

By JASON EPP

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When adversity comes great teams answer it. And in Thursday's first round of the Oklahoma Class A boys state tournament both teams answered it, but Okarche came up with the last answer, winning 42-39 over Turpin.

Turpin faced adversity before the game when the news came that top scorer Konner Hood's knee injury, a torn acl, would sideline him for the tournament.

His teammates answered that adversity in the first five minutes of the game, jumping out to an 11-1



lead.

"They came out in a 1-3-1 zone which they usually don't show until the second half," said Cardinals coach Gary Wallace. "We were shooting a lot of easy shots against it."

Okarche finished the first quarter on a 7-2 run to tighten the game at 13-8 still in favor of Turpin.

Turpin maintained their lead midway through the second at 18-12, but Okarche cut the Cardinals lead to only three at the half, 20-17.

Turpin falls to No.2 Okarche at state tournament

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Turpin's offense continued to struggle in the third, and when Okarche's Cody Baustert put in a put-back basket with 2:40 left in the third, it gave them their first lead of the game at 27-26. Austin Craig quickly added a three to make it a four-point game.

"They went to a full-court man, and we had trouble scoring," said Wallace. "Aaron's (Kuns) foul trouble was magnified with Konner already not playing."

But Turpin battled back in the fourth, getting within one point four separate times, but never able to recapture the lead. Turpin's Konner Hood nailed a three with 15 seconds left to bring the Cardinals within a single point again.

Okarche made both free throws, and Keifer Hood's hurried deep three fell short.

Cale Longhofer led the Cardinals with 11 points; Keifer Hood scored 10, Braydon Robinson 8, and Aaron Kuns 6.

"I'm really proud of them," said Wallace. "These seniors put in a ton of time, extra time, and they bought into our team concept. We gelled defensively late in the season, and it is what got us this far in the playoffs. I was proud of how our bench stepped up, how our post play got so much better, and Keifer and Konner were just so consistent."

Turpin finishes the season 21-7 with their two playoff losses coming to the No.1 and No.2 teams in the state.