Buchtel ready for tournament after topping Kenmore-Garfield in City Series postseason final

By Michael Beaven
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Buchtel senior Javen Rogers is a fun teenager off the basketball court who enjoys conversation and laughs with family members and friends.

Her demeanor on the basketball court is a tad different.

“When I am on the court, there is nothing funny,” Rogers said Wednesday night after Buchtel defeated Kenmore-Garfield 60-48 in the City Series girls basketball postseason final at Firestone.

Rogers, the City Series Player of the Year, led Buchtel (16-4) with 20 points, four steals, four rebounds and two assists.

She climbed a ladder and cut down the nets with her teammates after a trophy presentation and, of course, took time to pose for pictures with her loved ones.

One of Rogers’ family members held a Fathead poster up in the air that featured an image of Rogers with a big smile on her face.

There were several reasons for Rogers to smile as Buchtel defeated Kenmore-Garfield (12-10) for the third time this season.

Rogers, a 5-foot-7½ Walsh University recruit, made her first four shots — two layups, a jumper and a 3-pointer — as Buchtel jumped out to an 11-5 lead with 3:50 to go in the first quarter.

“We knew we had to start off hard and get a run going and it would be difficult for them to come back,” Rogers said.

Buchtel sophomore Leah Cheatham and junior DaVeonna Nash also played important roles against Kenmore-Garfield, which got 28 points, five rebounds, four steals and three assists from junior Ianna Lopp.

Cheatham contributed 14 points, five rebounds, three assists and two steals, and Nash finished with 12 points, 15 rebounds, five steals and four assists.

“We tried to stress a fast start and a strong finish, and we did that,” Buchtel coach Brian Neugebauer said. “We hit some shots early, which helps, and played good defense.

“We are still trying to focus on getting better every day and we are focused on being our best selves. Energy, effort and focus are three big things we are always talking about. They are a resilient group.”

The Griffins extended their advantage to 32-20 by halftime with a 10-0 run to end the second quarter. Junior Kanai Chance and Rogers each made a 3-pointer to start the spurt. Cheatham made a jumper and junior Amiyah Stallings dropped in a layup.

Cheatham propelled Buchtel to a 37-22 lead with 7:04 remaining in the third quarter with a layup and a 3-pointer, and the Griffins maintained a lead the rest of the game.

“These girls are experienced,” Neugebauer said. “With Chance, she was out at the beginning of the year with a hurt wrist and then she had pneumonia. This year has been rough as heck on her, but [Wednesday] she showed up with rebounds, really good defense and hit some big shots. These girls are not scared of the moment.”

Chance scored eight points against K-G, and Stallings finished with seven steals.
"Javuan is a leader and she got Player of the Year because she is the best player in our league," Neugebauer said. "She is unselfish. She can go score and she is a big high school guard. She has continued to develop more and more as a leader and as a player. She rallies her team and they stay together.

"The girls all work hard and play hard. We stress defense and they have got good skills. Like Dae Dae [Nash], she flies around and is all over the place all the time. She gets rebounds, hustles and gets steals."

Rogers, Nash, Cheatham and Stallings join senior DeAvionna Prince in Buchtel's starting lineup. Chance, junior Sahniya Manson and sophomore Paris Snell are the top reserves for the Griffins, a Division II district champion last season.

Buchtel opened this season with a four-point loss to Walsh Jesuit, a two-point loss to Nordsnia and a one-point loss to Olentangy Liberty.

The Griffins then won 15 games in a row with two wins apiece over K-G, Firestone, Ellet and North, and wins over East, Green, Manchester, Brush, Kenston, Canfield and St. Vincent-St. Mary.

Wadsworth ended Buchtel's win streak on Saturday, but the Griffins bounced back Wednesday.

"Working together is one of our biggest things," Cheatham said. "With our defense, we play aggressive and know how to work together. We have a lot of chemistry that helps us."

Buchtel will conclude the regular season with a 7 p.m. tipoff Feb. 12 at Berlin Hiland. The Griffins will then host Field or Triway at 7 p.m. on Feb. 20 in a Division II sectional final.

"I love my team and I pray that we do good in the tournament," Nash said.

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