

Iowa City High is one game from finishing a perfect season -- and winning a second state championship.

In a game of wild swings, top-ranked City High withstood a furious challenge from No. 4 Johnston and pulled out a 58-52 victory to remain unbeaten and advance to the Class 5A title game on Friday night.

Iowa State signee Ashley Joens led the Little Hawks with 24 points and her two free throws with 1:17 left put her team ahead to stay. She also had nine rebounds and seven steals.

Johnston did a good job double-teaming and trapping Joens and forced her into 10 turnovers, but she still made eight of 12 shots, including two 3-pointers, and sank all six of her free throws.

Rose Nkumu added 13 points for City High and Paige Rocca scored seven.

Jennah Johnson, who is Johnston's lone senior starter, led the Dragons with 19 points and Regan Nesheim scored 17 on 7-for-8 shooting. The Little Hawks did a good job defensively on Johnston's quick sophomore guard, Maya McDermott, who scored 25 points in a quarterfinal victory over Waukee. City High held her to three points in the first half and nine for the game.

The fast-paced game resulted in its share of turnovers, but it was fun to watch and held everyone's interest to the end.

Johnston wiped out an early City High lead with a 17-0 run, only to see City High rattled off eight straight points -- five by Joens -- to get back in it.

A 14-0 City High burst gave the Little Hawks a 44-32 lead late in the third quarter, but Johnston scrambled, tying the score at 49 on Johnson's free throw with 1:33 remaining. Joens followed with her tie-breaking free throws and the Little Hawks capitalized on three Johnston turnovers to finish it off at the line, making seven of eight in the final minute.

City High takes a 25-0 record into Friday's 6 p.m. championship game, where the Little Hawks will try to add to the title they won in 2008.

Johnston finishes with a 21-4 record and plenty of hope for the future with players such as McDermott and Nesheim returning.

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