



THE PAPER



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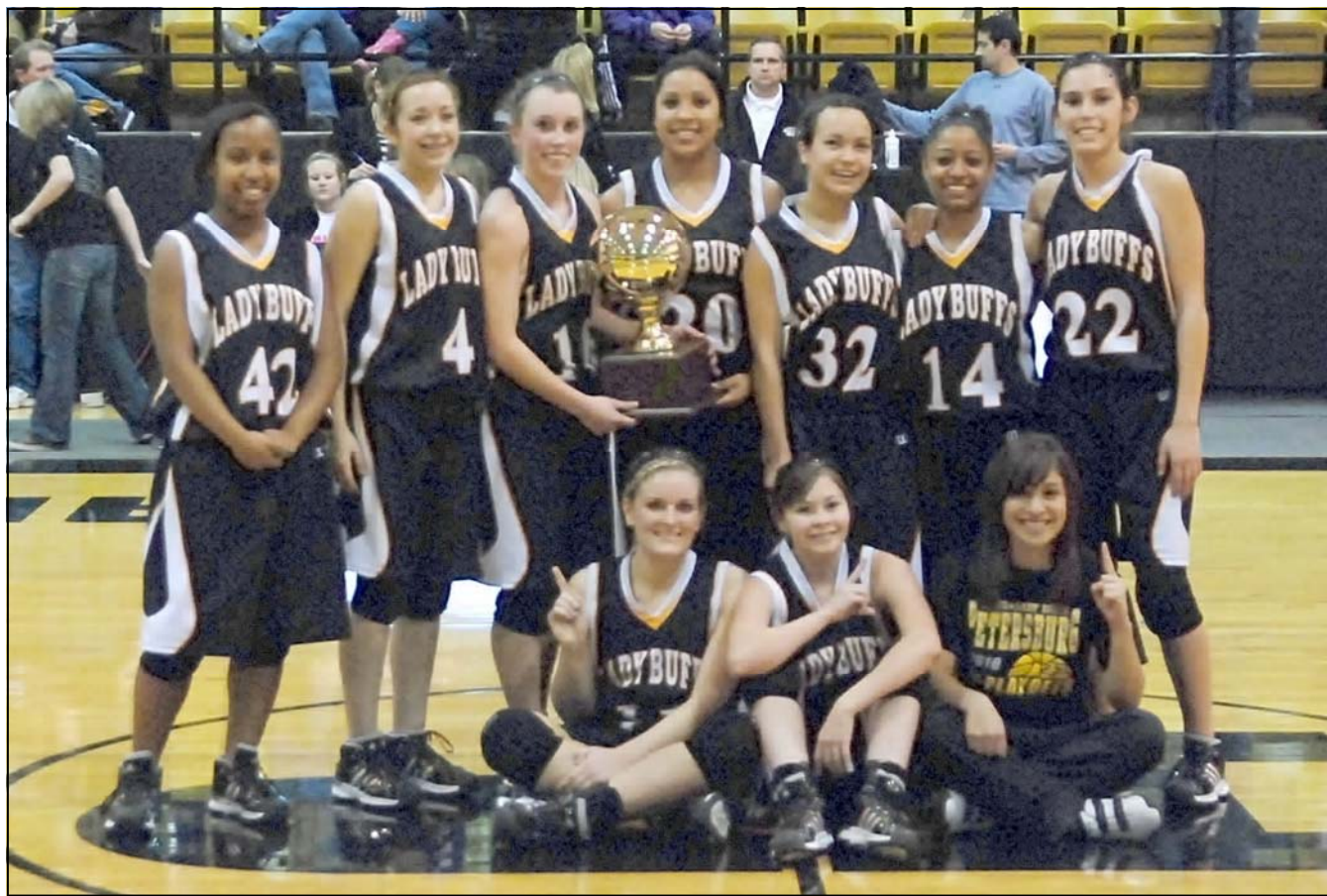


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THURSDAY

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Class A Division II Regional Champions



By KEVIN LEWIS
Herald Editor

POST — They may call it Antelope Arena the 364 other days of the year, but on Tuesday night the high school gymnasium here — appropriately adorned in black and gold with a gigantic “P” at midcourt — belonged to Petersburg.

Just call it Buffalo Gym-Garza County branch.

The Petersburg Lady Buffs made school history by qualifying for the regional tournament for the first time ever, scoring 16 straight points surrounding halftime for the bulk of a 64-43 Class 1A Division II regional quarterfinal victory over Meadow.

“It’s amazing. All of us are really excited. This is a really big deal to us,” junior Katlyn Tarbet said of advancing to this weekend’s regional tournament in Levelland where the No. 25 Lady Buffs (24-9) will take on No. 5 Happy (22-7), a 68-41 winner over No. 23 Groom, in the semifinals at 1 p.m. Friday. In the other semifinal, No. 24 Lorenzo (22-11), the District 5 champion ahead of runner-up Petersburg which eliminated No. 3 seed Whitharral 46-26 on Tuesday, takes on No. 7 McLean (26-4), a 51-28 winner over Nazareth. Friday’s winners advance to Saturday’s 2 p.m. championship with a trip to Austin on the line.

In the boys game, 6-foot-1 freshman Thomas Roden continued his impressive performances in the wake of foot surgery, scoring 13 points and grabbing 14 rebounds to lead the Buffs to a 48-36 win over New Home in a bi-district game.

“This is pretty awesome,” junior forward Dylan Smith said after Petersburg pulled away late by scoring 13 unanswered points. “We wanted it bad. Hopefully we can keep it up and some more good things will happen.” In the playoffs for the first time in eight years, the Buffs (12-11) next play Balmorhea (19-2), the District 7 champion which drew a first-round bye, the Buffaloes will play Balmorhea in Andrews at 8:00pm Friday.

Coach Michael Simpson thought the game would be played Friday in Andrews or Odessa.

... It took about 12 minutes for them to get rid of some jitters, but once the Lady Buffs did that there was no stopping them.

“We were nervous because this is the game we’ve wanted so bad,” said Britney Shedd, the diminutive left-handed guard who scored a game-high 23 points and had five steals for Petersburg.

With the game tied 14-all after the first quarter, the Lady Buffs were clinging to a 25-19 lead midway through the second period when they started their big run. Petersburg scored the last nine points of the first half and the first seven of the second half to assume a commanding 22-point.

“We finally got those jitters out,” said Tarbet, who scored all but two of her 15 points in the first half. “This is the (round) where we’ve lost out the last two years.

Six different Lady Buffs contributed points during the 16-0 run, with

the biggest points coming on a 3-point play by Tarbet, a bucket just before the halftime buzzer by Jenny Longoria and a 3-pointer by Lili Sanchez to cap the push and put Petersburg ahead 41-19.

Lady Buffs coach Ritchie Tarbet said the key to the game-changing spurt was in Petersburg ditching the full-court press.

“We were giving them some easy baskets, so we got out of the press. The risk-reward wasn’t there,” he said. “If I had half a brain cell we would have gotten out of it about six minutes sooner.”

After the Lady Buffs’ big run, Meadow (14-19) never got closer than 17 points the rest of the game.

“Petersburg outplayed us,” Lady Broncos coach Ryan Bobo said. “It’s a full-court game for four quarters, and Petersburg played all four of them. We only played about 2-1/2.”

Bobo felt his team “got tired” in the second quarter when the Lady Buffs began pulling away.

“Their girls are quick,” he said. “We were trying to stay with them, but our bench isn’t as deep as we needed it to be.

“My hat’s off to Petersburg.”

Ritchie Tarbet knew Meadow would have a tough time coming back once the Lady Buffs got ahead.

“They were having trouble scoring in their half-court set,” the coach said. “They’re a young team, and right now they don’t shoot the ball well enough to come back from something like that.”

Besides Shedd’s 23 points and Tar-

bet’s 15, senior post Taylor Nichols also reached double figures with 14 points. Katrina Garza had a game-high 10 rebounds while Longoria pulled down eight. Petersburg hit 17-of-23 (74 percent) free throws while Meadow was just 4-of-13.

May McCauley led Meadow with 14 points. Crystal White added 10 and Kristen Waters eight.

The Lady Buffs now turn their attention to the regional tournament to be played at the Texan Dome at South Plains College.

Shedd, who missed the playoffs last season with a torn ACL, said she is confident in Petersburg’s chances of getting to the state tournament.

“We just need to play like we know we can,” she said.

Ritchie Tarbet said anything can happen at this stage.

“We’ve talked about this since the end of track season (last year),” he said. “We knew we were close, and we knew if we stayed healthy we’d have a chance.

“I’m proud of what they’ve accomplished, but we’d like to win a couple more games.”

At least a couple.

... No doubt Michael Simpson cringed when he heard Thomas Roden needed foot surgery as the result of a football injury and would miss much of the basketball season. That’s not the kind of thing a first-year coach counts on.

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Buffaloes are Bi-District Champions

