

STATE BOYS BASKETBALL

Final Four ...

South dethrones defending champ to advance to semis

BY JEFF LETOFSKY
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

The defending champs are no more.

In an epic performance in an epic atmosphere, the South High School boys basketball team edged Pueblo West 64-62 before 4,175 raucous fans at the Southwest Motors Events Center on Saturday night.

The victory came in the Great 8 of the Class 4A state boys basketball tournament and thrust the No. 2 seeded Colts (20-6) into the Final Four. South will play No. 6 Lewis-Palmer (22-4) on Friday at the Denver Col-

iseum in the semifinals. No. 12 Golden (19-7) and No. 1 Valor Christian (22-4) will meet in the other semifinal. Times will be released today by the Colorado High School Athletics Association. The championship game is set for 3 p.m. Saturday.

In what will go down as the highest profile game in modern Pueblo boys basketball history, South weathered everything Pueblo West threw at it in winning the season series 2-1. The teams split during the South-Central League season on each other's home court. The Cy-

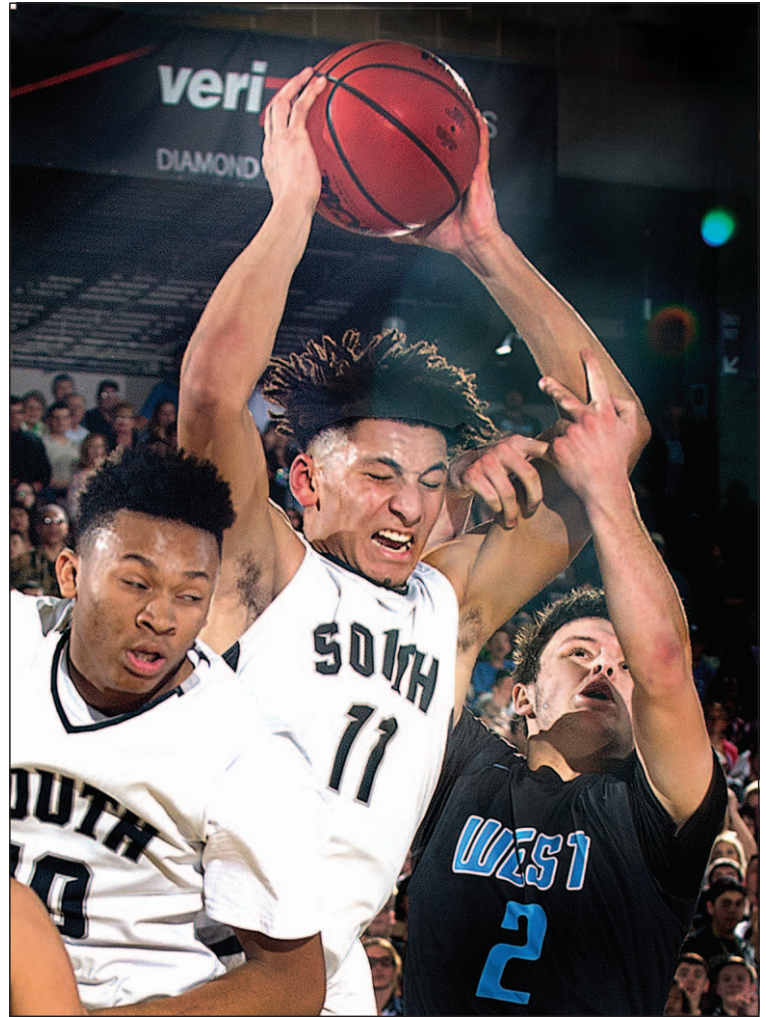
clones, the No. 7 seed and defending Class 4A champion, ended their season at 23-3.

"Coming into the game with all the hype involved, the atmosphere is great and electric but the game sometimes ends up one-sided," South coach DJ Johnson said. "I didn't know what to expect."

SEE SOUTH, 3C

CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/CHRIS MCCLEAN

South's Marcell Barbee grabs a rebound and is fouled by Pueblo West's Mitchell Mayber during their Great 8 game at the Southwest Motors Events Center on Saturday.



SOUTH/from page 1C

This game lived up to its billing as far as the game was played. Both teams played very hard.

Sometimes the ball bounces your way and sometimes it doesn't. We've been on the other side many times. Tonight, the ball bounced our way a few times and that's what it takes.

The Colts, chasing their third state championship, achieved the victory by limiting Pueblo West all-everything senior guard David Simental to just two baskets. He was 2 for 17 from the field and finished with 18 points, going 14 for 14 from the free-throw line. They also gave up only one basket in transition, an area Pueblo West thrives.

South's bigs inside were instrumental. Juniors Marcell Barbee and Jeremy Cody turned in huge games. Barbee had a game-high 20 points and 13 rebounds and was 9 for 11 from the free-throw line. And the 6-foot-6 Cody pumped in eight points to go along with five rebounds.

The outcome came down to a wild fourth quarter in a second half where the game was tied six times, the last at 45-45 early in the fourth quarter.

Cody's offensive rebound bucket gave the Colts the lead for good and two free throws from Barbee made it 49-45.

South still led 51-47 when its floor leader, senior Deshilo Stanley, fouled out with 1:31 to play.

It didn't matter. South made all the

plays down the stretch, knocking down 4 of 6 free throws, the final one coming on the back end of a two-shot free-throw from Tonay Aragon that made it 64-62.

Pueblo West had one last gasp with the ball under its basket and 5.7 seconds remaining. Simental got the ball near halfcourt, maneuvered his way toward the center of the court and fired up a 30-footer with Cody in his face that missed.

Making its first appearance at the spacious Events Center, Pueblo West struggled shooting all night. It was 2 for 12 in the first quarter and 5 for 18 in the fourth quarter. The Cyclones shot 32.7 percent (19-58) for the game.

Give a lot of credit to South, they played tremendous defense, exploited all of our weaknesses, Tyler said.

They made us do some things that we weren't quite ready to handle. A lot of shots didn't fall.

Barbee and Cody said it was all about rebounding.

We came in as a team knowing we had to rebound, Barbee said.

That was our defensive and offensive mindset to rebound the ball.

The most fun I've ever had in my life in a sports game, for sure, Cody said. Our main priority was to stop David (Simental) on the offensive side, keep him from shooting and driving. Coach (Johnson) said defense and rebounding was our main priority.

Johnson also wanted to control tempo as Pueblo West came in averaging

better than 70 points a game.

We really worked on a lot trying to get back on the defensive end, Johnson said. The first time we played them they scored so many points in transition and they are so good at it. We thought if we could limit their touches in the open court and in space it would improve our chances of winning.

Johnson explained how his team limited Simental, who had scored 30 or more points in 11 of 13 games and came in averaging 26 points a game.

We really limited David's touches as much as we could, Johnson said.

He's such a dynamic player. He's such a great shooter but he's very underrated when he takes the ball off the dribble. We didn't want to let him shoot uncontested. We didn't want him to go around us and get to the free-throw line.

Jacob Wilkinson had a tremendous game for the Cyclones with a double-double, 12 points and 12 rebounds. Nieyeme Smyer-Williams added 13 points.

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South 64, Pueblo West 62

PWest 11 16 18 17 , 62
South 22 9 12 21 , 64
Pueblo West , Louthier 1 0-0 3,
Mayber 3 0-0 7, Smyer-Williams 5 2-5
13, Simental 2 14-14 18, Taylor 3 0-0
7, Jacquart 1 0-0 2, Wilkinson 4 4-4
12. Totals: 19 20-23 62. 3-point goals:
Louthier, Mayber, Smyer-Williams,
Taylor. Fouls: 30. Fouled out: Louthier,
Mayber, Taylor. Technical fouls: Jac-
quart.

South , Ramos 0 4-7 4, Stanley 4
6-6 14, Barbee 5 9-11 20, Cody 3 2-4 8,
Aragon 3 1-2 7, Caporicci 3 1-2 9, Hu-
ber 1 0-0 2. Totals: 19 23-32 64. 3-point
goals: Caporicci 2, Barbee. Fouls: 19.
Fouled out: Stanley. Technical fouls:
Stanley.