

The Record North Jersey Sports

All-County photos

The photo session for All-Passaic and All-Bergen Winter sports will be today, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at 1 Garret Mountain Plaza in Woodland Park

BASKETBALL TOURNAMENTS SECTIONAL FINALS

Panthers 'D' chases Bulldogs

Rebecca Rabeiro leads Midland Park to first North 1, Group 1 title

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MIDLAND PARK — The defense was smothering. The crowd was inspiring.

That was more than enough to cobble together perhaps the biggest moment in program history for the Midland Park girls basketball team.

"This has never happened before," said junior guard Rebecca Rabeiro after the top-seeded Panthers shut down No. 7 Butler, 51-33, Monday to win their first North 1, Group 1 title in front of a standing-room-only crowd of approximately 650 fans.

"It's just so great. I've never seen this place like this before. We're just so pumped up."

The Panthers (22-6) will face North 2, Group 1 champions Bloomfield Tech in the Group 1 state semifinal at 5 p.m., Wednes-

**MIDLAND PARK
BUTLER**

**51
33**

GIRLS: NORTH 1, GROUP 1

day at Ramapo High School.

"This means so much to me," said first year coach Sean O'Connor. "And this means the world to the girls and those fans and the school."

And there was no doubt about this one since midway through the first quarter.

The Bulldogs (13-14) opened the scoring with a three-point field goal with 5:20 remaining in the quarter. It was seven minutes and 15 seconds before they scored again, thanks to a Midland Park defense that turned up the heat.

Every time Butler tried to move the ball, the Panthers seemed to

get a hand on it or force them to throw it away. The Bulldogs were unable to push the ball inside to their big scorers and the Panthers' aggressive press didn't allow them quality shots from the outside.

It was a complete team effort, but it also a showcase for Rabeiro.

She showed why she's one of the premier defensive players in North Jersey, picking up seven of her 14 steals and scoring nine of her game-high 16 points in the first quarter as the Panthers went on a 21-0 run. Rabeiro has been outstanding during the postseason (21.5 points average in four games), and now has 262 steals for the season.

"What else can I say about her?" O'Connor said.

"We probably weren't ready for how fast she was," said Butler coach Jason Luciani. "It's difficult to prepare for that. Everything we

tried to do, she disrupted."

Rabeiro set the tone for the entire game and even though the Panthers had a few sloppy moments along the way, the Bulldogs never had a chance to get back in the flow.

Forward Kim Rabeiro, Rebecca's sister, also played an outstanding game. She scored 11 points, grabbed nine rebounds and did a fine job shutting down Maja Sekulovska, Butler's best scoring threat.

"Coach wanted me to take her out of the game mentally," Kim Rabeiro said.

Midland Park center Nicole Cartaino scored 10 points and had 10 rebounds and Avery Dravis-Stark scored nine points.

Sekulovska had seven points, but only one field goal for the Bulldogs. Marlene Arabia scored eight points and Taylor Russnak had nine rebounds.



MITSU YASUKAWA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Panthers' Rebecca Rabeiro, right, breaking down court away from Maja Sekulovska, had 14 steals and scored 16 points.