

They're deep, they're talented and now the Marion Indians have a chance to win their first state championship in girls basketball.

Nine players scored as top-ranked Marion beat conference rival Center Point-Urbana for the third time this season, winning 56-46 to reach the Class 4A title game.

Kayla Laube led the unbeaten Indians with 13 points, while Chloe Rice produced a solid all-around performance with 10 points, eight rebounds, five assists and three steals. Caitlyn Smith added nine points for Marion, which overcame an early deficit to take the lead for good late in the first quarter but couldn't shake the fifth-ranked Stormin' Pointers until the final two minutes.

Cailyn Fox led Center Point-Urbana with 14 points, while Drake University recruit Allison Wooldridge had 11 points and eight rebounds. Adrianna Katcher added 10 points for the Stormin' Pointers and Olivia Brecht scored nine.

When two teams know each other well, the winner usually has to grind it out and that was the case in this one.

Marion built a 42-35 lead early in the fourth quarter, only to find itself clinging to a one-point advantage just two minutes later, Wooldridge knocking down a 3-pointer from the top of the key to draw her team to 42-41 with 5:17 left.

The Stormin' Pointers could not capitalize on a couple of chances to take the lead and Marion finally assumed control. Smith hit a big 3-pointer -- she finished 3-for-3 from long range -- to give the Indians some breathing room and Laube got a breakaway layup when her teammates beat the press.

That made it 47-42 and Marion did the rest with free throws. The Indians finished 13 of 15 at the line. Center Point-Urbana struggled with its free throws, missing 10 of 29.

Marion is now 25-0 and will play for the title at 8 p.m. Friday. Center Point-Urbana, which finished second to Marion in the Wamac West, goes home with a 22-4 record.