

Gritty defense, a big comeback and a dramatic buzzer-beating basket sent Ankeny Centennial into the Class 5A semifinals.

Jackie Pippett's layup at the buzzer lifted Centennial to a 47-45 victory over Southeast Polk, capping a rally that brought the Jaguars back from a 14-point deficit.

With the score tied at 45, Southeast Polk was working for a final shot when Centennial's Maggie Phipps tied up the ball, giving possession to the Jaguars with 6.3 seconds left. Following a timeout, Centennial got the ball to Phipps, who dribbled across midcourt, continued down the right sideline and fired a pass to Cleao Murray. Murray then zipped the ball to Pippett on the low block and the 5-foot-11 senior banked in the game winner as the buzzer sounded.

Pippett finished with 15 points and six rebounds to lead the fifth-ranked Jaguars, who'll take a 16-2 record against top-ranked Waukee in the semifinals at 10 a.m. Thursday. Bella Robben added nine points for Centennial, while Phipps and Elle Street each scored seven.

Grace Larkins led fourth-ranked Southeast Polk with 15 points in her final high school game. She'll play at the University of South Dakota next season. Sophomore Brooklyn Dailey added 14 points for the Rams on 5-for-6 shooting.

Southeast Polk, in the tournament for the 15th time, finishes 15-4.

The Rams made their first four shots in jumping to a 10-2 lead and used a 10-2 run midway through the second quarter to go up 26-12. But Centennial held Southeast Polk to six field goals the rest of the way -- one of them on a fluky play -- and fought its way back into it.

Back-to-back 3-pointers by Street and Avery Porter cut the lead to 31-27 and the Jaguars pulled ahead for the first time when Pippett converted a three-point play to make it 45-43. Southeast Polk tied it at 45 when Street tipped a pass and the ball went through the basket, Larkins getting credit for the points.

Larkins then knocked the ball away, dove on it and got a timeout with 1:33 remaining. Southeast Polk then worked for a last shot that never came. Phipps tied up the ball a few seconds later, but Southeast Polk retained possession. Then she did it again, giving her team the chance it needed to win it.