

Lady Bulldogs punch their ticket to "The Big House"

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By JASON EPP

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The Forgan Lady Bulldogs made 14 of their last 17 free throw attempts to win the Area Championship and punch their ticket to the "Big House" with a 42-31 over the Lomega Lady Raiders.

"I'm just so proud of these girls," said Lady Bulldogs coach Brett Trippet. "We didn't play great, but we played extremely hard."

Forgan's senior duo of Jaci McGill and Miranda Lopez carried the bulk of the offensive load for the Lady Bulldogs. McGill finished with a team-high 15 points, including 3-of-7 shooting from three-point range and 6-of-7 from the line, all in the fourth quarter.



Lopez scored 12 including 6-of-8 shooting from the free throw line.

During a critical stretch midway through the fourth, Lopez and McGill made nine consecutive free throws as Lomega made their final push. The Lady Raiders had cut the lead to 6, but the free throws pushed the lead back to 11 with just over a minute left in the game.

All of Forgan's points in the fourth quarter came at the line.

But it wasn't just the seniors. Freshman center Kenzi Taylor owned the glass with 19 rebounds and seven points, and Samantha Leisher nailed two threes to keep the Lomega defense honest.

Forgan started the game on an 8-0 run, but saw that lead evaporate as the second quarter started with the two teams knotted at 10. Later, Forgan led by five, but saw that cut to just two with 32 seconds left in the half.

But it was the senior point guard McGill hitting a deep bomb as the halftime buzzer sounded, and Forgan led 20-15.

The Lady Bulldogs advanced their lead, to nine, midway through the third only to see Lomega cut it back to three again.

Another critical basket came after Leisher missed on a three, but Taylor grabbed the rebound and passed to McGill for her final three of the game. Lindsey Trippet added two free throws to give the Lady Bulldogs an eight-point lead heading to the fourth.

With the win Forgan returns to the state tournament for the first time since 2004 when they brought home the gold ball.

"I'm just so excited for these girls," said Trippet. "They've been a lot of fun to coach."