



MENDOCINO-LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Janelle Bird, Director of Community Relations & Communication
Phone/Email: [707.468.3012](tel:707.468.3012)/jbird@mendocino.edu

EAGLES BEAT FOOTHILL, ADVANCE IN THE PLAYOFFS

Written by: Joe Langstaff

The Mendocino College Eagles' men's basketball team's season has been extended for at least one more week, with the potential for extending another week after that.

On Friday evening, February 28, at home, the No. 7 seed Eagles of the Bay Valley Conference beat the visiting No. 10 seed Foothill College from Los Altos Hills, members of the Coast-North Conference, 68-58, in Round 2 of the CCCAA Men's Basketball Northern California Regionals.

That was program's first playoff win since the California Community Colleges switched from a small-school and large-school playoff formats in 1983 to an all-inclusive state playoff format which groups teams by geographic region (Northern California and Southern California), with the four finalists from each region competing at the state finals.

Friday's win, the Eagles' 21st of the season, was their sixth win in row, besting the Eagles' previous longest winning streaks this season; two 5-game streaks, one in December and one spanning the Eagles' last 2 games in December and their first three games in January.

In other NorCal Regionals games played on Friday, No. 6 Santa Rosa beat visiting No. 11 West Valley, 88-64. No.8 Redwoods beat No. 9 Sacramento City, 75-56. No. 5 Sequoias beat No. 12 Butte, 87-64.

On Saturday, No. 1 San Francisco City College beat No. 14 San Joaquin Delta 113-82. No 3 Columbia beat No. 14 Alameda 76-64. No. 4 Yuba College beat No. 13 Los Positas 98-78. No. 2 Fresno City College beat No. 18 Diablo Valley 91-72.

Round 3 of the NorCal Regional Playoffs will be held this coming Saturday, March 7, featuring the final eight teams playing in four games.

The No. 7 Eagles (21-8) will play at No. 2 Fresno (26-3). No. 8 Redwoods (22-5) will play at No. 1 San Francisco City (29-0). No. 6 Santa Rosa (22-7) will play at No. 3 Columbia (26-3). No. 5 Sequoias (23-6) will play at No. 4 Yuba (24-5). All games start at 7 p.m.

Mendocino and Fresno City are no strangers to each other. They played each other on December 14 in the



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championship game of the 82nd Annual Modesto Junior College Basketball Tournament.

That game turned out to be a classic, going into double overtime, before the Rams prevailed by a final score of 109-106. That loss stopped the Eagles' first 5-game winning streak of the season.

Fresno City went on to win 17 of the 18 remaining games on their regular season schedule, going 14-0 in the Central Valley Conference play to win the conference championship and finish the regular season at 25-3, earning them a No. 3 ranking in the state and No. 2 in Northern California and the No. 2 seed in the NorCal Regionals.

An added challenge for the Eagles in this second meeting with the Rams is that the game will be played on Fresno's home court, not on a neutral court.

But this second meeting of the teams this season also provides the Eagles with a dual opportunity; (1) to get some payback for the Eagles' loss to the Rams in December and (2), more importantly, earn the Eagles a first-ever berth in the State Finals with the win.

But those opportunities would not have been available had the Eagles not taken care of business this past Friday night in their game with the Foothill College Owls.

Foothill came into the game 17-11 record, having finishing in a 3-way tie for third place in the tough Coast-North conference behind undefeated San Francisco City (28-0) and Las Positas (20-8).

As previously noted, the Eagles came into the game riding their third 5-game winning streak of the season, a streak that had propelled them into the playoffs and included BVC wins over first-place Yuba and then second-place Los Medanos.

The Eagles wasted no time taking the first lead of Friday's game when sophomore point guard Divon Davis-Boddie made a long drive to the bucket from the right side for a layup. Foothill tied the score on a jumper in the paint on their first possession.

After a scoreless possession each, the Eagles took a 4-2 lead on an offensive board and putback by freshman guard LG Hallums. Foothill answered with a three for their first, and what would turn out to be, their only lead of the game.

On the Eagles' ensuing possession they retook the lead on the first 3-point goal of the night by sophomore guard Fred Bryant from the left top of the 3-point arc.

The Eagles made a defensive stop and converted a fast-break slam dunk by sophomore forward Darius Traylor to go up 9-5 with 16:25 on the first-half clock.

A couple scoreless possessions later, the Eagles upped their lead to 11-5 with two Bryant free throws with 15:15 on the clock.



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A Foothill layup was countered by a Traylor three. The Owls answered with a three on their next possession for a 14-10 score, with Foothill calling a timeout with 13:31 on the clock.

Over the next couple minutes of play, the teams battled on even terms. A baseline-jumper by sophomore guard Landon Garcia-Floyd with 11 minutes to play in the half put the Eagles up 20-15, with Mendocino calling a timeout.

From that point until the Eagles called their next timeout with 4:57 to play in the half, the teams continued to trade buckets and defensive stops, more of the latter than the former, each team going scoreless in one stretch of four possessions each.

Coming out of that timeout, leading 26-20, sophomore forward Alex Rojas hit a three-point shot to give the Eagles a 29-20 lead.

With 3:48 to play in the half, he made one of two free throw attempts to give the Eagles a 30-20 lead. At that point, the Eagles had held Foothill scoreless for nearly 4 minutes of play.

A blocked shot by freshman center Shafee Mumin helped the Eagles get a shot-clock violation on the Owls for Foothill's 8th scoreless possession in a row.

They finally ended that streak, hitting a three and then making 2 free throws on their next possession after two defensive stops to cut the Eagles' lead to 30-25 with under 2 minutes left in the half.

A Hallums layup interrupted that mini run. Foothill answered with a layup, as did the Eagles with a Davis-Boddie assist to Hallums to make the score 33-27 with 35 seconds to play in the half.

Hallums then made a steal and layup just before the buzzer to give the Eagles a 35-27 lead at half.

When the second half got underway, for a the first few minutes of play, it looked like the Eagles might be taking firm command of the game.

A Rojas three put the Eagles up 37-27. A couple possessions later, a Bryan three off a Garcia-Floyd drive and kickout gave the Eagles a 40-28 lead, their largest lead of the game, with 17 minutes on the clock.

But a Foothill 6-0 run cut the deficit 40-34. The Eagles answered that with a Mumin slam off a Davis-Boddie assist at the 13-minute mark. A Foothill layup and a free throw on a foul on the play made it a 5-point game, 42-37.

A Traylor steal led to a Hallums' fast-break layup and a 44-37 Eagles' lead with 12:23 to play in regulation, with the Eagles calling a timeout.

But Foothill would not go away, continuing to chip away until they managed to tie the game 46 all on a steal and fast-break layup with just under 10 minutes to play.



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The Eagles answered with a Hallums drive through the paint in traffic for a dunk and then a defensive stop.

On their next possession, Hallums drove the right baseline for a layup to put the Eagles up 50-46.

Foothill countered with a three. A Hallums' offensive board, followed by a free throw made the score 51-49 with 7:52 to play.

Foothill tied the game again, this time at 51-51 with 6:18 on the clock. The Eagles immediately untied it on their next possession, with Bryant hitting a three from the left corner to give the Eagles a 54-51 lead and the Eagles calling a timeout with 5:36 to play.

The teams traded pairs of free throws, Rojas the two for the Eagles, giving them a 56-53 lead. With 4:55 to go the Eagles made a steal, leading to Rojas' fast-break layup to put the Eagles up 58-53.

A missed Owls' shot and a Traylor defensive board led to another Hallums' layup and a 60-53 Eagles' lead with 4:23 to play. Foothill called a timeout with 4:12 to play.

The next minute and half plus of play saw the score remain the same. With 2:36 to go, Foothill drew a foul and made a 1-and-1 to cut the Eagles' lead to 60-55.

They pressed the Eagles, nearly getting a steal, but fouling, sending Hallums to the line where he made one of two free throws to make the score 61-55, with 2:11 to play.

Foothill missed a 3-point shot with just over 2-minutes left to play. The Eagles took and missed a 3-point shot, with Hallums getting the offensive board and the Eagles calling timeout with 1:49 to play, still leading by 6.

When play resumed, Davis-Boddie inbounded to Hallums just to the right of the block, with Hallums driving past three defenders for a layup to put the Eagles up 63-55.

Foothill made a 3-point shot with 1:19 to play to make the score 63-58, but Bryant knocked down a three from the left corner with 1:02 on the clock on the Eagles' next possession to make the score 66-58.

Foothill missed another 3-point shot, with Traylor rebounding and getting the ball to Rojas who was fouled with 48.5 seconds left. He made both free throws to put the Eagles up 68-58.

Foothill missed a couple more shots on their next two possessions and quickly fouled, sending the Eagles to the line a couple more times, shooting one-and-ones which they didn't convert.

Before time expired, both coaches subbed in players to give them some playing time in the playoff game.

With the outcome decided, the Owls were content to let the Eagles dribble the remaining seconds off the clock without Foothill committing any more intentional fouls.



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When final buzzer sounded the Eagles had won the playoff game 68-58 and punched their ticket to the next round of the playoffs.

Hallums was the game-high scorer with 23 points. Bryant and Rojas scored 14 points each, Bryant with the 4 threes. Traylor had 7 points and Garcia-Floyd and Davis-Boddie 4 each. Mumin chipped in with 2 points.

For Foothill, Ethan Thompson had 19 points and Erick Norton had 15. Five other Owls scored in single digits.

Eagles head coach Billy Offill felt that “early we fed off the crowd well and made some big plays. Even when Foothill came back to tie it late, we held our composure and got some more big buckets.

“Overall, it was a great environment for JC basketball. It was the way things are supposed to be. When you work all year from August to March to be in a position to host a game, that’s the kind of environment you hope to have; a big crowd, student body support, administration support and have the media there.

“Not enough can be said about the environment Friday evening. It was a great game for our guys. Our bench was awesome. Our locker room was a special place to be after the game. I was really proud of my guys. They handled business at home and did what they were supposed to do.

“It was a great job by our guys to never get rattled. We’ve played a tough schedule and have been in tough environments in places like Yuba. I think our players understood the magnitude of the game. We’re now in a one-game playoff to be in the State Final Eight. It’s a great place to be in.

“I really appreciate of the moment on Friday. We talk about that a lot in our program, about just being in the moment, doing what you can to control your own destiny. Our guys have been doing that for a month. That showed Friday.

“Foothill was really solid. Our guys did a really good job of guarding their action, did a good job on the glass and created some turnovers that led to some transition buckets. That got LJ and Freddy Bryant going. I feel we were able to win the game because of that.

“Foothill was a team that could have come in here and beat us. Defensively to hold a team to 58 points in the playoffs is as solid as you can be. Our guys did that. We got good contributions off the bench from Shaffee and Landon. But our whole bench was in the game regardless of minutes. The entire game we were vocal and where we needed to be.

“We’re going to play a powerhouse Fresno City team on Saturday. We have an opportunity for a rematch. We played them to 109-106 double OT game at the Modesto. It’s a tough game for us. They’re 26-3 and on a 16-game winning streak. It will be a tough game for us.

“We’ll have to play great basketball. But it’s a team we played and know. We know what the key components are to play in game with a team like Fresno who presses you all game and is physically imposing team that wears people down.



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“To be in a one-game playoff to get to State is something our guys have earned. I think they’ll be ready Saturday night in Fresno. It’s a tough task, but it’s something we’re excited about. I can see us playing well.

“We have a chance. We have a week to prepare for them. We’re going to do our best on Saturday night to hopefully have it come down to the end and right some wrongs from the last time.

“When the calendar changes to March and you’re still playing, that’s a special season.”