

Just when the lead was about to slip away, Lexi Toering and Victoria Rensink put Sioux Center back in control.

Toering and Rensink made the key plays down the stretch to help second-ranked Sioux Center hold off No. 9 Monticello 65-57 and advance to the Class 3A state championship game.

That means the title game at 3 p.m. Saturday will be a matchup of No. 1 vs. No. 2. Top-ranked Crestwood advanced with a 72-48 victory over North Polk. Both finalists are seeking their first title.

Sioux Center appeared to be safely in front at 45-35 midway through the third quarter, but Monticello kept hanging around and then made a run, drawing to 53-51 when Jordan Kuper, a 6-foot-2 sophomore, intercepted a pass and drove the length of the floor for a layup.

But the Panthers never got the lead.

Toering made her third 3-pointer of the game, then got a steal that led to Rensink's putback for a 58-51 lead. After Monticello's Taylor McDonald hit a 3-pointer, Rensink answered with a 3 of her own from the deep left corner. Toering then stole the ball again and fed Rensink for a layup, putting the Warriors up 63-54 with 1:22 remaining.

This time, the lead was safe and Sioux Center advanced with a 24-2 record.

Toering led the Warriors with 18 points, 12 rebounds and three steals. She finished 3-for-4 on 3-pointers after going just 9-for-38 from long range during the season.

Shayla Post added 14 points, while Rensink and Jordyn Van Maanen each scored 13. Van Maanen added eight rebounds, four assists and two steals. Sioux Center had 13 steals in all.

McDonald, a 5-foot-6 senior, scored 26 points in her final high school game. She also came up with four rebounds, three blocks and two steals. Kuper had 11 points and 13 rebounds for the Panthers, who finish 20-6.