

That suffocating zone defense just keeps getting the job done for Cascade.

Dike-New Hartford was the latest to endure the frustration of trying to score against the Cougars' defense. The Wolverines were coming off an upset of top-ranked North Linn in the regional finals, but Cascade took control in the second quarter and won 61-44 to advance to the Class 2A semifinals for the second straight year.

Three players scored in double figures and the sixth-ranked Cougars held Dike-New Hartford to 24 percent shooting, forcing the ninth-ranked Wolverines to miss 15 straight shots during one stretch.

Sophomore guard Nicole McDermott led the way with 20 points. She hit seven of 10 shots, mostly on drives into the lane, and grabbed eight rebounds. Abbie Ruggeberg scored 11 points for the Cougars, Rachel Trumm had 10 points and 10 rebounds and Anne Ryan contributed eight points and five steals. The team's fifth starter, Jordan Simon, blocked five shots.

Northern Iowa volleyball recruit Baylee Petersen led Dike-New Hartford with 13 points, while Morgan Weber scored 11 and grabbed seven rebounds.

Cascade picked up its defensive pressure after falling behind 21-15. The Cougars held Dike-New Hartford without a field goal in the second quarter and finished the period with nine straight points for a 31-24 halftime lead.

The lead grew to 48-31 after three quarters and teams don't come back from that kind of deficit against Cascade. The Wolverines did get the lead down to 51-44, but the Cougars rattled off eight quick points to put it away.

Cascade, which lost to Treynor in last year's semifinals, will take a 23-3 record into the next round at 11:45 a.m. Friday. Dike-New Hartford finishes 23-3.