

By Phil Sandoval

Guymon Daily Herald

SEILING, OKLA. — Forget about the pretty plays and the fancy stuff. Playoff basketball is all about grit, determination and defense.

Texhoma and Hooker displayed all three in Saturday's, Class A boys regional consolation championship game against each other. Fittingly, it took almost the entire four quarters to a winner to emerge.

J.D. Pugh put the Red Devils ahead, 30-29, with six minutes left in the game. The senior's basket led to a 6-1 run where stretched the margin to 34-30 at the two-minute mark.



“That was playoff basketball right there,” said Hooker head coach Brad Coffman. “Pugh took over. I thought we had defended him really well. But great players make great plays and he did.”

Texhoma held serve to take a 37-34 decision over their cross county rival. But, the Red Devils had to endure a last-gasp charge from the Bulldogs in the final 45 seconds to come out on top.

The victory advances Texhoma to this weekend's Class A Boys Area Tournament at Chisholm Trail High School in Enid.

Hooker, who suffered their second post-season loss, was eliminated from further play.

"It was an ugly win. But when you get in the playoffs, a win's, a win. It doesn't matter how it comes," said Texhoma head coach Greg Higgins. "Give Hooker credit," he said in the same breath.

"They played great defense and made some shots in the first half. Then we got a different intensity in the second half and made a difference."

The Bulldogs took and held the lead the entire first half then carried into the middle of the third quarter until Freeman, who tied with Pugh for high-game honors with 12 points, gave Texhoma it's first lead of the game on a 3-pointer.

Kelly Slater gave Hooker back the lead, one the second bucket of a 4-0 run in the period's last minute. The freshman led the Bulldogs with 10 points.

The three-point difference in the final score came from a concerned effort on the defensive end.

After giving up 22 points to Hooker in the first half, and trailing by six at intermission, Texhoma held the Bulldogs a combined 12 points in the game's last two quarters.

Down the stretch, the Red Devils were down right stingy. In the fourth quarter, Hooker shot 1-for-7 and scored only 5 points.

Overall, the Bulldogs connected on 13-of-40 (33 percent) field goal attempts.

"We needed that to be ugly and a low-scoring game," Coffman explained. "I watched Texhoma the night before and they lit Ringwood up for 80 points. We can't hang with anyone who can score 80 points."

On the flip side, Hooker was just as tough to mount an attack on.

Texhoma shot a meager 29 percent (13-of-49) from the field.

The Red Devils were also inconsistent at the free throw line, where they went 9-for-17.

Higgins said missing five of 10 attempts from the stripe allowed Hooker to mount their final push. "We about gave it away missing our free throws at the end."

Matt Freeman reversed the trend when he sank the first of two charity shots after Bulldog sophomore Alex Sanchez fouled the Texhoma guard in the act of shooting with 1:21 remaining.

A Slater miss after Hooker got the rebound allowed Texhoma to keep its 35-32 lead. Skylor Rodriquez ticked the advantage up to four points on a free throw with 16 seconds left.

Jake Faulkner scored the last basket of his high school career to cut it to 36-34 with 4.5 seconds to. Freeman, who tied Pugh for high-point honors with 12, made one of two free throws afterwards for a three-point lead.

With 2.9 seconds to play after the score, Hooker Coffman called his final time out to set up a 3-point shot to force the game into overtime.

Blake Kennedy, who drained in a pair of 3-balls earlier, got the ball away from the right arc.

The shot banked harmlessly off the right side of the backboard, a foot away from the iron.

"I feel extremely proud," said Coffman of the Bulldogs.

"We're always disappointed when we don't win. But, I was proud of our seniors for stepping up. That was big for us."

Next year could potentially be as big or better for Hooker. Three of the Bulldogs five starters in Saturday's game are underclassmen.

"It depends on how they want to take it, Coffman said. "If they want realize where they can be and work hard this summer and get back here that would be a positive."