The Big Dance

The state girls basketball tournament is lighting up the U of M courts. Finalists so far are Hopkins vs. Stillwater in 4A, and DeLaSalle vs. Becker in 3A.

Stillwater’s Sara Scalia, making herself at home at Williams Arena, which will be her home base the next four years, scores after a steal against Shakopee in a 73-48 win.

Frankie Vascellaro scored 35 but Holy Angels fell to DeLaSalle 61-59.

Paige Bueckers scores after a steal as Hopkins beat Centennial 75-51.

Photos by Bruce Strand, Minnesota Basketball News
Dawson-Boyd boys trip No. 1 Minneota

By Bruce Strand

Minneota, top-ranked all season in Class A and hoping for its first state trip in boys basketball, did not achieve that goal. Dawson-Boyd, a team they beat by 20 points earlier, stunned the Vikings 82-73 in the second round of Section 3A on March 7.

The Blackjacks sank 11 three-pointers in the first half and led 42-33. They made just one more 3-pointer but finished 31-for-50 overall, 12-for-20 on three’s.

Junior guard Ronnell Horton led with 26 points, including five 3-pointers in the first half. Jake Lee added 19, Bentley Boike 12 and Zach Durfee 11.

“We shot the ball well from all over,” coach Cory Larson said. “We did a really nice job of forcing them to defend all five guys. It was definitely the best we had moved the ball in the half-court set all season. We were consistent for the most part of 36 minutes. Intensity was there from the start.”

Dawson-Boyd (15-9) then beat LaC qui Parle Valley 68-59 and faces Westbrook-Walnut Grove for the title on Friday night.

“We put up a fight, but we dug too big a hole,” Minneota coach Dave Bus selman lamented. “We gave them too many looks out there. Once we gave up the three’s, we had to go out of the zone.”

Jacob Hennen scored 22 points and Logan Sussner had 19 and 11 rebounds for Minneota, which finished 24-3. Their top scorer Thomas Hennen, with Blackjacks always in his face, was held to nine.

**MN Region Playoff Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B</td>
<td>RCTC (Rochester)</td>
<td>March 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B</td>
<td>RCTC (Rochester)</td>
<td>March 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 2</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B</td>
<td>Min State-Mankato</td>
<td>April 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B</td>
<td>Min State-Mankato</td>
<td>April 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 3</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B</td>
<td>Redwood Falls</td>
<td>March 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B</td>
<td>Redwood Falls</td>
<td>March 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 4</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B</td>
<td>Moose Lake &amp; Willow River</td>
<td>April 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B</td>
<td>Moose Lake &amp; Willow River</td>
<td>April 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 5</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>April 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>April 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 6</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>April 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>April 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 7</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G, 9G, 8B</td>
<td>Mountain Iron-Buhl</td>
<td>March 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5B, 7B, 4G</td>
<td>Mountain Iron-Buhl</td>
<td>March 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B, 6B, 7G</td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
<td>March 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9B, 6G, 8G</td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
<td>March 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 8</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B</td>
<td>Bemidji</td>
<td>April 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B</td>
<td>Bemidji</td>
<td>April 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boys & Girls Grades 4-9

Register online @ www.pacesettersports.net
Girls state tourney snapshots

Goodhue’s Kate Opsahl, Arianna Thomforde, Tori Miller celebrate after pulling out a 50-48 win over Mountain Iron-Buhl with a couple defensive stops in the last 10 seconds.

Centennial’s Taylor McAulay takes aim on the way to 22 points in a 74-64 win over Maple Grove.

Roseau’s Hannah Mooney gathers in the game’s last rebound, over Aubree Hicks, and Katie Borowicz yelps for joy, after Redwood Valley missed a 3-pointer in the final seconds, leaving Roseau a 75-74 winner.

Becker soph Julia Bengtson races upcourt to score on a fast break against Cooper. She led a 68-66 win with 29 points.

Emily Meier of Marshall, who had 18 points, goes to the hoop against Becker’s Megan Gamble. Becker won 68-67.

Robbinsdale Cooper’s Kierra Wheeler wheels inside to score in a 72-40 win over Austin. She had 19 points, 13 rebounds.
State finalists are set in Class 4A and 3A

By Bruce Strand

Hopkins will play in its 11th state championship game, against Stillwater in its first title game, Saturday at 8 p.m. at Williams Arena. The Royals, Class 4A runners-up three straight years, hope to finish unbeaten and nab their seventh title, after rolling past Lakeville North 68-46 and Centennial 75-51 with Paige Bueckers scoring 57 points. Stillwater got past Shakopee 74-48 and Eastview 65-52.

DeLaSalle, top-seeded in Class 3A, beat Holy Angels 61-59 in the semifinals with Nurjei Weems laying in the game-winner with six seconds left. Francesca Vascellaro scored 35 for Holy Angels. The Islanders are set for finals 6 p.m., Saturday against Becker, which has pulled out two straight thrillers at state. The Bulldogs tipped Marshall 68-67 on Courtney Nuest’s 3-pointer with under 3 seconds left, and defending champ Robbinsdale Cooper 68-66 with Julia Bengtson netting 29 points capped by two free shots for the final margin.

Class AA and A have each played one round at this posting ... Roseau, top-seeded in 2A, got a combined 70 points and 14-for-14 free throw shooting from Katie (37 points) and Kacie (33) Borowicz and nipped Redwood Valley 75-74. Redwood got 21 points and 10 rebounds from Hallie Gorman while Aubree Hicks scored 20 .... Albany topped No. 2 seed Holy Family Catholic with Paige Meyer logging 32 points and 16 rebounds. .... In Class A, top-seeded Minneota tripped Red Lake 66-46 behind Lydoa Sussner’s 18 points and 17 rebounds, and Lindsey Gillingham scoring 19 points ... No. 2 seed Goodhue edged Mountain Iron-Buhl 50-48 with Lexi Lodermeier scoring 11 points, and Torrie Rehder and Joslyn Carlson nine each.
If the name Dan Westby sounds familiar to state tournament viewers, it should. With both his volleyball and basketball teams reaching state this year, he’s had 18 state tournament teams as a head coach and 26 counting years he was an assistant.

This year’s Tigers (21-8) lost to Becker 68-67 in the first round on a 3-point shot at the horn. This was their fifth state trip under Westby. Two of them were state Class 3A runners-up.

Westby’s volleyball resume is towering — six state championships and four runners-up in 13 state trips since 2004. He almost got No. 7 this fall as Marshall lost game five to North Branch 19-17 in the Class AA finals.

Counting three girls basketball teams, three volleyball, and two boys basketball as an assistant, he notes, ‘I’ve been fortunate enough to coach in 26 state tournaments.”

Westby deflects credit to the girls. “Our players work so hard,” he said. “The sacrifices they make are a direct correlation to the success we’ve experienced.”

Many of his players are with him in both sports, including Erica Jones, Kaia Sueker, Courtney Toulouse, Paige Andries, Keziah Knudson, Emily Meier and Jordyn Hilgemann this year.

Marshall shackled Waseca 53-44 for the Section 3AAA title, after losing to the Bluejays by 14 and 10 points in conference, by mixing up defenses, changing their press, and sinking 10 three-pointers.

“Dan Westby exhorted his volleyball players in the state finals in November. Most of them returned with him to state in basketball.”

Jordyn Hilgemann, a sophomore, leads the Tigers with 24 points per game. Junior point guard Linei Estrada is a third-year starter and averages seven points. Emily Meier, sophomore, is the top rebounder, and Paige Andries, junior forward (sister of Gopher football tackle Blaise), is the top inside defender.

Westby, a physical education teacher, never got close to a state tournament as a player at Danube High School, although his basketball team went 16-4 his senior year, 1978. “They went to state in 1979 and won the consolation championship,” he notes. “I was jealous that those guys got there.” As an athlete who never played in one, he reflects, “That’s probably why I never take it for granted as a coach. I remind our players of that. You never know if you’re going to get back there, so you’d better give a maximum effort when you’re there.”

Westby made All-212 Conference in football twice, as a running back and linebacker, and in baseball as a third baseman and shortstop. In basketball he played guard. “My job was to get the ball to Ron Lippert, our 6-8 center. He went on to play at St. John’s.” He played college football at Willmar Community College and Southwest State as a slot receiver and running back, starting every game for four years.

Westby said he’s been fortunate to be associated with many excellent coaches, as a player at Danube under Rod Black (basketball), Gary Fox (football, baseball) and Roger Biehoffer (football) and at Southwest under Gary Buer; and as an assistant coach under Terry Cullhane, Bruce Remme and Barry Wohler at Marshall, and Kevin Mulder at Renville County West.
Redwood, St. Peter scuttle unbeatens

Two girls teams that got through the regular season unbeaten were toppled by unranked teams in the sectionals, leaving just one unscathed team: Hopkins.

No. 3 Eden Valley-Watkins (28-1) fell to Redwood Valley 62-58 the Section 3AA finals.

No. 8 Medford (24-1) was stymied by St. Peter 46-33 in the second round Section 2AA. St. Peter (16-10) followed with wins over Waterville-Elysian-Morristown and Jordan to reach state.

Redwood (19-8) got 62 points against an EVW defense that held most teams under 40. Sydney Sommers netted 18 points, Amy Martius 15 and Haley Garman 14. The Cardinals sank six 3-pointers, three by Martius.

“We took care of the ball — bottom line,” said Tara Kockelman, Redwood coach. “We only had 12 turnovers, which was a big focus for us. We really wanted to limit their transition points.”

Redwood led by as much as 15. “We did such a great job attacking the basket,” Kockelman said. “We were able to get them to foul trouble and go to the free throw line. We hit shots in big moments.” Aubree Hicks made two free shots to open a 62-58 lead with 37 seconds left.

Emma Schultz scored 26 points and Halle Jansen 18 for EVW, which also lost a heartbreaker in last year’s section finals to Tracy-Milroy-Balaton 49-48.

St. Peter’s win over Medford was led by Sarah Conlan with 17 points. Morgan Kelly added 14 and Jacy Welp nine. Medford could not get an offense going, shooting just 4-for-23 on three’s. Emma Kniefel and Izzy Ruevers led with 10 points each.

“We knew we were going to have to play good defense and make them shoot contested shots,” coach Bob Southworth said. “Our girls did a really good job executing that game plan. We did allow them a few open 3-point opportunities but fortunately those did not go in.”
Nnaji ranks with Hopkins’ best

By Bruce Strand

A constellation of high school basketball stars have passed through Hopkins during coach Kenny Novak’s tenure. Twinkling with the brightest of those is Zeke Nnaji, leader of Novak’s 17th state tournament team in his 26 years.

The state will get a good look at Nnaji in next week’s boys tournament. The Royals, after a rare two-year absence from state in his first two varsity seasons, have won Section 4AAAA. Nnaji scored 29 points in the finals, an 82-71 win over Wayzata, fighting through double-teams, and 46 in the semifinals, an 82-59 win over St. Louis Park.

“He is not only one the top basketball players in Minnesota, he is one of the top basketball players in the United States,” Novak declared about the 6-11, 225-pound forward who is averaging 23 points and 10 rebounds, shooting about 62 percent (38 percent on three’s).

Nnaji is a Mr. Basketball finalist. He’s been all-conference since 10th grade, and all-metro and all-state last year, when he averaged 17.5 points and nine rebounds.

The coach attributes Nnaji’s achievements to the “dedication, commitment, self-discipline, and work ethic he shown” and regards him as “the ultimate role model” for athletes in his program.

Nnaji and his teammates have a motto, “We play for honor, not honors,” and Zeke always lives up to that, Novak said. Nnaji volunteers to coach youth boys basketball, tutors young students, and works with the elderly.

Rated a four-star prospect, Nnaji has signed with Arizona. Among his suitors were the Gophers, Kentucky, North Carolina, Kansas, UCLA, and all the top conferences: ACC, SEC, Big Ten, PAC Ten. (His sister Maya, a 6-3 freshman averaging 10 points, is also a coveted prospect).

Zeke Nnaji of Hopkins drove to the hoop in a season-opening win over Lakeville North.

The 6-foot junior guard for Hopkins -- averaging 24.5 points, 4.8 rebounds, 5.3 assists and 4.7 steals -- is regarded as the nation’s No. 1 recruit in the junior class. Last year, she was the first sophomore to get the Metro Player of the Year.

Also named all-metro first teamers are Frannie Hottinger, 6-0 senior forward, Cretin-Derham Hall; Lauren Jansen, 5-9 junior guard, Lakeville North; Sara Scalia, 5-10 senior guard, Stillwater; and Kallie Theisen, 6-2 senior forward, Wayzata.

Paige Bueckers is the Star-Tribune’s choice for Metro Player of the Year — for the second straight season — and heads the paper’s all-metro team.

Named to the second team are McKenna Hofschield, 5-3 senior guard, Prior Lake; Mackenzie Kramer, 5-10 junior guard, St. Michael-Albertville; Taylor McAulay, 5-11 senior guard, Centennial; Adalia McKenzie, 5-10 sophomore guard, Park Center; and Tori Nelson, 6-2 senior forward, Henry Sibley.

Named to the third team are Dlayla Chakolis, 5-7 senior guard, Hopkins; Mia Curtis, 5-9 junior guard, Minnehaha Academy; Macy Guebert, 5-10 senior guard, Eastview; Jenna Jonson, 6-2 sophomore forward, Wayzata; and Taylie Scott, 5-7 senior guard, Heritage Christian.
Pacesetter “College Prep”
Basketball Camp

Mon., July 1
College of St. Benedict
Clemens Field House
St. Joseph, MN
(4 miles west of St. Cloud)

Director:
Paul McDonald
All coaches are college coaches.

Boys and Girls entering grades 9-12 or freshman in college 2019-2020.
Parents are welcome to attend!

The Pacesetter “College Prep” program is designed for male and female players entering grades 9-12 through college freshman seeking to play basketball in college. Players will be taught high-level skills by college coaches in an intensive one-day, 7-hour format.

Paul McDonald will return as camp director. Paul is the head men’s coach at Vermillion Community College in Ely, MN, where he has guided teams to 23 straight state tournaments. He is the son of Bob McDonald, who finished his coaching career with over 1,000 wins - the most in Minnesota history. Paul played on two high school state championship teams. Other coaches on staff include college coaches from the MCAC.

Online Registration:
www.pacesettersports.net

SCHEDULE:
Monday: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Camp Fee: $80
(College prep camp fee includes lunch on Monday)

Questions? Email info@pacesetternet.com or call 320-243-7460
## Girls Section Finals

### Class 4A

- **Section 1**: Lakeville North 37, Farmington 35
- **Section 2**: Shakopee 41, Eden Prairie 39
- **Section 3**: Eastview 42, Rosemount 51
- **Section 4**: Stillwater 61, White Bear Lake 47
- **Section 5**: Centennial 63, Spring Lake Park 30
- **Section 6**: Hopkins 77, Wayzata 60
- **Section 7**: Forest Lake 64, Cambridge-Isanti 50
- **Section 8**: Maple Grove 69, St. Michael-Albertville 58

### Class 3A

- **Section 1**: Austin 62, Northfield 50
- **Section 2**: Marshall 53, Waseca 44
- **Section 3**: Holy Angels 63, St. Croix Luth. 50
- **Section 4**: DeLaSalle 65, Totino-Grace 49
- **Section 5**: Becker 56, Willmar 36
- **Section 6**: Robbins Cooper 52, Waconia 51
- **Section 7**: Hibbing 55, Grand Rapids 48
- **Section 8**: Fergus Falls 43, Alexandria 42

### Class 2A

- **Section 1**: Caledonia 48, Winona Cotter 39
- **Section 2**: St. Peter 61, Jordan 54
- **Section 3**: Redwood Valley 62, Eden Valley-Watkins 58
- **Section 4**: Minnehaha Academy 72, Concordia Academy 69
- **Section 5**: Holy Family Catholic 47, Annandale 32
- **Section 6**: Albany 60, Pine City 29
- **Section 7**: Proctor 62, Duluth Marshall 46
- **Section 8**: Roseau 73, Crookston 58

### Class 1A

- **Section 1**: Goodhue 42, Lyle/Pacelli 33
- **Section 2**: BOLD 63, St. Clair 41
- **Section 3**: Minnesota 65, Southwest Minnesota Christian 47
- **Section 4**: Heritage Christian 60, Christ’s Household of Faith 47
- **Section 5**: Menahga 46, Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa 39
- **Section 6**: Ada-Borup West 66, Parkers Prairie 34
- **Section 7**: Mountain Iron-Buhl 50, Cromwell-Wright 31
- **Section 8**: Red Lake 74, Stephen-Argyle 59

## Boys Section Finals

### Class 4A

- **Section 1**: Lakeville North vs. Rochester John Marshall
- **Section 2**: Prior Lake vs. Eden Prairie
- **Section 3**: Eastview 82, Burnsville 64
- **Section 4**: East Ridge 71, Cretin-Derham Hall 45
- **Section 5**: Park Centre vs. Champlin Park
- **Section 6**: Hopkins 82, Wayzata 71
- **Section 7**: Cambridge-Isanti 61, Blaine 51
- **Section 8**: Maple Grove 77, Buffalo 64

### Class 3A

- **Section 1**: Austin 57, Northfield 54
- **Section 2**: Waseca 63, Mankato East 54
- **Section 3**: Holy Angels 85, St. Thomas Academy 78
- **Section 4**: Mahtomedi 58, Totino-Grace 49
- **Section 5**: Monticello 56, Big Lake 54
- **Section 6**: DeLaSalle 78, Waconia 63
- **Section 7**: Princeton 91, Hibbing 76
- **Section 8**: Bemidji vs. Sartell-St. Stephen

### Class 2A

- **Section 1**: St Charles vs. Lake City
- **Section 2**: Jordan vs. St. Peter
- **Section 3**: Redwood Valley vs. St. James
- **Section 4**: Minnehaha Academy vs. St. Croix Prep
- **Section 5**: Minneapolis North vs. Breck
- **Section 6**: Melrose vs. Albany
- **Section 7**: Esko 58, Pequot Lakes 45
- **Section 8**: Perham vs. Dilworth-Glyn.-Felton

### Class 1A

- **Section 1**: Spring Grove vs. Randolph
- **Section 2**: Springfield vs. Minnesota Valley Lutheran
- **Section 3**: Dawson-Boyd vs. Westbrook-Walnut Grove
- **Section 4**: Christ’s Household of Faith vs. Hope Academy
- **Section 5**: Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa vs. Cromwell-Wright
- **Section 6**: Henning vs. Parkers Prairie
- **Section 7**: North Woods vs. Lakeview Christian
- **Section 8**: Ada-Borup West vs. Cass Lake-Bena