SHARKS WIN IN 3OT TO ADVANCE TO STATE FINAL

It took regulation, and not one, not two, but three overtimes for a gritty Ponte Vedra team to edge Leesburg 54-47 to advance for the third time in four years to play for a state championship.

In a game that was deliberate to say the least, and surely some pundits would say screamed for a shot clock, with only three points tallied in the first two 4-minute overtime sessions, and none in the first overtime, the three points scored by Ponte Vedra came on a three pointer by Ryan Speace with just 10 second lefts in the second overtime to send the game into the deciding third overtime.

6’9 junior Trace Westercamp, shortly into the third OT, drilled a clutch 3-pointer in what would prove to be all the points the Sharks would need in the first ever contest played by the Sharks that went three overtimes. After both teams missed on a pair of free throws 6’5, junior Maddox Palmer then scored on one his patented drives to the rim, was fouled and made the free throw to give the Sharks some breathing room. Yet another two pointer by Palmer will now send the Sharks into the state final game Friday at 7:00 PM.

The first half, and especially the opening minutes of the contest belonged to the Sharks as they scored the first nine points of the game and carried that same nine-point advantage at 28-19 in the second half. The third quarter was all Leesburg as the Yellow jackets went on a 11-0 run to close out the third quarter with a 35-33 advantage. The run extended to 13-0 but the Sharks never lost their poise as they bounced back to send the game into overtime at 43-43.

Leesburg, who had to make just a short jaunt of less than an hour to travel to Lakeland, were content in the first pair of overtime sessions to stay patient and play for the last shot. The Yellow Jackets took the lead twice, first near the end of regulation and again in the second overtime but Ponte Vedra the Sharks kept their hopes alive, first with a driving layup by David Sanchez-Barrara in regulation and then the clutch 3-pointer from Speace in the closing moments of the second overtime.

Four Shark players were in double figures led by Palmer’s 18 points. Sanchez-Barrara added 13 points while Westercamp and Speace both netted 10 points for the victors. 6’6 Julius Nelson was a monster on the boards for Leesburg with a game high 17 rebounds. PV'Westercamp also was effective in the rebounding department with 10 points while blocking 3 shots.