

2022 STATE

## FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

### CLASS 2A QUARTERFINAL




**DABCIG** (10-1)  
KICKOFF: 7 P.M. SAT., NOV. 12,  
AT THE UNI-DOME IN CEDAR FALLS




**CENTRAL LYON/GEORGE-LITTLE ROCK** (11-0)

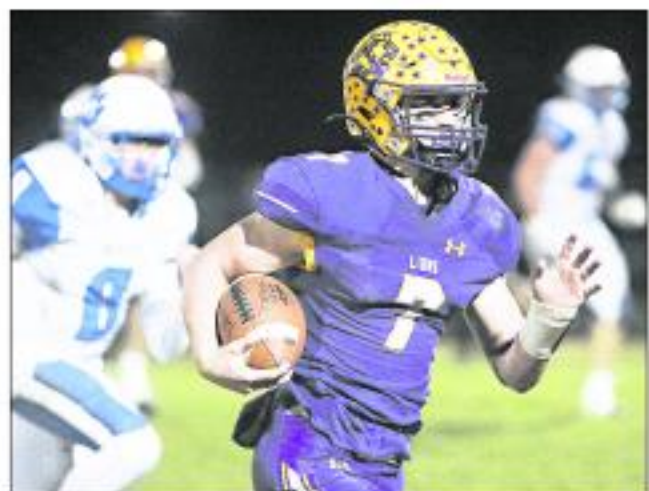
### CLASS 1A QUARTERFINAL



**UNDERWOOD** (11-0)  
KICKOFF: 7 P.M. FRIDAY, NOV. 11,  
AT THE UNI-DOME IN CEDAR FALLS



**WEST SIOUX** (10-1)



Central Lyon/George-Little Rock senior Zach Lutmer takes off running against West Lyon on Friday in Rock Rapids. The Lions claimed a 42-7 win over the Wildcats. Photo by Rylan Howe

#### CLASS 2A STATE FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS QUARTERFINAL

## Lions sprint past Wildcats to get to semifinal

Earn payback for last season's defeat

BY JUSTIN RUST  
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ROCK RAPIDS—Central Lyon/George-Little Rock took care of some unfinished business against sixth-ranked West Lyon on Friday in the Class 2A quarterfinals as the second-ranked Lions controlled the game from start to finish for a 42-7 victory.

It was a stark contrast to last year when West Lyon took down their county rivals in the quarterfinals, preventing the Lions a chance at making it to the UNI-Dome for the second straight year.

But this year, it was the Lions who got the best of the postseason Beef Bowl with a dominating victory to earn the trip to Cedar Falls.

"We felt like last year we were the better team and we just couldn't get things to roll our way. This year, things are just different. It feels great," Central Lyon/George-Little Rock coach Curtis Eben said. "That's something our guys have understood, winning in all aspects and tonight that showed. They stayed the course and did the things we talked about. They made the adjustments and that's the winning attitude and mentality our guys have."

The Lions had no trouble

See **LIONS** on page C4

#### CLASS 2A STATE VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

## Wolfpack finish unlikely comeback



Western Christian senior Kylie De Jager digs a Dike-New Hartford kill attempt in Thursday's Class 2A state title match in Coralville at the Xtreme Arena. The Wolfpack won in five sets 25-21, 19-25, 25-21, 25-23, 16-14. Photo by Roy Tucker

## Western takes down nemesis Wolverines to claim 2A title

BY SCOTT BYERS  
SBYERS@NWESTIOWA.COM

WESTERN CHRISTIAN 25 19 25 13 16  
DIKE-NEW HARTFORD 21 25 21 25 14

CORALVILLE—Western Christian senior Abby VerBurg is normally a pleasant person, but there are times on the volleyball court when she plays angry.

The thought that her last competitive volleyball match ever might be a loss was enough to

trigger VerBurg.

She blasted away at Dike-New Hartford as the Wolfpack scored the last five points in a row to take the Class 2A state championship 25-21, 19-25, 25-21, 13-25, 16-14 Thursday at Xtreme Arena in Coralville.

"Coach always tries to get me mad. And she says that's when I usually do my best," VerBurg said. "So I just tried to, I don't

See **WOLFPACK** on C2



Sioux Center senior Willow Bleeker attempts a unique over-the-shoulder attack in the Class 3A championship tilt, which the Warriors lost in three sets. Photo by Roy Tucker

#### CLASS 3A STATE VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

## Sioux Center unable to pull off second straight upset in setback

Assumption solves Warriors blocking

BY SCOTT BYERS  
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SIOUX CENTER 23 16 21  
ASSUMPTION 25 25 25

CORALVILLE—The blocks that had inspired Sioux Center's run to the Class 3A state championship were less frequent, and as a

result, the Warriors weren't ever able to build any momentum in a 25-23, 25-16, 25-21 loss to Davenport Assumption in the title match Thursday in Coralville.

"We didn't execute as well offensively as we had hoped. We knew we needed to keep them scrambling because in system, they're really difficult," said Sioux Center coach Julie Oldenkamp. "We didn't maybe serve quite

as tough as we had hoped. And to get them out of system. We had hoped our blocking was a little stronger, but when they're in system, it's really hard to get that block up consistently. And so I think those are the three biggest things that maybe just didn't go our way."

Senior Reagan Jansen said of

See **WARRIORS** on C5

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## SPORTS

## Experience of senior-laden team leads to victory

## WOLFPACK

Continued from page C1

know, just tried to send my hardest swings at them."

Dike-New Hartford and Western Christian had been ranked first and second, respectively, all year. The Wolverines swept the Wolfpack in last year's state championship match. One team or the other has been the Class 2A state champion every year since 2009.

The two teams played spectacular volleyball the whole way, but it looked like the top-ranked Wolverines had all the momentum after cruising in the fourth set and leading for the bulk of the fifth set. Dike-New Hartford had match point at 14-11 on a kill by junior Jady Peterson.

VerBurg then crushed a kill for a sideout, and Dike-New Hartford made a hitting error. The Wolverines called timeout at 14-13. VerBurg got another kill after the timeout, then powered down another to give Western Christian match point. The Wolverines tried to go to their best player, junior Payton Petersen, but the pass had her well off the net and wide of the pin. Petersen had no choice but to try to go down the line with a shot and she was unable to keep it on the court.

VerBurg said she was not in the mood to try any tips or roll shots at that point.

"I wanted the ball, and I wanted to swing," she said. "My teammates will tell me what is open and sometimes the coaches will pull me aside and tell me what is open, but otherwise they just tell me to swing hard."

The final point set off an explosion of emotion.

"We were all lying in that dogpile," said Western Christian senior Hannah Broek, who was the Iowa Pork Producers' Producer of the Match. "And we were like, 'Is this real?' I heard so many people say, 'Is this real?' I can't imagine that this is real, and it's insane. I can't wrap my mind around it, but I knew that we could do it. I knew that no matter what, if



Western Christian celebrates in the immediate aftermath of scoring the final point to beat top-ranked Dike-New Hartford in the championship match of the Class 2A state tournament. The Wolfpack trailed 13-9 and 14-11 in the fifth and final set but won 25-21, 19-25, 25-21, 13-25, 16-14. Photos by Roy Tucker

we fought and gave everything we had, that we could do this and we did."

Western Christian coach Tammi Veerbeek said it was significant that Dike-New Hartford was the team the Wolfpack had to beat in the final.

"The tears — it was just pure almost like relief. We did it," Veerbeek said. "There was joy, but I could sense like a relief, like that monkey has been on our back. And everyone talks Dike-New Hartford is the best team in the state regardless of class. And I'm thinking like, 'We have some good players. We have a good team, you guys.'"

"I thought we could battle with them. Did I know if we'd win? I wasn't sure. I thought it'd be a slugfest, and it was absolutely a slugfest. But just in the end, we made enough plays to get it done. And I'm just so happy for our kids. Man. They've worked hard for this."

Dike-New Hartford coach Diane Harms said the Wolfpack earned it.

"We played hard, and they played hard, and they made the play when they needed to make the points. I wouldn't have expected anything else out of the matchup like this. Going for five sets and extra points fit," Harms said. "Western is a very good team, and they took advantage of the things. Credit to them."

VerBurg said the loss in last year's title bout was motivation.

"Last year, everyone was just kind of like, 'Oh, they're going to win.' And we didn't really believe in ourselves either," she said. "And, this year, we really wanted it. We believed in ourselves, and we wanted to trust each other. And we knew we could do it. Last year was a little bitter to us, and we wanted it bad."

Western Christian set the tone by winning the opening set. Senior Stella Winterfeld had five kills in a six-point run that put the Wolfpack up 8-6. Western Christian led until Dike-New Hartford scored seven in a row to tie it at 18. The teams traded sideouts a few times, and it was still tied at 21. VerBurg then took her turn up front and made three straight kills before a Broek block for a point ended the set.

"That was huge for us because

I remember we were in that tunnel after the first set, and when we looked around to each other and we said, 'Two more, — which, clearly, we didn't do to it in two more, we did it in a few more — but that was huge for us. We needed that little confidence booster to erase the past of last year and to prove to each other that we could do this,' Winterfeld said.

Dike-New Hartford took a 5-2 lead early in the second set. The Wolverines pumped the lead up to 12-8, then 15-10. The biggest advantage was 24-17. Western Christian got a couple of points before a Payton Petersen kill closed the set and evened the match.

The lead went back and forth in the third set. Dike-New Hartford was up 20-17 before the Wolfpack finished strong. They tied the score at 20. The Wolverines took the lead one more time on a Payton Petersen kill, then a hitting error gave the Wolfpack the sideout it needed. VerBurg had three straight kills, then a hitting error by Dike-New Hartford gave the Wolfpack the set win.

The Wolverines again had a big response. An early five-point run gave them the lead in the fourth set. Western Christian had a four-point run to tie the score at 9-9, but Dike-New Hartford scored 11 of the next 12 points to go up 20-10 and was never pushed again on its way to the win that evened the match.

Broek said the Wolfpack's confidence was not shaken.

"We're saying, 'OK, we kind of let up there a little bit. We don't quite have it locked down. We still got to work for this last set,'" she said. "We just got a little bit too lax. And so we were just like, 'OK, but we're still not letting this game slip away.'"

Winterfeld said it was not hard refocus for the fifth set.

"We got to the tunnel after the fourth set, and we said, 'All right, I guess we just want to play one more game with our best friends,'" Winterfeld said. "We just completely flushed that out of our mind. We knew we could not dwell on that going into fifth set, and we didn't."

Verbeek said the maturity and experience of the Wolfpack stood out in that situation.

## CLASS 2A ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM

Stella Winterfeld, senior, Western Christian — captain  
Abby VerBurg, senior, Western Christian  
Jady Peterson, junior, Dike-New Hartford  
Payton Petersen, junior, Dike-New Hartford  
Isabelle Elliott, junior, Sumner-Fredericksburg  
Molly Shafer, sophomore, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont  
Bailey Boeve, freshman, Hinton

"We talked about that offensive rhythm, and we knew we were deadly on offense," the coach said. "But what we talked about before this match is the only way you're going to win a state championship is defensively. I preach, 'Defense wins championships.' And were we perfect in our defense? No, we missed some stuff. We didn't get every block. But I thought we worked hard to keep that balloon off the floor and that gives us a chance."

Western Christian was up 2-1 early in the fifth set, but the Wolverines got four in a row to take the lead. The Wolfpack tied it at 5, but Dike-New Hartford scored the next two and slowly expanded the lead from there.

"We just kind of tried to not look at the score," Broek said. "You're just going point by point. We weren't going to look at the score. And we were just thinking, 'OK, we want this so bad.' And we're going to lay our life down for this game. We're going to not let a ball hit our ground on our side."

That set up the dramatic conclusion.

"We are a big senior-heavy team," Winterfeld said. "And we knew that this was our last match together. We've been playing together since fifth grade and competitively even before that. This is everything we have ever worked for and ever dreamed about, and it's just amazing to see our dreams come true."

Winterfeld, who was the captain of the all-tournament team, and VerBurg, also an all-tournament team member, were a big part of it. VerBurg finished with 26 kills and Winterfeld had 24.

"They've been our go-to hitters. Everybody knows it," Veerbeek said. "As a coach, I'm like, we've got to

use balance; we got to use balance, but I'm also like, if they can't stop it, why wouldn't you go to it? They're our highest hitting efficiency. They hit high. They hit smart. This is their third year. They've been denied two years in a row. They wanted it. So, you got to go to those kids. You got to go to those kids, and they rose up, and they had that experience, and they just refused to be denied."

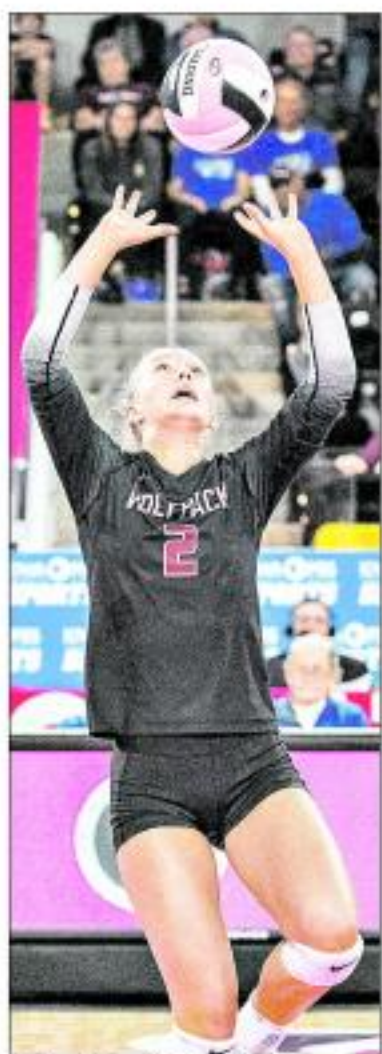
Broek finished with 53 assists. Senior Jocelyn Oostenink was 24-for-24 serving with two aces. Winterfeld made 15 digs and senior Kylie De Jager had 14.

Western Christian ended its season at 42-5. It was undefeated against teams from Iowa.

The school was making its 40th trip to state and its 22nd in a row, both state records. It was the 18th state title for the school. Veerbeek has coached 13 teams to a state championship, which is a state record.

"I had a dream the other night. Thirteen is my favorite number. It was my volleyball number. It was my daughter's number. And now I just won my 13th state title," Veerbeek said. "I dreamed that if I beat Dike-New Hartford, I was going to be done. So, now I got to do some thinking. I did have that dream, and I sometimes like to follow things like that. If I do, this will be it for me, but my daughter is coaching with me right now. So I think I need to train her a few more years before I just hand her the reins."

"You know, living in this moment right now, you're at such a high, but it's hard, right? It's a grind to be a coach at this level and up to this year in and year out," she said. "But, man, it was super fun. So, we'll see what the future holds. But we're going to cherish this one right now."



Senior Hannah Broek sets a pass toward a Western Christian teammate in the Class 2A state championship match against Dike-New Hartford on Thursday in Coralville.

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