

### *Lady Chiefs vs. East Ascension*

**NATCHITOCHES, La.** - The sixth-ranked Natchitoches Central Lady Chiefs overcame a slow start to edge the 11<sup>th</sup>-ranked East Ascension Lady Spartans, 44-41, Monday night in the second round of the Division I non-select basketball playoffs at NCHS.

The Lady Chiefs (29-4) found themselves in an early hole trailing, 13-4, late in the first quarter and trailed 16-7 at the end of the first. However, NCHS picked up the intensity in the second quarter as they came storming back to trim the lead to 20-18 at halftime.

In the third quarter, the Lady Chiefs rallied to take a 36-26 lead at the end of the third quarter as Akeelah Wade and Jordan McDaniel began to make plays.

The Lady Spartans (22-6) didn't go away as they erased the 10-point NCHS lead to tie the game at 41-41 with under a minute to go in the game.

The Lady Chiefs found themselves in a tough spot as they shot 13-for-26 from the free throw line for the game and Wade heading to the line with 59 seconds left to break a tie. The senior made three out of four free throws, after starting 2-for-7 from the free throw line, in the final minute to propel NCHS.

Wade finished with 15 points while McDaniel had 18 as NCHS had just enough to advance past the Lady Spartans. The Lady Chiefs shot just 14-for-41 for 34 percent but had just 14 turnovers.

"We never quit," said NCHS girls' basketball head coach Nikki Jones. "We have been battling through some injuries and playing five and six players sometimes and finding ways to get it done. I told the girls; it doesn't always have to be pretty if you are willing to work hard."

Next up, the Lady Chiefs will face the third-ranked Zachary Lady Broncos on the road Thursday in the quarterfinals at a time TBA.

"I know they (Zachary) are deep with some quick guards," said Jones. "They've got some big players on the inside. I've been knowing their coach for a long time, and I respect her as a coach. I expect they will be well-coached and athletic so it will be a challenge."