

Liberty Middle School eighth-grade basketball girls vie for state title Thursday

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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NORMAL – Liberty Middle Schools' eighth-grade girls basketball team is aiming for a state championship this week.

The Panther eighth-grade girls reached the IESA Class 8-4A final Saturday with a 54-39 win over Flossmoor Parker of suburban Chicago in a quarterfinal game in the afternoon, followed by 59-34 win over Arlington Heights South of Chicagoland Saturday evening to send them to Thursday's final against Shorewood Troy of Plainfield at Normal Parkside Junior High; the final is set for 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

Against Parker, the Panthers got out to a 19-7 lead at quarter time, but Parker rallied to cut the Panther lead to 25-22 at the half; Liberty regained control at three-quarter time with a 20-point quarter to extend the lead to 45-30 and closed out Parker in the final quarter.

Sydney Harris led Liberty with an 18-point effort, followed by Elle Evans' 15 points on the day.

Against Arlington Heights South, Liberty got out to a 32-13 lead at the half and never looked back, expanding the lead to 51-22 at three-quarter time to run out winners on the night.

Harris connected four times from beyond the three-point arc in a 28-point performance for the Panthers; Macy Silvey added 10 points for Liberty on the night.

Liberty enters Thursday's final at 25-0, while Troy goes into the game at 20-5. A win would be the third straight championship for the eighth-graders playing for Liberty, having won it all as sixth- and seventh-graders in 2015 and 2016. The eighth-grade team last won the title in 2011 with several current seniors playing for Edwardsville's girls team on that roster.