

Grundy Center marches on with its unblemished record, but wow, that was close.

The top-ranked Spartans crawled out of a 9-0 hole early and overcame a five-point deficit late to turn back Unity Christian 49-45 in the opener of what should be an excellent Class 2A tournament.

Grundy Center, last year's state runner-up, rallied after trailing 43-38 with less than three minutes left and will take a 23-0 record into a semifinal game at 10 a.m. Friday. A 9-0 run lifted the Spartans into the lead, helped by Unity missing the front end of two 1-and-1 free throw situations.

Brooke Flater's basket inside cut the lead to three and then Hailey Wallis hit what might be the biggest shot of the game. Wallis had missed all six of her 3-point attempts before drilling one from the right side to tie it at 43 with 2:10 remaining.

Sydney Mathews' steal and layup gave the Spartans the lead and Cara Saak followed with a baseline jumper that made it 47-43. That was enough of a cushion for Grundy to hold on.

Kylie Willis and Reegan Zinkula led Grundy Center with nine points each, Zinkula getting all of hers on three 3-pointers. Wallis finished with eight and shot just 3-for-12 but she grabbed 10 rebounds and had three of her team's 12 steals.

Janie Schoonhoven had 12 points and 15 rebounds for Orange City, while Jori Bronner scored 13 for the Knights.

Unity Christian had upset fourth-ranked Cherokee to reach the state tournament, an incredible turnaround after losing to Cherokee by 49 early in the season. The unranked Knights almost had an even bigger upset but couldn't quite pull it off and finish 19-6.