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ELHS Girls Basketball Advances to State Finals ^[1]

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By:

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Maintaining its undefeated record this season, the ELHS Trojan girls' basketball team defeated the Wayne Memorial Zebras 60-52 in the state semifinals today at Calvin College's Van Noord Arena in Grand Rapids. They will move on to face Saginaw Heritage in the finals at the same arena at 12:15 p.m. tomorrow.

The Trojans were led by strong performances by Amelia McNutt (#2) and Aazhenii Nye (#14). McNutt was the high-scorer for East Lansing, bringing in 20 points, including several key free-

throws near the end of the game.



The first half was close, with neither team able to gain much separation. The first quarter ended with East Lansing down 16-14. Wayne Memorial led early in the second quarter, 20-14, but the Trojans were able to battle back and tie it up again with two three-point shots.

The game remained close until the half-time mark, with Wayne Memorial leading 30-27 at that point.



The Trojans then opened the second half with a 6-0 run in the first minute. With five minutes remaining in the third-quarter, the Trojans had been on a 14-4 run, bringing the score to 41-34 in their favor.

In the third quarter, the Trojans' defense grew significantly stronger, and was able to successfully convert Wayne Memorial's turnovers into offense. At the end of the third, the Trojans led 50-41.



The fourth quarter turned into a defensive battle, with neither team scoring except in short bursts. Wayne Memorial's #22, Camree Clegg, led her team's efforts, but the Trojans' defense was able to limit their opponent's scoring.

Wayne Memorial's Jayah Hicks (#12) brought in two three-point shots in the last minute of the game, allowing her team to bring the score within an 8-point stretch. But they could not bring it closer. McNutt's free-throws for the Trojans proved insurmountable for the Zebras.



Coach Robert Smith advised his players not to take any shots in the final minute, in order to avoid letting the opponent gain control of the ball. The players followed his instructions, with their only scoring coming from free-throw shooting.



With about forty seconds left on the clock, the approximately three hundred students from ELHS began chanting, "I believe that we will win!" and Principal Andy Wells, sensing their overwhelming energy, reminded them to stay off the court when the game ended.

Once Wayne Memorial's players had left the court, East Lansing's student fans went out to the court and mobbed their team, celebrating the advancement to the finals.



Playing for the Trojans are Captains Amelia McNutt (#2), Jaida Hampton (#15), Aaliyah Nye (#32), and Aazhenii Nye (#14), with teammates Kalaia Hampton (#2), Sanaya Gregory (#4), Allie Mayes (#5), Annelise Lebeda (#12), Steffi Kracko (#13), Zion Keyes (#20), Carolyn Heck (#21), Alhura Lofton (#23), Aaliyah Nye (#32), Aashawanti Nye (#33), and Eva Dunbar (#44).

Assisting Coach Smith are Billy Hamilton, Sami Tucker, and Cosette Buckberry. Their manager is Tate Smith.







Photos by Kepler Domurat-Sousa.

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