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MARYLAND 4A GIRLS

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Trojans earn state berth with OT victory

Gaithersburg will face Arundel, which gets another shot at title

BY MARK GIANNOTTO

CATONSVILLE, MD. — Overtime was about to begin during Thursday's Maryland 4A girls' state semifinal between Wise and Gaithersburg when the Trojans' Kara Marshall went from leading scorer to motivational speaker.

Marshall had fouled out in the fourth quarter after leading the Trojans back from a 16-point deficit, so with her team huddled around her, she delivered a simple message: "You just need to believe we're gonna win this game."

The 11th-ranked Trojans heeded Marshall's advice and outlasted the second-ranked Pumas, 46-44, at UMBC's RAC Arena to gain an unlikely spot in the Mary-

land 4A state final Saturday at 3 p.m. Gaithersburg, the No. 4 seed from the 4A West region, will take on No. 9 Arundel, which defeated Urbana, 52-42, in the second semifinal.

Junior Sarah Seipp finished with a team-high 13 points, including the game-winning free throw, and center Aisha Ahmad (eight points) had Gaithersburg's lone basket in the extra frame. But it was the rally led by Marshall that made the overtime possible. Gaithersburg converted just one field goal in the game's first 10 minutes and trailed 20-4 in the second quarter.

"We just looked at each other and said, 'We aren't losing this game, we're picking it up right here,'" Marshall said. "Who cares if they're up 16 points? We were gonna come back no matter what we had to do to come back."

Marshall (11 points) scored seven straight points as Gaithersburg (23-3) regained its footing

and went into halftime down by seven.

The Trojans stayed within striking distance in the third quarter, and in the final period Wise (24-2) began to lose composure, forcing shots and committing turnovers.

"We were falling apart and when we tried to pick it back up, it was too late," said Wise senior Janay Borom (11 points).

After Gaithersburg took its first lead with five minutes remaining, Wise senior Tiarra Smith (15 points) tied the game on a layup with 14 seconds left in regulation. But Marshall had the Trojans ready for the extra period.

"We'd come so far and we weren't gonna stop," Seipp said. "That was enough motivation for us."

Arundel cruises

Arundel senior Talen Watson calls it "the boo boo face" and she

was reminded of it this week as the Wildcats prepared for the 4A state semifinal matchup with Urbana. As an inspirational tool, Arundel assistant coaches placed a picture of the players in tears following their 2009 4A state final loss to Eleanor Roosevelt.

"We call it the 'boo boo face' because I had tears rolling down my eyes here last year," said Watson after Arundel dispatched Urbana. "To make it back to this point after last year is great."

The Wildcats (22-4) used a balanced attack that featured five players with seven or more points to get to their second straight state final. Leading the way were Watson (game-high 15 points) and fellow senior Sheronne Vails, a Louisville recruit.

Vails (14 points) was most effective on the defensive end where she finished with eight blocks and at least as many altered shots. She owns the Arun-