

# Montgomery, West battle for last playoff spot

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By **David Arno** | **0 comments**

The playoffs may as well start on Friday for Montgomery and Magnolia West.

In a winner-take-all tiebreaker game, the Bears will host the Mustangs at 7 p.m. for the final postseason berth from District 17-4A.

Sitting at 7-5 in district last week, Magnolia West only needed to win one of its final two games to seal a spot in the playoffs.

After losing at home to Brenham, the Mustangs fell 34-32 at the Bears on Tuesday night — giving both teams a 7-7 district record and forcing the tiebreaker.

“We need to play smarter on Friday,” Magnolia West coach Mike Clifford said. “We didn’t play smart at the end of the quarters on Tuesday and it cost us. I expect it to be a five-point game either way, and I expect both teams to come out shooting better too. It’ll probably be in the 40s or 50s, so we’ll need to be ready for that.”

After school administrators decided to nix playing the contest at a neutral site, Montgomery won the home-and-home coin flip to host the tiebreaker.

“We’re lucky that we won the coin flip,” Montgomery coach Don Johnson said. “Anytime you can play a game like this at home it’s good. Hopefully, we can come out on top again.”

Magnolia West won round one of the series against Montgomery, coming out on top 54-44 at home on Jan. 21.

The Bears feel that if they can keep it a low-scoring game like they did on Tuesday, they have a good shot to beat the Mustangs for the second time this week.

“We’re going to need another stellar defensive effort,” Johnson said. “We’re going to have to shoot better, though, and we’ll need to rebound better. They’re very long — they have some long, athletic guys in the post — so we’re going to have to play an all-around complete game.”

Although he said that he would have preferred to host Friday’s game at Magnolia West, Clifford thinks the Mustang fans will come out and erase any home-court advantage the Bears may have.

“I’m expecting the gym to be a standing room only situation,” he said. “There should be a lot of people there on our side, so that should offset the home-crowd advantage Montgomery would have. Other than they don’t have to take a bus to get to the game and they’re more comfortable playing in their own gym with their own hoops, I don’t expect them to have much of an advantage.

“I feel that we have an advantage in it’s a revenge game because we thought we had the opportunity to win on Tuesday night. We just have to go out and play a full, 32-minute game.