By JASON EPP

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It’s not whether you get knocked down; it is whether you get back up.

And after getting knocked to the mat Friday by No.1 Garber and losing top scorer Konner Hood to injury, the Cardinals got up off the mat, and defeated the Texhoma Red Devils 39-36 to earn their first trip to the state tournament since 1972 and only the third in school history.

“It was a real team victory,” said Cardinals coach Gary Wallace. “We’ve preached all year that we never want to rely on one guy. Guys stepped up, bonded together, and did not want to lose.”

One player in particular that stepped up was senior reserve guard, Cody Levens. Levens was the only Cardinal to finish in double figures with 10 points. His most crucial points were the final two of the game.

Keifer Hood went to the line with just seconds left, and sank the first free throw to give Turpin a 37-36 lead. Hood missed the second, but Levens got the rebound off of the tip, and made the put back from the block over Texhoma defenders to make it a three-point game.

Levens two field goals in the fourth were the Cardinals only field goals in the quarter.

“I put a lot of pressure on him to play at a high level,” said Wallace. “He stepped up.”

All that was left for Texhoma was a last second desperation heave that fell short.

The game had been close throughout with both teams answering each other's baskets. Turpin led 9-8 at the end of the first, but the Red Devils led 21-19 at the half.

The battle continued in the second half with Texhoma continuing to lead, but never by more than five, including a one-point lead heading to the fourth.

"At the end we made some big plays by using our pressure defense," said Wallace.

If fact, it was a steal by Keifer Hood that ultimately got him to the free throw line for the winning shot.

After Levens, Turpin was led in scoring by Braydon Robinson with 9; Keifer Hood scored 8, and Aaron Kuns 7.

Matt Freeman led the Red Devils with 9 points, and J.D. Pugh added 8.

The Turpin-Texhoma series has been a classic one this season with four of those games decided by a total of 10 points. Interestingly, Texhoma won the two games played in the panhandle, and Turpin won the three played outside of it.

Turpin (21-6) advances to the state tournament that begins Thursday, and Texhoma's season ends at 24-5.