

Weather disrupts NCHSAA playoffs

Girls' basketball playoffs delayed and compressed due to snow and ice



Riverside's Zaria Rogers (1) and Mone' Jones (51) double-team South Central's Aniya Little (4) during their team's 75-55 first-round victory. The game was delayed and finally played Feb. 28. (Staff photo by Max Miceli)

By Max Miceli
Staff Writer

The roads were lined with walls of snow and the parking lot was relatively empty, only highlighted by a school's activity bus and a couple large piles of snow.

But on Saturday, Feb. 28, the Riverside High School girls' basketball team took on South Central High School from Winterville, North Carolina, in the first round of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association playoffs—finally.

After a week of postponements, the accumulation of snow in the Durham area had subsided enough for the contest to take place.

"I think my concern is everybody's concern," Coach Alicia Jones said. "Not being able to come into the school... Not having legs. We had some girls complaining about not being able to breathe because, you know, we haven't had an opportunity to get in the gym."

With snow and ice taking over the Triangle in February, schools everywhere have had to deal with cancellations, and scheduling for the NCHSAA

basketball tournament has been chaotic to say the least.

The first round of the playoffs were originally scheduled to be completed before Feb. 25, but with schools like Riverside having so many closings due to icy roads, teams haven't been able to practice—much less play.

With three of five school days canceled in the week prior to Riverside's first-round playoff game, physical preparation was clearly an issue.

As of Feb. 27, only 20 of the 128 first-round girls' basketball playoff games had been completed.

That put a lot of pressure on the NCHSAA to figure out how to manage running so far behind schedule.

Adjusted Schedule

Only 20 of 128 first-round games had been played by Feb. 27. First-round games had to be played by March 1, second-round games by March 2 and third-round by March 3.

The NCHSAA forced the playoffs into a gauntlet by mandating that first-round games be played by March 1, second-round games by March 2 and third-round games by March 3.

"These extraordinary circumstances have caused us to make significant adjustments in the NCHSAA basketball playoffs," NCHSAA Commissioner Davis Whitfield said in a statement. "We sincerely appreciate the cooperation of superintendents, principals and our member schools in working with us to complete the basketball playoffs."

Squeezing the rounds together, while necessary, wasn't easy for teams like Riverside that couldn't practice for a week before its first round game, but Jones said game planning isn't a huge issue.

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"The coaches are always planning," Jones said. "The only thing now is to execute. It's not about implementing anything different. It's about executing what we already have that has gotten us to this point."

Jones' starting point guard, Zaria Rogers, didn't let the snow stop her from playing basketball though.

She and a few of her teammates went to a local YMCA three days in the week before their game against South Central for about four or five hours at a time.

"We knew we had to get ready for the game because we knew it was going to be sometime this week," Rogers said after the team's first-round win against South Central. "So we decided to go to the Y and work on our shots and stuff like that."

With snow melting and a plan in place, it's clear that the weather has disrupted the state's basketball tournament.

But it won't stop high schoolers across the state from playing the game and eventually crowning a champion.