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SPORTS

Bradshaw wallops Lodi Academy to open section title defense

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The top-seed in any tournament, no matter the sport, should be a heavy favorite over any #16 seed. But, that team is hardly ever a 73-point favorite to win.

That's exactly what happened Tuesday night at Bradshaw Christian High School when the two-time defending Sac-Joaquin Section Division V champions in girls' basketball hit the floor to open the playoffs. The Lady Pride set a school record for largest margin of victory in a post-season game by easily beating Lodi Academy, 85-12.

The old mark for Bradshaw came in the opening round of the 2008 bracket when the Lady Pride defeated Sierra Christian, 75-16.

Four Bradshaw players scored as much as or more than the entire Lady Titan team Tuesday. The Lady Pride were led by Ashley Jones with 28 points followed by Fernandi Espinosa's 14. Jordie Smith added 13, Lauren Beyer scored 12 and Cheyenne Williams tacked on 11 points.

Smith, along with Beyer and Williams, dominated on the boards. She's glad to be playing in the post-season after suffering a knee injury last year which kept her on the bench during the playoffs.

"We're just one more step closer to ARCO (Arena)," the junior forward said.

"The girls played really well even though (Lodi Academy) is as good as the teams we're going to see later (in the playoffs)," Bradshaw's head coach Mike Ruble said. "I liked our team tonight. I liked our spirit, I liked our attitude, I just like the way we played tonight."

Lodi Academy fans knew it would be a long night when Bradshaw sprinted out to a 22-0 lead before their club could muster a short jumper with 2:13 left in the opening quarter. The Lady Pride led 26-2 after one period and proceeded to outscore the Titans 26-0 in the second quarter. Lodi Academy had no answer to Bradshaw's pressing defense, nor its superior athleticism nor its sharp three-point shooting.

One of the referees was overheard asking the lady operating the official scorebook to ask Coach Ruble to call off the horses in the second half. He did, sort of.

Beyer hit five quick points to open the second half before Brooke Allen scored Lodi Academy's third and four points with a bucket. Ruble stopped the full court press in the third quarter, but still Bradshaw went on a 22-0 run. A 25-footer by Rachel Gates gave Lodi's fans a brief cheer with :37 left in the third period, but the Lady Pride had a 75-7 lead.

Likely, they would have scored 100 points if it weren't for the continuous clock in the fourth quarter, a move which is called for by CIF rules when a team has a lead of 40 or more points in the final period.

With all the bench emptied (Bradshaw had nine girls suited up) and the clock rolling, the Lady Pride played like they were practicing for Thursday's second round playoff game. They hosted the winner of



Photos by Bryan Higashino - Behind the defense of Bradshaw Christian point guard Fernandi Espinosa, the Pride ran out to a 52-2 halftime lead and defeated Lodi Academy, 85-12, in the Division V playoff opener.

Forest Lake Christian and Valley Christian.

Ruble admitted that having 73-point wins don't always help a team get ready for the tougher squads they'll like face as they move through the bracket.

"If a big win helps or hurts, it sort of hurts," Ruble said. "In playoffs I'd rather take a close win than a blowout because you learn so much from a close loss or a close win. You just don't get that same experience in a blowout."

If the Lady Pride gets past Thursday, they'll make the D-V semi-finals which will be played in Galt on Tuesday and the championship game will be next Friday at ARCO Arena.

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