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## Mules Advance To Second Straight Final Four

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*By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports*

DEXTER, Mo. - After winning all of their playoff games, save one, by double digits, the Bernie Mules (ranked fourth in the state, 26-4 record) were one game away from advancing to the Final Four for the second consecutive year. The only thing standing between the Mules and a trip to Columbia was the New Haven Shamrocks (ranked seventh in the state, 24-4 record). After a hard fought battle, the Mules came out on top, winning by a 58-50 final score.


“I think our kids, especially in the second half, did whatever they had to do to win the game,” Bernie head coach Brad Botsch said. “We hit our open looks, got some penetration, and got their [New Haven] kids in foul trouble (Austin Peirick and Lance Gerlemann both fouled out in the fourth quarter) a little bit, and did a better job screening. They took us out of what we wanted to do in the first half, but the second half effort was just tremendous.”

Bernie’s star senior Jordan McGowan, who typically shoots outside insanely well, was a little off in the first half, but Botsch credited teammates Cameron Shipman and Jesse Shelton as key contributors to the victory.

“Jesse [Shelton] gets a lot of his points off penetration, but Cameron [Shipman] has really shot the ball well of late,” Botsch commented. “[Shipman] really helped carry us in the

sectional game. I thought our kids did what they had to do, especially with them [New Haven] covering up Jordan [McGowan] as hard as they were.”

Botsch stated in an earlier interview that McGowan and Sammy Walker would both have to have great games in the paint.

“We wanted to keep that big kid  pushed off the block, and he still got a few points on us,” Botsch said, “but Sammy [Walker] did a great job of getting him out of the paint. Sometimes there’s not a whole lot you can do when the kid has nine inches on you - Sammy’s only about six feet tall - but his strength and his heart kept him going.”

“Jordan, for the most part, did a real good job on that Gerlemann kid inside,” Botsch continued. “He did give up a few offensive rebounds at different times in the game, but overall, he did a tremendous job inside.”

McGowan credited his team’s heart, as well as dominance on the glass, as key factors in the victory.

“We played with tremendous heart tonight,” McGowan said. “Rebounding was phenomenal tonight, and that was a big part of our gameplan. It took a lot to get ready for their bigs, but we worked hard in practice all week. We knew making shots in key situations was a big point for this game, and my team did that tonight. We knew we were going to have to work really hard on #40 [Elijah Fleer] and get him out of the paint. He hit some shots, but you can’t hardly stop 6’9”.”

McGowan, who set the state record for charges drawn in a career, drew two more charges in the contest.

“I think I hit 80 tonight,” McGowan continued. “We really focused on pressuring the ball, and not letting them [New Haven] run as much time off the clock as they’re known for. We knew we’d get beat of the dribble a couple times, but I was able to pick up a couple charges on it, and that really helped power my team to the top tonight.”

The Mules will advance to the Final Four for the second time in as many years. Bernie will face off against Wellington-Napoleon on Thursday (March 17) at 3:20 p.m. The Final Four will be held at Mizzou Arena in Columbia, Mo.

	1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q	FINAL
<b>BERNIE</b>	10	9	16	23	58
<b>NEW HAVEN</b>	8	16	13	13	50

**BERNIE:** McGowan-22. Shipman-14. Walker-9. Shelton-7. Eaves-3. Turner-3.

**NEW HAVEN:** Engelbrecht-16. Fler-12. Menke-8. Peirick-6. Gerlemann-4. Tritch-4.

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In the day's second contest, the Couch Lady Indians (24-3) and the

Meadow Heights Lady Panthers (25-3) faced off in a double-overtime thriller.

After the final buzzer sounded, the Couch Lady Indians came out on top, and will advance to the Final Four. The Lady Indians will face North Platte on Thursday (March 17) at 6:40 p.m., at Mizzou Arena in Columbia, Mo.

**Photos above** *Top Photo: Bernie players and coaches celebrate their 58-50 victory over New Haven.*

*Middle Photo: Bernie's Jesse Shelton puts up a shot over two New Haven defenders.*

*Bottom photo: Couch's Jordan Hale (white jersey) battles Jillian Mills (#24) for a loose ball.*

	1st Q	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q	OT 1	OT 2	FINAL
<b>COUCH</b>	8	11	8	12	6	15	59
<b>MEADOW HEIGHTS</b>	5	18	3	13	6	5	50

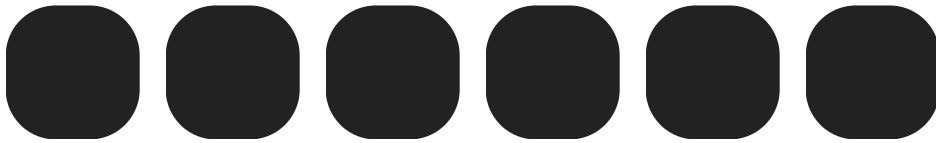
**COUCH:** Hower-27. Neptune-13. Hale-8. Roberts-6. Nessling-5.

**MEADOW HEIGHTS:** Welker-19. Bollman-14. Dietiker-6. Gureton-6. Morse-3. Cook-2.

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