

Given a third chance against its archrival, Iowa City West finally found a way to win it. And it came in the game that mattered most.

West is your 2018 Class 5A champion.

Ninth-ranked West kept top-ranked City High in check with aggressive defense and won 56-45 to hand the Little Hawks their first loss.

West had lost to City High twice in the regular season, the last time during a slump in which the Women of Troy lost five of six. But they recovered to finish with eight straight victories and claim their second state title after holding their three state tournament opponents to an average of 47.7 points a game.

Their last effort on defense was the most impressive of all. City High, led by Iowa State recruit Ashley Joens, had come in averaging 76.8 points a game. Through the first three quarters, the City Hawks managed only 29.

West also had great balance on offense. Lauren Zacharias scored 15 points, Logan Cook had 14 and Cailyn Morgan added 10. Rachael Saunders made a major contribution by grabbing 12 rebounds and scored seven points.

Joens finished with 26 points after getting 14 in the fourth quarter. She made 8 of 14 shots but had to work for every one of those baskets because West ran a second defender at her every time she touched the ball.

Rose Nkumu added eight points for City High but no one else scored more than four.

West's defense forced the Little Hawks into outside shots and they couldn't convert, going just 6-for-25 from 3-point range. West, meanwhile, scored consistently on layups and drives to the basket and enjoyed a 34-14 advantage in points in the paint.

West went ahead for good with a 12-0 run that produced a 17-9 lead midway through the second quarter. The Women of Troy led by as many as 10 before Joens hit a long turnaround 3-pointer to draw her team to 39-34 early in the fourth quarter

But West had an answer and got its last six baskets on layups. The Women of Troy were able to spring someone to the basket when they spread the floor, then broke City High's press for a couple of layups at the end.

Joens finished her standout career with 2,178 points, which ranks 13th on the state's all-time list. She was voted captain of the all-tournament team and was joined by Nkumu, Zacharias, Morgan, Indianola's Grace Berg and Johnston's Jennah Johnson.

West finishes with a 19-7 record and some nice hardware. City High, which started four sophomores alongside Joens, finishes 25-1.