Hopkins girls (again) and C-DH boys win Sweet 16

Cretin-Derham Hall’s Amari Carter (14), Will Burke (4) and J’vonne Hadley (right) whooped it up after beating Park Center 78-76 in the finals on Hadley’s last-second tip-in. Park Center’s John Grigsby made a “wave it off” signal, hoping the refs would rule that the clock had expired. There was no such suspense for Paige Bueckers (left) and the Hopkins girls.

Photos by Bruce Strand, Minnesota Basketball News
New addition, Hadley, helps Raiders capture crown

By Bruce Strand

J’vonne Hadley has joined the Cretin-Derham Hall Raiders for his senior year, leaving behind Mahtomedi, for whom he scored 28.5 points per game last season, and 1,303 in his three years with the Zephyrs.

One of the 6-6 guard’s first official acts as a Raider was to deliver the Pacesetter Sweet 16 championship on Aug. 4 by sinking a last-second game-winner in the finals.

BOYS SWEET 16 FINALS: CRETIN-DERHAM HALL 78, PARK CENTER 76

The Raiders won a meat-grinder against Park Center 78-76 at College of St. Benedict. After Park Center’s John Grigsby tied the score on a rebound shot with six seconds left, Hadley took the ball to the hoop, missed a runner, and soared for the tip-in with a split second left.

Hadley led Mahtomedi to the state Class 3A tournament (their first since their only other one, 1961) this past season and hit 32 points in the first-round 68-63 loss to Princeton. He had a 52-point game against Hill-Murray on Feb. 4, breaking the school record of 50 that stood since 1961.

This summer, he said, the idea of transferring came up when it was suggested by the Raiders’ Tre Holloman, a friend in the Howard Pulley League.

“It happened a couple months ago,” Hadley said. “At first, we were just joking around, but then I figured, why not? My last year, why not go out with a bang.”

Hadley, who’s had offers from UNC-Greensboro, Colorado State and South Dakota, joins a lineup that now has four solid college prospects, three of them transfers, that should be a leading state title contender.

His new teammates, under coach Jerry Kline, include seniors Curtis Jones (14.3 ppg last year) and Amari Carter (12.9 ppg) and sophomore Holloman (10.9 ppg). CDH was 22-7 and section runner-up. Jones transferred from Minneapolis South after scoring 17 ppg as a sophomore. Holloman moved from Minneapolis North after hitting 10.7 ppg in eighth-grade.

The Mahtomedi coaches were “kinda mad about it, at first” but eventually wished him well, Hadley said. His former team was also a Sweet 16 invitee and went 2-2.

Playing for Cretin-Derham Hall should raise his profile. The Raiders have a long tradition of athletic excellence, turning out such luminaries as Daniel Oturu, leader of their 2018 state champs and a current Gopher with NBA potential; former major league stars Joe Mauer and Paul Molitor; and former NFL quarterbacks Chris Weinke (a Heisman trophy winner) and Steve Walsh.

Cretin-Derham Hall: continued on next page
Mankato East, Waseca, Caledonia boys place 3-4-5 in Sweet 16

The Mankato East boys placed third in the Pacesetter Sweet 16. The Cougars (24-5 last year, section runner-up) beat Henning 68-37 and Hopkins 82-49, lost in the semi-finals to Cretin-Derham Hall 84-74, and tripped Waseca 70-62 in the third-place game. The Cougars got a bit of revenge for a section finals loss to the Bluejays in March.

Waseca, 30-2 last season and state Class 3A runner-up, placed fourth, beating Sartell-St. Stephen 74-57 and Eastview 66-59, before losing to Park Center 85-49 and Mankato East. Waseca drops from Class 3A to 2A next year and should be a leading contender, with three-time defending 2A champion Minnehaha Academy moving up to 3A.

Caledonia placed fifth. The Warriors (23-6 last year, section runner-up) defeated Mahtomedi 67-20, lost to Cretin-Derham Hall 80-68, beat Hopkins 88-58, and beat Eastview 79-57 in the fifth-place game.

Mankato’s 6-4, 240-pound Jordan Merseth muscles up to Waseca’s 6-8 Andrew Morgan.

Hopkins and Henning were the two 2019 state champion teams participating (Minnehaha Academy and DeLaSalle did not). Hopkins was missing several top athletes who were playing in a Las Vegas tournament. Henning, the Class 1A champion, lost to Mankato East 68-37, beat Lake City 78-51, lost to Mahtomedi 78-68, and beat Sartell-St. Stephen 71-65, officially placing 11th.

Bemidji captured the consolation championship. The Warriors, who were 23-6 last year and reached the 3A state tournament, lost in the first round to Park Center 79-60, then defeated Hayfield 61-50, Sartell-St. Stephen 50-43 and Mahtomedi 79-48, to officially place ninth.

Cretin-DH nips Park Center for title in final second

The Raiders advanced to the finals beating New Ulm Cathedral 105-48, Caledonia 80-68 and Mankato East 84-74. Other Raider players were Josh Garcia, Danny McGraw, Jack Clipper, Jack Tauer, Al Fleming, and Will Burke. With high school coaches not allowed with the team after Aug. 1, Josh Rodenbiker took the helm.

Park Center, led by Dain Dianja, a 6-9, 260-pound Baylor recruit, advanced with victories over Bemidji 79-60, Minneapolis North 90-68, and Waseca 85-59. The Pirates were 30-2 last season and third in the state.

The Pacesetter Sweet 16 is an invitational pitting top teams from each of the four high school divisions.
Hopkins girls take Sweet 16 for sixth consecutive year

By Bruce Strand

It’s now been a calendar year since Paige Bueckers and the Hopkins girls have lost a basketball game.

A year ago, the Royals rolled through the Pacesetter Sweet 16 Tournament, a harbinger for the high school season when they reeled off 32 straight wins, all but one by double digits, to capture the Class 4A title.

Last weekend, Hopkins breezed to another Pacesetter title, capped by their finals conquest of Wayzata 79-65. The Royals also dispatched Red Lake 80-38, Minnehaha Academy 78-35 and Austin 85-46.

**Girls Sweet 16 Finals: Hopkins 79, Wayzata 65**

“We had a nice balanced attack, with contributions from everyone,” said Tara Starks, who always coaches them in the Sweet 16. “I thought we shot the ball real well over the weekend, which was huge against Wayzata.

“We had our usual great defense, putting pressure on the ball, being able to turn the guards over. But I thought the big thing was our balance, with kids coming in off the bench to give us four or five points and steals, all tournament.”

It could be another year before anyone foils the Royals. They graduated a Miss Basketball finalist but remain supremely talented, led by Bueckers, the state’s most-recruited player ever who has committed to 11-time national champion UConn. For the record, Hopkins’ first five Sweet 16 titles in this dynasty were followed by championships in 2016 and 2019 and three runner-up finishes in between.

Hopkins did lose a game in a summer tournament the previous week, but without Bueckers in the lineup.

Chaska tipped the Royals 74-70 on July 30 in the first annual Hall of Game Girls Summer Invitational.

The team with the best chance to knock them off is probably Wayzata, the No. 2 ranked team last winter. The Trojans play in the same conference and section, and had to settle for runner-up status to Hopkins in each. Wayzata was 26-0 against everyone else and 0-3 against Hopkins, including one loss by 69-66.

Hopkins: continued on next page
Lakeville North, Austin, Stillwater girls place 3-4-5 in Sweet 16

The Lakeville North girls placed third in the Pacesetter Sweet 16. The Panthers (18-13 and a state participant last year) got past Mankato East 76-40 and Fergus Falls 66-64 in pool play, lost the semi-finals to Wayzata 77-66, and clipped Austin 70-56 in the third-place game.

Austin (20-10 and a state qualifier last season) placed fourth. The Packers beat Proctor 85-55 and Stillwater 74-69, then lost to Hopkins 85-46 and Lakeville North.

The girls Sweet 16 was not filled this year, with several invitees having conflicts. With 12 teams, play was broken into four three-team pods, after which the 2-0 teams played Division I, the 1-1 teams played in Division II, and the 0-2 teams played in Division III.

Lakeville North’s Ellie Glomstad was about to score on a breakaway, trailed by Austin’s Colie Justice and Emily Bollum.

Stillwater won the Division II tournament, officially placing fifth in the tournament. The Ponies, who were 28-3 and state Class 4A runner-up last season, beat Proctor 70-41 and lost to Austin 74-69 in pool play. They downed Minnehaha Academy 76-40 and Waconia 84-70 in the Division II competition.

Hawley emerged as Division III champion. The Nuggets (16-8 last winter) fell to Waconia 56-51 and Wayzata 74-26. In pool play, then tripped Mankato East 63-33 and Proctor 52-46.

Two of the four state champions, Hopkins and Minnehaha Academy (2A), played in the Sweet 16. Minnehaha Academy went 1-3. Other defending state champions are DeLaSalle (3A) and Minneota (1A).

Wayzata 2nd to Hopkins in another strong showing

The Royals’ main rotation included Paige Bueckers, KK Adams, Jaide Pressley, Amaya Battle, Mya Nnaji, Taylor Woodson and NuNu Agara.

Wayzata reached the finals beating Waconia 66-43, Hawley 56-51 and Lakeville North 77-66. The Trojans gave Hopkins a good battle as always before notching another runner-up finish.

The Pacesetter Sweet 16, held every August, is an invitational pitting top teams from each of the four high school divisions.
**BOYS**

**First round**
Cretin-Derham Hall 105, New Ulm Cathedral 48  
Caledonia 67, Mahtomedi 20  
Hopkins 71, Lake City 48  
Mankato East 68, Henning 37  
Park Center 79, Bemidji 60  
Minneapolis North 81, Hayfield 47  
Eastview 75, Minneota 65  
Waseca 74, Sartell-St. Stephen 57

**Quarterfinals**
Cretin-Derham Hall 80, Caledonia 68  
Mankato East 82, Hopkins 49  
Park Center 90, Minneapolis North 68  
Waseca 66, Eastview 59

**Semifinals**
Cretin-Derham Hall 84, Mankato East 74  
Park Center 85, Waseca 49

**Championship**
Cretin-Derham Hall 78, Park Center 76

**Third place**
Mankato East 70, Waseca 62

**Fifth place**
Caledonia 88, Hopkins 58  
Eastview 76, Minneapolis North 66  
Caledonia 79, Eastview 57

**Seventh place**
Hopkins, forfeit from Minneapolis North

**Consolation games**
Mahtomedi 77, New Ulm Cathedral 59  
Henning 78, Lake City 51  
Bemidji 61, Hayfield 50  
Sartell-St. Stephen 81, Minneota 75  
Mahtomedi 78, Henning 68  
Bemidji 50, Sartell-St. Stephen 43  
Lake City 58, New Ulm Cathedral 43  
Hayfield 69, Minnesota 68  
Lake City 60, Hayfield 57  
Minneota 84, New Ulm Cathedral 61  
Henning 71, Sartell-St. Stephen 65  
Championship: Bemidji 79, Mahtomedi 48

**GIRLS**

**Pool play**
Hopkins 80, Red Lake 38  
Hopkins 78, Minnehaha Academy 35  
Minnehaha Academy 70, Red Lake 65  
Lakeville North 76, Mankato East 40  
Lakeville North 66, Fergus Falls 64  
Fergus Falls 51, Mankato East 40  
Wayzata 66, Waconia 43  
Waconia 56, Hawley 51  
Wayzata 74, Hawley 26  
Stillwater 70, Proctor 41  
Austin 85, Proctor 55  
Austin 74, Stillwater 69

**DIVISION I**

**Semifinals**
Hopkins 85, Austin 46  
Wayzata 77, Lakeville North 66

**Championship**
Hopkins 79, Wayzata 65

**Third place**
Lakeville North 70, Austin 56

**DIVISION II**

**Semifinals**
Stillwater 76, Minnehaha Academy 40  
Waconia 57, Fergus Falls 49

**Championship**
Stillwater 84, Waconia 70

**Third place**
Waconia 56, Hawley 51

**DIVISION III**

**Semifinals**
Proctor 56, Red Lake 41  
Hawley 63, Mankato East 33

**Championship**
Hawley 52, Proctor 46

**Third place**
Mankato East 65, Red Lake 60
Pine City boys nab MIT title

By Bruce Strand

The Pine City boys basketball varsity picked up five wins for the championship of the Pacesetter Minnesota Invitational Tournament on July 26-27.

The Dragons thumped ROCORI 56-40 in the championship game at College of St. Benedict’s in St. Joseph, after pulling out four close games in pool play. To reach the finals, the Dragons edged the same ROCORI team 40-38 in the first round, then Pillager 50-46, Hayfield 42-40 in overtime and Kenyon-Wanamingo 44-40.

\**BOYS MIT FINAL: PINE CITY 56, ROCORI 40**

“We really pride ourselves on the defensive end,” coach Kyle Allen said. “Each of the close games came down to us making free-throws or a clutch shot and then having to get it done on the defensive end. It was great for our guys to win games on that end of the floor.”

Pine City was 24-4 last season and will return nine varsity players. The seniors are Seth Logan (the top scorer back), Tanner Wicktor, Duke Waxberg, Koleman Lind and Christian Fromm. Also playing were Luke Wilson, Jason Thieman, Cole Waxberg, Colton Blaisdell, Konnor Jusczak, Kameron Jusczak, Dylan Petersen, and Caleb Fromm.

“We are excited to bring that group together and fuse them with a very young JV team that had 19 wins last year,” Allen said.

The Dragons play in their own summer league on Monday and Wednesday evenings. They placed third in a pair of Tri-State tournaments in Winona.


Spartan players were senior Brett Sowada; juniors Matt Torborg, Tucker Haakonson, Luke Humbert, Jaden Ruegumer, Drew Schneider, Jayden Philippi and sophomore Zach Harris. Coach Levi Peterson cited point guard Sowada for controlling the pace, Humbert for a strong inside presence and rebounding, Haakonson for hard work on defense and Philippi for outside shooting.

ROCORI, 6-21 last winter, has also placed first and second (twice) in three Breakdown tournaments.
NLS girls are MIT champs

By Bruce Strand


The Wildcats pulled out two close games, and played smothering defense throughout, as they went 5-0 at St. Benedict’s.

In the finals, the Wildcats won a fierce defensive battle over Red Wing 25-24. Red Wing was 24-3 last season and expects to be just as strong next season. NLS was 20-7 with four sophomore starters.

**GIRLS MIT FINALS: NEW LONDON-SPICER 25, RED WING 24**

Ava Kraemer was fouled shooting with four seconds left and made the second of two free shots for the winning margin. The left-handed post banked home a pair of turnaround shots to give NLS a 24-22 lead before Red Wing tied the score on a layup after a ball steal with :30 left.

“It was a really physical game,” NLS coach Mike Dreier reflected.

In pool play, NLS beat Granada-Huntley-East Chain/Truman/Martin Luther 56-27, Menahga 41-25, and Waconia 51-49. Mackenzie Rich nailed a three-point shot with three seconds left to beat Waconia, the only opponent to solve the NLS defense. The Wildcats then clipped Waseca 48-28 in the semifinals.

The NLS roster was Payton Mages, Erin Knisley, Kraemer, Emma Hanson, Grace DeSchepper, Mackenzie Rich, Mya Krause, Ellie Hanson, Nyla Johnson, Avery Rich and Emily Giere.

The Wildcats also played in seven Breakdown tournaments and a Maple Lake tournament. Their record was approximately 24-4.


Seniors Kyli Nelson and Elle Thorson “each had an excellent tournament,” coach Jesse Nelson said. Also playing were Sydnee Nelson, Hallie Roschen, Kayla Shelstad, Bailey Roschen, Sophia Rahn, Kyli Nelson, Abi Deming, Cadence Thorson, and Sydney Rahn.

The Wingers also placed second in a Breakdown tournament, losing to Alexandria in OT in the finals.
GIRLS

POOL PLAY, NORTH
Waseca 40, Esko 16
Red Wing 58, Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 31
Red Wing 42, Waseca 37
Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 45, Esko 32
Waseca 53, Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 28
Red Wing 49, Esko 31

Pool records — Red Wing 3-0, Waseca 2-1,
Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 1-2, Esko 0-3

POOL PLAY, SOUTH
New London-Spicer 56, Granada-Huntley-East
Chain-Truman-Martin Luther 27
Waconia 54, Menahga 25
New London-Spicer 41, Menahga 25
Crookston 29, GHECTML 16
New London-Spicer 49, Crookston 33
Waconia 63, GHECTML 28
Waconia 67, Crookston 22
Menahga 61, GHECTML 28
New London-Spicer 51, Waconia 49
Crookston 43, Menahga 24

Pool records — New London-Spicer 4-0,
Waconia 3-1, Crookston 2-2, Menahga 1-3,
GHECTML 0-4

DIVISION I

Semifinals
New London-Spicer 48, Waseca 29
Red Wing 51, Waconia 42

Championship
New London-Spicer 25, Red Wing 24

Third place
Waseca 56, Waconia 40

DIVISION II

Play-in
Esko 48, GHECTML 34

Semifinals
Crookston 33, Esko 29
Menahga 39, Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 29

Championship
Crookston 49, Menahga 41

Third place
GMECTML 65, Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 46
Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 62, Esko 59

BOYS

POOL PLAY
Oak Grove Lutheran 51, Hayfield 50, OT
Pine City 40, ROCORI 38
Pillager 38, Kenyon-Wanamingo 27
Pine City 50, Pillager 46
ROCORI 57, Oak Grove Lutheran 50
Hayfield 48, Kenyon-Wanamingo 34
Pine City 42, Hayfield 40, OT
ROCORI 64, Pillager 46
Kenyon-Wanamingo 51, Oak Grove Lutheran 49
Pillager 56, Oak Grove Lutheran 49
Pine City 44, Kenyon-Wanamingo 40
ROCORI 62, Hayfield 55
Hayfield 57, Pillager 51
Pine City 58, Oak Grove Lutheran 55
ROCORI 53, Kenyon-Wanamingo 47

Pool records — Pine City 5-0, ROCORI 3-1,
Hayfield 2-3, Pillager 2-3, Oak Grove Lutheran
1-4, Kenyon-Wanamingo 1-4

Championship
Pine City 56, ROCORI 40

Third place
Hayfield 44, Pillager 39

Fifth place
Kenyon-Wanamingo 59, Oak Grove Lutheran 59
Sweet 16 girls snapshots

Taylor Woodson of Hopkins gathers a rebound against Wayzata.

Haley Bryant of Lakeville North takes aim before hitting a ‘3’ against Austin.

Tess Johnson of Waconia connects on a jump shot against Stillwater.

Minnehaha Academy’s Kate Pryor manoevers to shoot while closely guarded by Fergus Falls’ Hannah Polejewski.

Annika Stewart of Wayzata eyes the hoop before sinking a free shot against Hopkins.
Sweet 16 boys snapshots

Paul Kueth of Mankato East gets past Kyreese Willingham of Waseca for a layup.

Luke Ricker of Mahtomedi scored despite by Bemidji’s Colten Jensen.

Curtis Jones scores for Cretin-Derham Hall in the finals.

Mahtomedi’s Will Underwood beats Bemidji’s Nick Snell and James Williams to a loose ball.

John Grigsby of Park Center ties the score with :06 left in the finals against Cretin-Derham Hall.

Casey Schultz clutches a rebound for Caledonia against Eastview.

John Grigsby of Park Center ties the score with :06 left in the finals against Cretin-Derham Hall.
SWEET 16 CHAMPIONS

CRETIN-DERHAM HALL
Front: Tre Holloman, Curtis Jones, Jack Tauer, Josh Garcia
Back: Coach Josh Rodenpiper, Will Burke, Al Fleming, Jack Clipper, Danny McGraw, Amair Carter, J’vonne Hadley

HOPKINS
Names not available
More Sweet 16 snapshots

Wayzata, the Sweet 16 runner-up, posed after the finals -- Front: Molly McKenzie, Jasmine Smiley, Alivia Arnebeck, Emma Hawkinson, Miranda Travis ... Back: Mara Braun, Annika Stewart, Jenna Johnson, Elise Prosser, Lydia Hay

Lakeville North’s Morgan Robison looks for an opening while guarded by Austin’s Hope Dudycha.

Dueling for a rebound were Minnehaha Academy’s Tessa Leiner and Fergus Falls’ Ellie Colbeck.

Isaak Fisher scores for Henning against Sartell-St. Stephen.

Will Burke of Cretin-Derham Hall squares up to score from the corner.