

Cardiac Kids

Down 18 at half, team beats Urbandale

Down 18 at the half to a team that they had beat twice in the regular season, Johnston was facing real trouble. Urbandale was hitting whatever shot they wanted, and was stifling the Dragons high-powered offense. Yet the team knew that it wasn't over yet. "It didn't matter what we did, they hit almost every shot in the first half," coach Chad Jilek said.

The girls' basketball team has developed into one of the powerhouses in 5A, becoming a mainstay at the state tournament. This year was no different, with five of the seven leading scorers returning. Ready to compete for their first state championship, the Dragons reeled off a season for the ages, going 21-2 and earning the #1 seed at the state tournament.

Urbandale came out on fire, shooting 59% from the field and going up 41-23 at half. Senior Regan Nesheim knew that they had to step up the intensity in the second half. "In the first half our defense was one of the things that got us down, so we knew we had to play our best defense and best half of the year in the second half."

Johnston did just that. A stifling full court press with junior Kendall Nead started the run. Nead made offense for Urbandale star senior DeeDee Pryor near impossible, holding her to seven points in the second half.

Nead's defense helped jumpstart a offensive assault by the Dragons. Nead (15 pts.) hit a 3. Nesheim (14 pts.) had an and

one. Junior Maddie Mock and senior Macy Thompson knocked down free throws and gathered rebounds (4 pts. each). And junior Maya McDermott (22 pts.) got hot. She attacked the defense getting her team open looks and getting her own as well. This all led to a sequence that will go down in Johnston athletics history.

Down 48-52, Nead got a steal and made a fast break layup to cut the deficit to two. Mock then stole a pass from Pryor, who gave it to McDermott. She passed to Thompson who passed to McDermott for an open three. Nothing but net. McDermott had a smile as big as the sun on her face. The Johnston student section was in pandemonium. Urbandale called a time out. Johnston was up 53-52, and they didn't stop there. They won 66-57. One of the great comebacks in IGHS AU history was complete.

Three days later, Johnston lost to WDM Valley 76-64 in overtime in the state semifinals. Yet that would not define the season. What was said to be the biggest student section at a state game (the semifinal game) left school to watch them. They made a school all come together and show that sports can unite everyone. McDermott summed it up best after the loss, saying, "We all looked at each other in the locker room, and we don't want this feeling next year, so we're gonna come back stronger."

Lining up for a jumper in a 66-57 win over Urbandale is senior Regan Nesheim. A four-year varsity player, Nesheim will go down as one of the best Dragons ever, saving arguably her best performance for last with 26 points in her final game in a Dragon uniform. She finished her career seventh all time in points (810), 10th in career scoring average (10.0), third in total rebounds (454), and first in career wins (78) and single season/all time field goal % (60.7%/59.5%). Nesheim committed to South Dakota State.



1. Junior Maya McDermott celebrates after making a 3 to complete the 18-point comeback win over Urbandale 66-57. Three years into her high school career, McDermott has established herself as one of the great in not only Johnston history, but Iowa history. The UNI commit has the single game threes (6) school and assists (15) records, the single season threes (60) and assists (159) record, and finally is already the school career leader in assists (309) and threes made (142). (Photo by: Evan Newcomb)

2. Trying to make an entry pass to the post is senior Macy Thompson. Thompson played varsity player for four years, becoming one of only three girls in Johnston history to make four straight state tournament appearances. She finished her career eighth all-time in team history with 83 games played. (Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti)

3. Junior Maddie Mock gets ready to shoot a free throw in a 81-63 win over Mason City. Mock has been on varsity since her freshman year, starting the past two years helping lead the team to the state tournament. She is already established herself as one of the Johnston greats with stats like fourth all time in rebounds (438), ninth in blocks (48), fifth in assists (168), and eight in charges (7), all while still having one year left to improve on those numbers. She is committed to play college basketball at South Dakota State. (Photo by: Julia Merritt)

4. Swarming to the ball to stop Dowling Catholic star junior Caitlin Clark are seniors Macy Thompson and Regan Nesheim. Clark was the fourth best player in the nation (ESPN) and averaged an astonishing 32.5 points per game while shooting 40.9% for the field. Yet, Johnston seemed to have her locked down holding her to 28.5 points per game and 35% shooting from the field, beating her twice. (Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti)



Story By: Will Burch
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