



Lakeview suffocates Pickering, 54-26, in semifinals

The top-ranked Lakeview Gators dominated the fourth-ranked Pickering Red Devils, 54-26, in the semifinals of the Division IV non-select basketball playoffs Tuesday night at Burton Coliseum in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

The Gators (27-6) were relentless defensively from the opening tip as they didn't allow Pickering (24-10) to score until the 2:48 mark of the first quarter. Lakeview held a modest, 9-5 lead at the end of the first quarter and led 20-14 at halftime.

In the second half, the Gators exploded as they outscored the Red Devils 19-4 in the third quarter to take a 39-18 lead. Lakeview allowed just five field goals in the second half as they cruised to victory and into the state championship game.

The Gators were led by Andre Sowell with 16 points while Dereon Joseph added 15 points and eight rebounds. Lakeview shot 23-for-60 (38 percent) from the field but held Pickering to 11-for-33 shooting (33 percent). The Gators also forced the Red Devils into 23 turnovers while committing just seven. Lakeview won the rebounding battle, 38-25, including grabbing 21 offensive boards.

“We really had to lock in on our defensive assignments,” said Lakeview boys’ basketball coach Brian Williams. “When you’re playing against a team like Pickering with four and five shooters, that’s a hard rotation especially when you’re playing on a college court. I saw a couple of times where we closed out a little shallow but most of the time we rotated perfectly. I thought we made some decisions offensively that weren’t really good, but we locked in defensively most of the night.”

Next up, the Gators will try to secure their first state championship since March of 2003 when they take on the sixth-ranked Franklin Hornets (23-7) Friday at 4 p.m. in the Division IV non-

select State Championship Game. The Hornets edged second-ranked Ringgold, 63-61, Tuesday in the semifinals.

“I think a win Friday would be good for the community,” said Williams. “Obviously, the players and I want this badly, but I think the community wants to see the ultimate success. Everyone in the state knows we are a good team, but we want that final validation which is a state title, and we will leave everything we have on the court Friday to get it.”

Friday’s game can be heard on 100.7 KZBL or at KZBLRadio.com.

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