

Given a second chance against Cascade, Grundy Center made the most of the opportunity.

Hailey Wallis led a big third-quarter outburst and the top-ranked Spartans turned back a late run to beat Cascade 59-49 in a rematch of last year's Class 2A championship game.

Cascade won that game 41-37, but Grundy Center is the one going back to the finals. The top-ranked Spartans, who won a state title in 2005, take a 24-0 record into Saturday's 5 p.m. championship game.

Wallis bounced back from a subpar game in the quarterfinals to score 25 points, grab seven rebounds and make three steals. She put up 12 of those points in the third quarter, when Grundy Center outscored the Cougars 21-9 to erase a 17-16 halftime deficit.

Wallis had scored only eight points on 3-for-12 shooting in a quarterfinal win over Unity Christian. She was much more aggressive in taking the ball to the basket in this one and knocked down three 3-pointers.

Her third 3 gave the Spartans a 40-26 lead in the opening seconds of the fourth quarter, but anyone who thought Cascade was finished at that point was wrong.

The Cougars clawed their way back into it and trailed just 46-42 after Nicole McDermott converted four-point play. She was knocked to the floor after sinking a jump shot and made both free throws.

But Cascade could not get any closer and Grundy Center secured its trip to the finals with free throws. The Spartans sank 14 of 18 over the final 3:25, including six of eight in the last 63 seconds. Cascade managed only one more basket after cutting the lead to 48-44 on Skylar Dolphin's layup with 1:50 to play.

The 59 points were the most given up by Cascade this season. Only two other teams reached 50 points against the Cougars, who finish 23-2.

McDermott led Cascade with 26 points and Abby Welter scored 10. Maddie McMartin had 10 for Grundy Center, while Brooke Flater had six points, 10 rebounds, three assists, two steals and a block.