

Defending state champion Johnston is another step closer in its bid for a repeat title in Class 5A.

Jada Gyamfi put together a 19-point, 18-rebound double-double and the youthful Dragons held off a Cedar Falls comeback attempt in a 71-64 victory that sends second-ranked Johnston to Thursday's semifinals.

Freshman Alli Tanke added 17 points for Johnston, which starts only one senior, and another freshman, Aaliya Riley, scored 11.

Gyamfi, a 6-foot-2 junior who has committed to the University of Iowa, did most of her scoring with strong moves in the low post. She had her double-double at halftime with 10 points and 10 rebounds and finished 9-for-16 from the field. Her strong play inside helped the Dragons build a 39-19 rebounding advantage.

Anaya Barney, the only senior who started for seventh-ranked Cedar Falls, led the Tigers with 24 points, right at her season average. She'll play at the University of Northern Iowa next season, when she'll join four other former Cedar Falls players on the Panthers' roster.

Sydney Remmert added 12 points for Cedar Falls, while Sarah Albaugh and Jasmine Barney each scored 11. Barney, a sophomore, added five assists and three steals to her line and did not commit a turnover. Cedar Falls came up with 13 steals in all and forced 20 turnovers.

Johnston was in control most of the game, getting points throughout the lineup in racing to a 28-10 lead. Cedar Falls ended the first half with a 14-4 run to draw to 32-24 and cut the lead to 38-32 on Anaya Barney's long 3 from the top of the key with 5:42 left in the third quarter.

Johnston responded with a 12-2 run that included two buckets inside and a 3-pointer from reserve Molly Noelck to go up 50-34 and the Dragons kept Johnston at arm's length the rest of the way. Noelck, a sophomore, finished with nine points on 4-for-6 shooting in 17 minutes and grabbed three rebounds.

Cedar Falls did get the lead back down to six on Anaya Barney's layup with 41 seconds remaining. But Riley finished off a three-point play after banking in an off-balance shot with 29.2 seconds left to make it 71-62 and end the final Cedar Falls threat.

Johnston is now 17-1 and will play again at noon on Thursday. Cedar Falls finishes 17-4 after its second straight trip to state.