‘You don’t get this back’
How players, coaches reacted to the bad news

By Bruce Strand

The worldwide outbreak of coronavirus is wreaking such havoc that the first blow to Americans, making us go without sports for a while, will ultimately be seen as just a minor footnote.

Still, young athletes are at the forefront of the initial groups having to sacrifice something vital in the effort to stem the spread of the deadly novel disease.

On the heels of the NBA and NHL suspending their seasons, and the NCAA canceling national tournaments, the Minnesota girls tournament was halted halfway through, on Friday, March 13, along with the boys basketball state tournament and any remaining section finals.

Following are some reactions:

Jalen Suggs, leader of Class 3A’s top-ranked Minnehaha Academy, which beat Tonino-Grace for the section championship, and was pursuing their fourth consecutive state title, told the Star-Tribune:

“When the NCAA and NBA were shut down, I couldn’t help but think high school was next. I started the game really slow because I had it in my head that this was possibly my last game. I eventually got it out of my mind, and was going to make sure I enjoyed my last game.”

Kris Fadness, Austin boys coach whose team was to face Albert Lea in the Section 1AAA title game, told the Austin Herald:

“They’re teenagers, they’re emotionally invested and they’ve worked their whole lives to be in a position where they can get to a state tournament and make a name for themselves …. I feel bad for the Albert Lea kids, I feel bad for the Mayo kids and I feel bad for every team and every boy and girl athlete right now, especially the seniors. You don’t get this back. This time doesn’t come back. I feel horrible for those kids … I understand the pandemic … Human life is more important than any basketball game.”

Duluth Marshall girls coach CJ Osuchukwu, whose team was about to face Providence Academy in the Class 2A semifinals, told Fox 21 TV in Duluth:

“I found out when my AD called me … We gathered girls in the hallway and we all just broke down and we realized our season ended … I told them it’s just another stepping stone in our lives to make us better people and we talked about good times, the good things, having the most wins in our school history first win in a state tournament, first time here in 20 years.”

Tyler Kaus, coach of the Waterville-Elyssian-Morristown girls, in state for the first time and in the semifinals, got the news via phone just before the team left their hotel. He told the Mankato Free Press:
‘Would have been happy to play in an empty gym.’

“After they put the restrictions in place, I thought we’d play. We were ready to go … The kids took it pretty tough. I think we all were in shock. We still are. The kids have put a lot of time and effort to get where we are. To have it end so abruptly, it was disappointing.”

Mike Hepola, coach of the Henning girls, who qualified for state for the first time and reached the semifinals, told the Star-Tribune: “It was a crashing end to an unbelievable winter season in Henning We’re 29-2, and don’t even have the best record in the school. It was a special season for us.”

The Henning boys, defending state Class 1A champs, were 29-1 and had won their section again, but would not have the chance to defend the state title. Henning boys coach Randy Misegades told the Star-Tribune: “Both teams had high hopes in the state tournament. We told our players to play the section championship just like it was the state championship because we might not get another chance this year. Unfortunately, we got that news Friday. It was a bizarre day.”

Minneota girls coach Chad Johnston said the team found out in the locker room at state shortly before they were to take the court against Waterville-Elysian-Morristown. He told the Marshall Independent: “I went and told the girls and they thought I was joking … (Senior leader) Morgan Hennen took it hard right away and then some of the other players looked at her and saw the gravity of the situation … For us it just affected a game, but for a lot of others it’s affecting their jobs, families and livelihood. It just hit her a little bit harder because she was really determined and wanted to shine here at state.”

Marshall boys coach Travis Carroll, whose Tigers beat No. 2 Mankato East for the Section 2AAA title Thursday evening, told the Marshall Independent: “On Thursday we knew that they were going to be making adjustments to the tournament and understood there was a possibility of having the state tournament canceled. I feel bad for the kids, but this is out of our control and there are going to be situations in life where that happens … I thought they handled it well, just like how they handled the whole season well. They did an amazing job of working together and were committed to the team and were rewarded to end their season and careers with a section championship.”

Waseca’s Hannah Potter, who was about to board the bus for the Class 2A semifinals when she got the bad news via twitter on teammate Rachel Breck’s phone, told the Mankato Free Press: “It was tough; we shed a few tears. We brought the rest of the girls off the bus and told them. The we all decided we need to go somewhere and just be together … We had so much confidence going into that game. We accomplished so much this season, so that helps us get through this. We did some amazing things. Nobody can take that away from us.”

Seth Anderson, Waseca boys coach, whose team was Class 3A runner-up last year, and had reached the Section 2AA finals against Jordan, told the Mankato Free Press:

“I was concerned that maybe the state tournament wouldn’t get played, but you still hold out hope. Any time your season ends, it’s emotional, but it usually ends with a loss … People have said, ‘You have a lot of juniors. You’ll still go next year.’ But it doesn’t work that way. We really thought we had a good shot at winning a state championship this season, and those type of teams don’t come along very often. I feel bad for the kids. They’ve put a lot of work into (basketball) and sacrificed a lot to be in this position.”

Alan Woitas, coach of the New Ulm Cathedral boys, who had reached section finals (against Springfield) for the first time since 1999, told the Free Press: “These kids would have been happy to play in an empty gym. They just wanted to play … I understand the decision, but it’s a lost opportunity for the kids. As a coach, that’s probably the toughest conversation I’ve ever had with the players.”

Esko boys coach Derek Anderson, whose team was to meet Pierz in the Section 7AA finals, learned Thursday that just a small number of fans would be allowed to attend the finals, but assumed the game would be played.

He told Fox 21 TV in Duluth: “We had gotten our list put together of the people who would be able to attend, obviously family members of the team, and then everything escalated pretty quickly and when we got here we found out … They won their last game, were looking forward to playing the next one, and then to just be done, that is a tough thing to happen to them, especially for seniors who put so much time since elementary school until now, and don’t get to go out on the court one more time.”
Virus attack
Team Minnesota: Defend!

By Jeff McCarron

I chose the above title because there has never been a time in my memory that it is more important for MINNESOTA to unite as ONE people. And I chose “Defend!” to take a sports term to get into people’s mind, heart and fiber – to stop this virus in its tracks!

Yes, I’m talking to YOU.

You may have learned something in sports – no matter what level you feel you are playing, there is always a higher level you can play – if you need to or if you want to. Sometimes you are behind in a game or match. Sometimes a high-level coach or player crosses your path. Sometimes it is just the championship beast within you that pushes you to the best you can be.

Minnesota sports people: We need to find that beast in every one of us! Too often there is an arrogant, cocky, sense of immunity that we portray – that no little virus is going to get me!

Wake up, Dip Stick! It is time to tuck in our egos and release that beast that defends the moment your opponent walks into your building. Or defends before he gets out of bed! Or defends while he is still in the womb! Or before he is a thought in his parents’ head!

Get the idea? This virus is passed when people don’t know they have it! A little lady in South Korea decided to go quietly to church services. She infected seven people. She had it and didn’t know it. If those seven did the same and their seven did the same, 343 people would have the virus! Times 7 more = 2,401! This virus presents a serious math problem! We can’t afford to wake up too late.

Let me repeat: You can pass the virus when you have NO SYMPTOMS. So what does that mean? You should be acting like YOU HAVE IT. And you should be acting like EVERY PERSON YOU MEET HAS IT.

Please get this message to everyone you know. Only then will we be able to stop this virus from reaching the weakest and dearest in our state – our grandparents, our disabled, our compromised – even kids with underlying issues. Not being able to provide respirators to all would be heart-wrenching. These precious people are dying by the hundreds (over 700 in the last two days) in Italy now. This is coming to Minnesota, people – soon!

I heard a bar in Stearns County was offering bingo last night. Seriously? Wake up, Minnesota! And then wake up everyone you know. This is no ordinary cold or flu. It is more contagious and more deadly – and it’s real...as much as we just want it to go away by itself.

In basketball terms, think of the virus as a 30-point scorer. If you don’t give your best effort, he or she is going to light you up for 30-40 points and your team is going to lose. So suck it up, bend your knees, grit your teeth, and don’t let that SOB touch the ball. No one can score without the ball!

Any time TWO PEOPLE are within range of a sneeze – I would say 10 feet – there is a chance of becoming a “carrier” of the virus. If you get it, it is YOUR fault and you let us all down. YOU put yourself at risk and weren’t careful enough. Don’t blame others. YOU need to keep yourself free from the virus. And you need to keep others free from YOUR virus – that you should assume you have.

So shut down your arrogance, wake up your ignorance, and be a player on TEAM MINNESOTA, TEAM USA, and TEAM WORLD. Don’t you dare let us down. DEFEND! We are only as strong as our weakest link – don’t let it be YOU!

Be safe, be kind, be alone ... and stay focused.
Eden Prairie: ‘We never lost’

By Bruce Strand

Eden Prairie’s boys basketball team cut down the net last Friday night. It was a symbolic act that made then feel a little better. Nobody could blame them.

Four games from completing one of the greatest seasons in state hoops history, the Eagles would have faced Shakopee in the Section 2AAAA finals at home that evening, but news came before noon that everything was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“We gathered in the gym at 6:00 on Friday night with the 90 fans originally planned on being in the gym,” coach Dave Flom said. “We cut the net down and clapped for each player and coach as they cut. I said a few words, then we all went out to eat, and shared stories.”

Flom referred to the limited number of fans each team would have been permitted to have at the game. That was the plan announced Thursday by the MSHSL in accordance with Department of Health restrictions on crowds at any event to slow the spread of the virus. But on Friday morning, Gov. Tim Walz, on recommendation of the DOH, announced a general shut-down that included the basketball tournaments.

While every girls and boys team still in contention was deeply hurt, it must have been especially painful for this all-senior group that played together since grade school and were in hot pursuit of their school’s first state basketball championship.

There’s no guarantees in life, and certainly not in tournament basketball, but the Eagles were 28-0, ranked ninth in the nation, and had beaten the 2-3-4-5-6 ranked Class 4A teams and nine of the top 13, along with two of the top three in Class 3A, including nationally ranked Minnehaha Academy. Their closest win was 81-75 over Hopkins, whom they beat 82-68 in their other meeting.

By Friday, everyone knew they might not get to finish the job. “We saw all signs point in that direction but we were still hopeful,” Flom said. “Once the news officially came down, there were lots of tears, lots of texts in group text out how much we all love each other and about our great season.”

As for his own reaction, the elementary teacher said: “I sat behind my desk and cried on and off for 45 minus. My fifth-graders didn’t know how to handle it.”

The flurry of messages included one from Austin Andrews that summed it up: “We never lost. Nobody can ever take that away from us. Love you guys.”

Cutting down the nets is the ages-old tradition for championship teams. The Eagles felt they had earned the right, so that’s what they did before family members.

In college football, before they started holding playoffs in 2014, national champions were crowned on the basis of the final rankings. Since the Eagles were the undisputed No. 1 since early in the season and proved it over and over, Flom was asked by MBBN if the Eagles felt they were the mythical state champions, in the same sense.

“In our minds, we definitely feel that way,” he said, “but obviously there will be no official state champs banner we get to hang up in our gym.”

But there will be a banner in the gym, Flom said. It will be a lasting tribute to this team led by the Fab Four of Austin Andrews, Drake Dobbs, Connor Christensen, and John Henry, who scored over 6,000 points between them, played in two state tournaments, placed third as juniors, and went unbeaten against one of the strongest schedules any Minnesota prep team ever faced, in their bittersweet final season. That banner will read:

“Perfect season. 28-0. #9 ESPN Nationally.”

“As I explained to our parents, it really was a perfect season,” Flom said, “not just with the record but it every aspect. The boys were a dream to coach, no drama, came to work every day with joy and focus, and had a team GPA of 3.7. It really was a perfect season.”

Eagles coach Dave Flom completed a symbolic cutting down the net.
Bueckers adds Miss Basketball to list of laurels

By Bruce Strand

Hopkins luminary Paige Bueckers was named Miss Basketball on March 18, capping one of the greatest careers in Minnesota high school sports history.

The 5-10 point guard was MVP of the world U18 tournament last summer, leading Team USA to the gold medal; has signed with 11-time national champion UConn, whose coach is lauding her as their next superstar; and was recently named Gatorade’s national high school player of the year.

Bueckers scored 2,877 points in six seasons for Hopkins. This year she averaged 21.8 points, 9.4 assists, and 5.4 steals, with her best games coming against the top teams.

In her five years as a starter, Hopkins had a 150-8 record, including 62-0 the last two years, and reached state finals all five years. The Royals lost close championship games her first three years, won the title last year with a 32-0 record, and were 30-0 entering this year’s finals against Farmington, canceled due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The announcement was made on Mike Max’s WCCO Radio show. A Minnesota Girls Basketball Coaches Association award, it is normally announced at all-star weekend in early April, but that won’t be held this year.

The other five finalists were:

Lauren Jensen, Lakeville North 5-10 guard, who averaged 24.6 points, 4.0 rebounds and 1.7 steals and tallied 2,216 career points. She has signed with Iowa.

Mackenzie Kraemer, St. Michael Albertville guard, who averaged 15.3 points, seven rebounds and five assists before suffering a foot injury after 21 games, leaving her with 1,741 career points, which broke her mom’s school record. She will play for Creighton.

Alyssa Ustby, Rochester Lourdes 6-1 forward, who averaged 25.6 points and 11 rebounds, and tallied 2,553 points for the record at a school with eight state titles and several D-I players. She signed with North Carolina.

All five finalists’ teams played in the state tournament.
Suggs sweeps top hoops, grid awards

Jalen Suggs of Minnehaha Academy is the recipient of both the Mr. Basketball award and the McDonald Award, both emblematic of the top senior player in Minnesota.

Suggs received the Mr. Basketball award, giving by an independent group since 1975, on Wednesday evening. It was announced on Mike Max’s show on WCCO Radio with Suggs as a guest.

He was announced as winner of the McDonald Award, presented by the Minnesota Basketball Coaches Association since 2018, on Tuesday evening. It’s named for Bob McDonald, Chisholm coach who had the most wins of any coach in state history.

Suggs, a 6-5 guard signed by Gonzaga, averaged 23.5 points, 7.3 rebounds, 5.1 assists and 3.8 steals this year.

In his career he logged 2,945 points, 883 rebounds, 734 assists, 509 steals and 103 blocked shots. The Redhawks were 108-14 the last four years.

Suggs led the Redhawks to three state Class 2A championships, in grades 9-10-11. With the team moved up to Class 3A this year, Suggs led them to a 25-3 record, No. 1 ranking, and Section 4 championship. The state tournament was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

His clean sweep of major awards included the Mr. Football prize as a quarterback and defensive back. Suggs is the first athlete to get both Mr. Football and Mr. Basketball.

Mr. Basketball has five finalists. The others were Dawson Garcia of Prior Lake, Ben Carlson of East Ridge, Drake Dobbs of Eden Prairie, and Nathan Heise of Lake City.

The McDonald Award has 12 finalists. The others were Garcia, Carlson, Dobbs, Heise, Kerwin Walton of Hopkins, Henry Abraham of Cambridge-Isanti, Agwa Nywesh of Austin, Noah King of Caledonia, Steven Crowl of Eastview, Dain Dainja of Park Center, and Gabe Madsen of Rochester Mayo.

Mankato East trio had 76-14 record together

The three J’s at Mankato East — seniors Jax Madison, Joich Gong, and Jordan Merseth — helped the Cougars compile a 76-14 record in their three years. That includes a 26-game win streak in the Big Nine and two conference titles with an overall 41-3 mark. They won 25 straight this year, ending with a section finals loss to Marshall, 65-58. The trio played in the state tournament as sophomores and were stopped in the last two section finals by Waseca and Marshall. Madison and Gong, both 6-2 guards, and Merseth, a 6-6 center, have been teammates since fifth grade. Madison averaged 17 points this year and set career records with 1,495 points, 251 three-pointers, and 200 steals. His 300 assists ranks third. Gong averaged 15 points this year and hit 1,000 with his last basket. Merseth averaged 13 points. His shooting percentages of 61 and 64 the last two years are the two best on record. They also play football. Merseth (line) and Madison (wide receiver) both made all-Big Nine. Merseth was academic all-state. “All three guys are undecided about their college, but want to continue playing basketball,” coach Joe Madison said. “Jordan has had some football interest too.”

Pacesetter youth basketball regionals for grades 4-9 suspended

Pacesetter Youth Basketball Region Playoffs for grades 4-9 through April 6 have been suspended due to the COVID-19 virus concerns. Region playoffs set for April 18-19 in Bemidji and Mankato are likely to be suspended also.

Pacesetter will be seeking alternate sites and dates in May as the first option. A second option is a statewide playoff in June as part of the state tournaments in Maple Grove. If June is not possible, a playoff in November-December will be explored.

Pacesetter camps, Top 100 Expo, summer tournaments still scheduled

All Pacesetter events for the summer are still scheduled. Camps should continue to be scheduled, and teams should continue to register. For any events that cannot be held, full refunds will be provided. Direct any questions to jeff@pacesetternet.com.
Riding the bus with George

Teen heroes on Sherburn’s 1970 state champs bonded with a lonely old man who had been the town outcast

Editor’s note: Fifty years ago on March 21, Sherburn won the last one-class tournament, upsetting South St. Paul in the finals to finish unbeaten. The following “story within the story” was penned by Brad Bolsma, a Raider player who graduated the year before. He’s now an accountant in the St. Paul area. The article was originally printed in the Martin County Star.

By Brad Bolsma

It goes without saying that for most residents of Minnesota, hope springs eternal during the early days of March. For many without ample time or money for travel to tropical wonderlands, these hopes are pretty much fixated on a premature end to winter and the early arrival of much warmer weather.

But it wasn’t always like that – especially for the farmers and town folk residing in the counties of southwestern Minnesota.

For much of the last century, the calendar turn to March not only brought lofty hopes of an early spring and a swift snow melt, but also frequent coffee shop debates on how the local high school team would fare in the upcoming district, regional and state basketball tournaments.

Despite regular season records that offered faint aspirations of traveling to the big city and the Gopher campus, coaches and fans all crafted possible scenarios that would have their favorite team joining just seven other high schools in playing for the state championship at Williams Arena, or “The Barn” as it’s affectionately known.

With the southern Minnesota emergence of hockey and school district consolidations still many years away, high school basketball reigned supreme, if only because fielding twelve athletes who were sufficiently adept at dribbling, shooting and rebounding was plausible for even the smallest of these rural communities.

During the last eleven years prior to the creation of multiple-class tournaments in 1971, southwestern Minnesota high schools secured four championships, bookended by Edgerton’s 1960 championship win over Austin and unbeaten Sherburn’s capture of the very last single-class tournament in 1970 – two communities with barely 1,000 inhabitants each.

Much has been written about the Sherburn Raiders’ undefeated season and its 78-62 defeat of metro powerhouse and tournament favorite, South St. Paul, in the final game of the state tournament. While they are all great reads, none have really focused on that year’s emergence of the community’s most reclusive resident, George Packard, as the team’s most improbable, but truly renowned fan.

This 67-year old loner was feared by just about every kid who walked the streets of Sherburn. As team co-captain, Jeff McCarron, pointed out, “He scared us as kids. With untrimmed ear and nose hair, scraggly eyebrows, he was kind of this mysterious person about town.” Never with a clean-shaven face, and always publicly mumbling to himself, it was little wonder kids nervously avoided George’s house when trick-or-treating each Halloween. Even apprehensive adults crossed to the other side of the street when he regularly walked the three blocks from his home to the Post Office to check for mail.
George: loner was scary until they got to know him

George was not known to imbibe in alcoholic beverages, but in many ways he closely resembled the town drunk, Wilbur “Shooter” Flatch, the Dennis Hopper character introduced in the 1991 film, HOOSIERS, a movie whose narrative is uncannily similar to Sherburn’s storied road to the state championship. Like Shooter, George spent most days with no close buddies to talk through personal concerns and challenges, but he and Shooter did both share a very keen love of basketball.

It was George’s actual devotion to the local high school’s football team that initially gave rise to his eventual recognition, first by the teams’ coaches and players, then the local fans and ultimately, the entire state’s sporting public.

It was October 17, 1969, and the Raiders were set to play the Blue Jays from Truman, a 30-minute drive from Sherburn. The Blue Jays were the Raiders’ arch-rival in the Middle Eight Conference, and despite having one remaining home game against Mapleton, a Sherburn win that night would pretty much secure its first football conference championship in decades.

In the early afternoon hours of game day, George met up with Sherburn’s football coach, Bill Etter, and mumbled warnings about the strength of the Truman team and to not take a win for granted. Dressed in an old, tattered winter coat stained with blood from recent animal trapplings, mismatched mittens and lace-up boots that obviously exceeded standard mileage expiration dates, George explained to Coach Etter that he was headed to Truman to see the game. With kickoff nearly five hours away, a very curious coach had to be asking himself if George planned on walking to Truman. George later volunteered that his car’s headlights didn’t work, so he had to make sure he got to Truman before dark.

With George pacing the field outside the fan ropes, Sherburn did indeed beat Truman 32-0, a victory that ensured at least a tie for the conference championship. As the winning team and coaches boarded the bus for the triumphant return to Sherburn, Coach Etter recalled his afternoon conversation with George and wondered aloud what George’s plan might be for the night – a night where temperatures were expected to dip close to and maybe below freezing.

George’s sleepover in his car and return to Sherburn in the early morning hours of the next day was not the leading conversational topic amongst fans that morning. With fans excitedly replaying the hurt Sherburn had put on their arch-rival the night before, very few were aware of George’s travails in getting to watch his beloved Raiders. But the tale was not lost on Coach Etter who, upon hearing of George’s return, set about to help Sherburn’s most reviled, yet dedicated, fan, gain some community tolerance and possibly even a little public acceptance and acknowledgement.

With a final season victory over Mapleton and the conference championship trophy in hand, the attention of athletes and coaches turned to basketball. Tryouts and practices began in early November with the first game slated for the first week of December. With the return of Sherburn’s two outstanding big men, McCarron and Tom Mulso, second-year head coach Dennis Christofferson was excited about the team’s prospects and anxious for the start of the upcoming season.

Etter was also the assistant basketball coach, and when George began showing up at every practice in the same clothes he had worn that night in Truman, he alerted Christofferson to George’s plight in traveling to away games.

Always alone and leaning against the performance stage bordering the west end of the basketball court, George watched the floor action with a passionate interest while mumbling incessantly to himself as the Raiders practiced its soon-to-be vaunted fast-break offense and swarming zone defense. No one in the gym regularly greeted George upon his arrival, nor did anyone display any interest in his mumblings, as odors of perspiration and dead animals kept other fans at a careful distance. That is, until the day coaches approached George with an offer that in the eyes of many, bordered on madness.
George: coaches dressed him up to accompany team

As the coaches walked toward George, he started moving toward the exit, all the time expecting he was about to be told to leave practice. It wasn’t hard to understand his surprise when the coaches asked if he would be interested in traveling to away games on the team bus. The seldomly observed ear-to-ear smile on George’s face provided the answer, but it was quickly erased upon learning the offer’s conditions. Quite simply, George had to clean up his act.

With inadequate wardrobe alternatives and an even smaller bank balance, George probably recognized that despite the coaches’ generous offer, he once again would have to resign himself to walking the five blocks to the high school to only watch the local team play home games. But to these two coaches’ credit, they were hatching other plans to help the town’s most reclusive and frightening resident.

Coaches and players pooled spare cash and purchased new lace-up boots. Parents of the players located a used suit and outer coat for George that offered a reasonable fit. Other fans contributed a couple of dress shirts and ties. No longer did George have excuses. The addition of soap, water and more frequent use of his razor put George on the bus.

The Raiders opened their season on December 2 with an impressive 74-38 homecourt victory over Jackson. Just three days later, George’s first bus trip was to Butterfield – an easy 35-minute drive from Sherburn. Riding on the bus, George appeared bewildered by what his role might be with this team. As McCarron later pointed out, “You certainly could imagine how someone, subjected to so much past cruelty, would be confused when he was now having an entire team treat him with appreciation.”

Sherburn handily defeated Butterfield 76-54, but the buzz amongst Raider fans regarding the locals winning performance that night couldn’t hold a candle to the crowd’s clamoring for reasons why the town’s best-known recluse was sitting on the players’ bench and carrying the ball bag. In retrospect, it really should have been readily apparent to all. With George on the bus and the team undefeated, he had become their good luck charm. Regrettably for George, charming the town’s fans and residents into believing he was the real deal was going to take more than opening the season with two impressive victories.

With each ensuing bus trip, George seemed to gain a better grasp of his role. Players took it upon themselves to engage George in conversations about the game ahead and about his childhood. They reveled in never-before-heard stories of George’s youth – stories so outrageously amusing that coaches and players alike found themselves collapsing to the floor in gut-wrenching laughter.

But after all, the team did have a game to play and as the bus would approach each opponent’s town, Coach Christofferson would move George to the front seat. There George would remind the team of those opposing players he expected would be the toughest to defend. As McCarron tells it, “I’m not sure where he gained his understanding of opposing players, but it was a rare night that we didn’t believe him. He pushed us to remain focused on the job at hand. I don’t think there was ever a game where George didn’t tell us we could get beat.”

Despite his emergence as the team’s mascot, there were certainly going to be some things about George that would defy change. Senior point guard John Tirevold said, “He would pack a bag lunch for each trip and he always included a peeled, over-ripe banana that kind of molded itself to the bottom of the bag. With grubby unwashed hands, he would pull a chunk of the brown banana from the bag, stuff it in his mouth and lick his fingers.” George may have cleaned up his act but lunch sharing on that year’s bus trips was not going to be happening.

With the victories mounting, the team was also capturing ever greater attention from sports writers and broadcasters. Mulso and McCarron were quickly becoming the high scoring “M and M boys.” Tirevold was gaining kudos as the outstanding floor general responsible for pushing Sherburn’s fast pace of play. Reporters were intrigued by the outstanding ball skills and exceptional court sense exhibited by its two young sophomore starters, Pete Eiden and Paul Krohn.

And, of course, journalistic curiosity about a 67-year-old outcast being thrust into a prominent role with an undefeated team was flourishing. So familiar with avoiding public attention in the past, George now found himself at the center. He initially retreated, but like his role with the team, the appreciation and admiration extended to him by reporters brought pure delight to George.

In HOOSIERS, Hickory head coach Norman Dale attempted to prove Shooter’s worth to cynical local community members and fans by intentionally getting ejected from a game. With his assistant coach still recovering from a heart attack suffered weeks earlier, Shooter found himself forced to coach the team for the remaining minutes of play. To the surprise of players, fans and Shooter himself, he effectively demonstrated his basketball acumen by designing a play that helped Hickory win the game on a last-second shot.

Coach Christofferson’s frequent sideline antics provided
George: players were his pallbearers 13 years later

ample incentive for referees to toss him during that season’s games, but the 28-year old coach’s desire to win prohibited any thought of ever purposely retreating to the locker room and putting George in charge. Besides, assistant coach Etter was the always available and able-bodied replacement.

George was not once ever permitted to design plays like Shooter, but with the strong backing and encouragement of the players, these two coaches presented him with a much grander opportunity. He was afforded the good fortune to be an essential and vital part of a remarkable championship season. He did indeed earn the right to be called the team’s good luck charm. It was during those cold and glorious winter months Sherburn fans all wished would never end that George was finally able to discard his filthy, worn out clothes and shoes, along with nearly fifty years of personal challenges, loneliness, humiliation and public embarrassment.

His close relationship with this outstanding basketball team appeared to have won acceptance from the community as well. Residents crossed the street to greet George and wish him well. Kids rushed up to him to say hello. It was a very distinctive transformation, but ironically, George really didn’t change. Led by the thoughtful and generous actions on the part of the team’s players and coaches, the real transformation was rooted in changes to the community’s perceptions of a gentle man who listened to a much different drummer.

George was notorious for being quoted in newspaper articles much later in the season saying, “We’re just the hicks from the sticks.” For the most part, the players likely all hoped he was only speaking on behalf of himself, but for that one magnificent basketball season, those hicks demonstrated that not only could David conquer Goliath, but that good guys really could finish first. They strapped the village outcast to their backs and carried him into a realm of popularity and admiration that few people have ever dreamed of achieving. And let’s not forget, those hicks also showed the state’s sporting public how to play basketball in that very last single-class tournament.

These players all went on to play college basketball and/or football. They became educators, authors, playwrights, college athletic directors, and banking, radio and insurance industry executives. Throughout their careers, they continued to extend helping hands to individuals down on their luck or simply in need of just some kind of appreciation and acknowledgement – just as Coach Christofferson and Coach Etter had coached them to do years earlier.

Dennis Christofferson left Sherburn after the 1979-1980 school year and moved to Fargo, North Dakota. He started and owned a prominent insurance agency until passing away in 2005 at the young age of 64. Bill Etter left the education and coaching field a few years after the championship season. He became a very successful restaurant management executive before retiring to Arizona.

George passed away in July of 1983. He was 81 years old. Except for three sisters living some distance away, the obituary could have simply stated he left no one. The passage of thirteen years since the championship season had erased much of George’s notoriety within this small community. Those few residents who attended the funeral were mostly long-time neighbors who had helped George through his final days.

His contributions were not lost on the players and coaches from that championship season, however. They were his proud casket bearers that day and truly grateful for the opportunity to say a final goodbye to their good luck charm. Champions they truly were.

The team’s final victory over the highly-favored South St. Paul Packers brought residents and alumni of the small village of Sherburn an immeasurable amount of pride and euphoria. Sure, in the grand scheme of things, it was only one single basketball season – just four dark, cold and wintry months. But for Mr. Packard, it must have seemed like a lifetime.

Post-script by Jeff McCarron:

We never did ask George if he played basketball. His childhood was full of ridicule and difficulties. We just never had the good one-on-one to explore his past. The one time I did speak to him one-on-one, he was sick over Christmas break. My mom used to bake a chicken for him and have me bring it to him during my college days. He made sure he returned the favor by providing her with two jars his “special apple sauce.” That didn’t look too appetizing, but his heart was in the right place.

There were Halloween stories of him being left locked in an outhouse on Main Street. Humiliating. Embarrassing for the community. Kids can be so mean. It was great to see him standing in front of a mass of 3,000 people the Sunday after state, and stepping to the microphone and looking out at everyone and giving his take on the experience – then concluding with “And they thought we were Hicks from the Sticks!” He waved his hands and walked off, laughing, “Who-woo!” He got the last laugh.
Southwest Minnesota Christian’s boys finished the season with a 29-0 record, one of just three unbeaten basketball teams in the state counting boys and girls. The 29th win was their Section 3A finals conquest of Central Minnesota Christian School, 71-64, on March 12. But heartbreak came the next morning as the state tournament was called off as a consequence of the cruel coronavirus pandemic enveloping the world.

“March 13 was the absolute worst day in my entire 15 years of coaching,” coach Jamie Pap said. “We cried together in our locker room for well over two hours.” The team adjourned to a player’s house, eating some pizza together, “but the ache just wouldn’t ease,” Pap said. They returned to the gym to play some pickup games just to stay together.

Pap said Jacob Van Dam tried to put a positive spin on it, telling the coaches, “At least we got the best case scenario out of the worst possible outcome. We were allowed to be a part of such a great atmosphere last night in our section final game when other teams didn’t even get to play. That’s one thing we can be thankful for, even though this hurts so very bad.”

SWC has enjoyed great success in state tournaments with five Class 1A championships and one runner-up finish in eight appearances. Pap himself played for the 1999 state champs. The current team was bidding to be the school’s first unbeaten state champion.

Avery Pater, 6-0 senior guard, was the floor general, exuding humble, calm leadership on the offense end along with daunting pressure on the defensive end, averaging 12.7 points, 6.1 rebounds, 6.0 assists and 3.9 steals. He scored 1,161 points, while his 476 assists and 316 steals are the most of any player during Pap’s 15 years.

Jacob Van Dam, 6-4 senior guard, scored 1,469 points, No. 2 all-time at SWMC, and averaged 16.5 points, 4.4 rebounds and 3.6 assists this year. He rifled long past-break passes to teammates and his 3-pointer sent their regular-season game against CMCS to overtime.

Kade Fey, 6-5 senior guard, was the Eagles scoring leader with 20.2 per game along with 7.5 rebounds, dangerous on three’s, off the dribble, and posting up. He could also guard any position. A two-year starter, his 22 points in the section finals put him over 1,000 with a final 1,011.

The other starters were Hunter Vander Haar, 6-2 junior forward, who averaged 6.7 points and 5.6 rebounds, and Micah Schaap, 6-1 sophomore guard, who averaged 9.1 points and 3.6 rebounds. Top subs were Denver Decker, 6-1 senior guard (5.2 ppg), and Carter Van Hulzen, 6-3 sophomore forward (4.2 ppg).

While they missed out on state, the Section 3A finals was thrilling. Facing a CMCS team they nipped in overtime earlier, the Eagles prevailed 71-64 in “the loudest and most electric atmosphere a coach could ask for,” Pap said, with about 3,000 fans at Southwest Minnesota State.

“Because my team’s state tournament dreams were ripped away from them the next morning, I am so very grateful they were given the opportunity to play with a full tournament crowd,” said Pap, referring to some section finals played before a limited number of fans.

Pap thought it was a “rash decision” to cancel, as opposed to postponing, even until June or July. Because the kids found out about the cancelation from Twitter, he was also miffed that the coaches were not even allowed to be the ones breaking the news to the players.

A week later, Friday, Pap said he’s “still really struggling” with the cancelation and the deep disappointment for the players and fans. He even holds out hope that the tournament could still be resumed. He stated:

“We don’t need a large single location to host all the classes ... We don’t need all the media hype, we don’t even need a crowd if that’s what it takes .... We’d travel how ever many hours we needed to in order to be able to play out the tournament .... We only need a floor and two hoops. Just please give us a chance .... I’d pay tourney fees personally if I’d have to.”
Pacesetter’s proposal to resume the section and state tournaments

By Jeff McCarron
Pacesetter director

Pacesetter, which has run the Sweet 16 and other summer tournaments for 40 years, has a proposal to resume the basketball tournaments where they left off, if the teams are interested.

Could they still be held? If games are allowed again before the end of June, I would say YES! The girls only have eight games to play. That could be done in one day at Williams Arena or the Target Center:

SATURDAY – Facility I
Class AAAA quarter-finals, 8:30 a.m.
Class AAAA quarter-finals, 10:00 a.m.
Class AAAA quarter-finals, 11:30 a.m.
Class AAAA quarter-finals, 1 p.m.
Class AA quarter-finals, 2:30 p.m.
Class AA quarter-finals, 4:00 p.m.
Class AA quarter-finals, 5:30 p.m.
Class AA quarter-finals, 7 p.m.

SATURDAY – Facility II
Class A semi-finals, 9 a.m.
Class A semi-finals, 10:30 a.m.
Class AA semi-finals, noon
Class AA semi-finals, 1:30 p.m.
Class AAA championship, 3 p.m.
Class AAAAA championship, 4:30 p.m.
Class A championship, 6 p.m.
Class AA championship, 7:30 p.m.

DONE!

The boys’ tournament would require 17 section championships and 28 state games. These could be played this way: All 17 section championships on Tuesdays in the area of each section. Athletic directors could arrange this game and split the proceeds.

The 28 state games could be held on one weekend in June, using two courts (both courts in Williams?) with all quarterfinals – 16 games – on Saturday and all semis and finals – 12 games - on Sunday, played every 90 minutes. Pacesetter runs the Sweet Sixteen every summer with high-level teams playing games just 1:20 apart, so 1:30 wouldn’t be a problem.

SATURDAY – Facility I
Class AAAA quarter-finals, 8:30 a.m.
Class AAAA quarter-finals, 10:00 a.m.
Class AAAA quarter-finals, 11:30 a.m.
Class AAAA quarter-finals, 1 p.m.
Class AA quarter-finals, 2:30 p.m.
Class AA quarter-finals, 4:00 p.m.
Class AA quarter-finals, 5:30 p.m.
Class AA quarter-finals, 7 p.m.

SATURDAY – Facility II
Class A semi-finals, 9 a.m.
Class A semi-finals, 10:30 a.m.
Class AAA semi-finals, noon
Class AAA semi-finals, 1:30 p.m.
Class AAAAA championship, 4 p.m.
Class AAA championship, 6 p.m.

SUNDAY – Facility I
Class AA semi-finals, 8:30 a.m.
Class AA semi-finals, 10:00 a.m.
Class A semi-finals, 11:30 a.m.
Class A semi-finals, 1 p.m.

SUNDAY – Facility II
Class AAAAA semi-finals, 9 a.m.
Class AAAAA semi-finals, 10:30 a.m.
Class AAA semi-finals, noon
Class AAA semi-finals, 1:30 p.m.
Class AAAAA championship, 4 p.m.
Class AAA championship, 6 p.m.

There shouldn’t be any conflicts with facilities or players since everything is shut down – AAU, spring sports, other facility events, and so on. If you are a player, make your high school team your first priority, so your team can finish your high school tournament before you play on other summer teams.

We would all love it if the MSHSL would run it, so it stays within the traditional framework, but if the MSHSL is not willing or able to run it, Pacesetter would be happy, willing and able to do it. If the boys’ and girls’ coaches associations and the MSHSL would also support it, we could have a satisfying finish to the state tournament.

Who cares about the asterisk? Teams want to play.

NOTE: I am a strong believer in staying alone, separated and safe during this virus shutdown, but if it becomes safe to play by June 15, these playoffs could be held the last two weeks in June. Or in May.... But until the coast is clear – STAY SAFE AND SEPARATE!
GIRLS 1,000-PT CLUB UPDATE

Kora Kritzberger, '20, Ada-Borup/NCW - 1,477
Paige Meyer, '21, Albany - not available
Samantha Skarstad, '20, Albert Lea - 1,155
Ella Grove, '20, Alexandria - 1,050
Sydney White, '20, Andover - 1,318
Courtney Koefod, '20, Ashby - 1,370
Colie Justice, '20, Austin - 1,014
Julia Bengston, '21, Becker - 1,736
Courtney Nuest, '21, Becker - 1,152
Adeline Kent, '22, Becker - 1,062
Lauren Johnson, '21, Belle Plaine - 1,295
Sarah Lenz, '21, Belle Plaine - 1,334
Kaitlyn Berreau, '20, Benson - 1,082
Claire Ricard, '20, Benson - 1,165
Kayla Bohr, '20, Blaine - 1,135
Megan Oswald, '21, Blm Prairie - 1,188
Makayla Snow, '20, BOLD - 1,376
Brenna Weis, '20, BOLD - 1,085
Megan Benning, '21, Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart - 2,005
Zhane Thompson, '20, Burnsville - 1,391
Alaina Bennett, '20, Carlton - 1,179
Taryn Frazer, '22, Cass Lake-Bena - 1,074
Callin Hake, '22, Chanhassen - 1,299
Kaylee Van Eps, '21, Chaska - 1,198
Mallory Heyer, '22, Chaska - 1,386
Jackielyn Taflin, '20, Clearbrook-Gonvick - 1,297
Ivane Tensale, '21, Concordia Acad. - 1,890
Shaily Hakamaki, '20, Cromwell-Wright - 2,110
Taya Hakamaki, '20, Cromwell-Wright - 2,203
Emma Borowicz, '21, Crookston - 1,259
Tori Decent, '20, Crosby-Ironton - 1,019
Karli Nixon, '21, Crosby-Ironton - 1,049
Lily Peterson, '21, Crosby-Ironton - 1,199
Nurjei Weems, '20, DeLaSalle - not available
Macy Hernandez, '20, Duluth East - 1,044
Grace Kirk, '20, Duluth Marshall - 2,449
Gianna Kneepkens, '21, Duluth Marshall - 2,795
Bella Lourey-Bowen, '20, East Central - 1,662
Nneka Obiazor, '20, Eden Prairie - 1,375
Halle Jansen, '20, Eden Valley-Watkins - 1,668
Olivia Kuechle, '20, Eden Valley-Watkins - 1,157
Lydia Haack, '20, Elk River - 1,322
Brielle Kallberg, '20, Ely - 1,25
Erika Mattson, '20, Ely - 1,952
Kristy DeMuth, '20, Esko - 1,091
Molly Mogenson, '20, Farmington - 1,741
Sophie Hart, '21, Farmington - 1,064
Ellie Colbeck, '22, Fergus Falls - 1,226
Paige Ziegler, '20, Frazee - 1,276
Miah Monahan, '21, Glencoe-Silver Lake - 1,680
Riley Queensland, '20, Grand Meadow - 1,738
Mallory Brake, '20, Hastings - 2,645
Paige Thompson, '20, Hawley - 1,485
Ellie Dague, '21, Henning - 1,805
Jordyn Allen, '20, Heritage Christian Acad. - not avail.
Kirstin Robbins, '20, Heritage Christian Acad. - not avail.
Isabella Hartzel, '21, Hill-Murray - 1,073
Francesca Vasecardo, '21, Holy Angels - 1,515
Abby Carlisle, '20, Hope Academy - 1,614
Paige Bueckers, '20, Hopkins - 2,777
Emma Geiwitz, '21, Houston - 1,228
CJ Decker, '20, Howard Lake-W-W - 1,506
Alexa Schumann, '20, Howard Lake-W-W - 1,380
Alaina Wolff, '20, Jackson County Central - 2,041
Riley Dummer, '20, Kenyon-Wanamingo - 1,237
Ellie Buchholtz, '21, Kingsland - 1,188
Natalie Bremer, '22, Lake City - 1,308
Mya Shones, '22, Lake City - 1,015
Lakesha Carter, '21, Lake Crystal-Wellcome Mem. - 1,661
Alexis Cloyd, '21, Lake Crystal-Wellcome Mem. - 1,338
Lauren Jensen, '20, Lakeville North - 2,216
Marissa Radtke, '21, Lester Prairie/Holy Trinity - 1,457
Myia Ruzek, '20, Lewiston-Altura - 1,750
Olivia Christianson, '20, Lyle-Pacelli - 2,177
Payton Danielson, '20, Mabel-Canton - 1,580
Sydney Clark, '20, Mahnomen/Waubun - 1,051
Lexi Karge, '22, Mankato East - 1,030
Mackenzie Schweim, '22, Mankato East - 1,097
Holly Wiste, '20, Mankato West - 1,172
Abby Schulte, '20, Maple Grove - 1,188
Jordyn Lamker, '21, Maple Grove - 1,285
Ally Bruegger, '20, Maple River - 1,001
Jordyn Hilgemann, '21, Marshall - 1,864
Emma Kneifel, '20, Medford - 2,019
Kiley Nihart, '20, Medford - 1,216
Makiya Luetmer, '20, Melrose - 2,063
Tara Hendrickson, '20, Menahga - 1,061
Ava Hill, '20, Mesabi East - 2,581
Hannah Hannuksela, '21, Mesabi East - 1,714
Miranda Broberg, '20, Milaca - 1,351
Jade Hill, '21, Minneapolis South - 2,338
Mia Curtis, '20, Minnehaha Academy - 2,544
Morgan Hennen, '20, Minneota - 1,299
Abby Hennen, '21, Minneota - 1,564
Emma Nelson, '20, MN Valley Lutheran - 1,108
Emma Thorfinnson, '20, Minnewaska Area - 1,049
Anna Olson, '20, Monticello - 1,782
Rylie Polomny, '20, Moorhead - 1,201
GIRLS 1,000-PT CLUB CONTINUED

Natalie Mikrot, ‘22, Moose Lake-Willow River - 1,453
Malory Anderson, ‘20, Morris Area/Chokio-Alberta - 1,226
Lindsey Becher, ‘20, Mounds View - 1,837
Margo Stoesz, ‘20, Mountain Lake/Comfrey - 1,455
Carly Hager, ‘20, New Life Academy - 1,455
Amanda Giesen, ‘20, New Prague - 1,103
Emily Russo, ‘20, New Prague - 1,644
Sophie Stork, ‘22, New Richland-H-E-G - 1,105
Lily Orazem, ‘20, Onamia - 2,595
Adalia McKenzie, ‘21, Park Center - 2,132
Karley Motschenbacher, ‘20, Park Christian - 2,456
Rilee Michaelson, ‘20, Park Rapids Area - 1,631
Faith Alberts, ‘21, Parkers Prairie - 1,772
Greta Tolleson, ‘21, Pelican Rapids - 1,281
Lily Wilson, ‘20, Pine City - 2,024
Ellie Hasz, ‘21, Pine City - 1,699
Alexandra Larson, ‘20, Pine Island - 1,089
Brooke Sinning, ‘20, Pine Island - 1,169
Rylie Hirshey, ‘21, Pine River-Backus - 1,213
Zoe Velde, ‘20, Pipestone Area - 1,186
Lauren Bjurman, ‘20, Princeton - 1,026
Haidyn Pitsch, ‘20, Prior Lake - 1,068
Sam Pogatchnik, ‘20, Proctor - 1,907
Hailey Hohenecker, ‘20, Providence Acad - 1,069
Megan Erickson, ‘21, Randolph - 1,471
Gerika Kingbird, ‘20, Red Lake - not available
Autumn Holthusen, ‘21, Red Lake - not available
Jenna Pahlen, ‘20, Red Lake Co. Central - 1,622
Kia Bachand, ‘21, Red Lake Co. Central - 1,061
Haley Garman, ‘21, Redwood Valley - 1,538
Kierra Wheeler, ‘21, Robbinsdale Cooper - 1,489
Alyssa Ustby, ‘20, Rochester Lourdes - 2,560
Anna Miller, ‘21, Rochester Mayo - 1,059
Sydney Manthana, ‘21, Rockford - 1,284
Katie Borowicz, ‘21, Roseau - 2,460
Taylor Janssen, ‘20, Rosemount - 1,062
Jayda Johnston, ‘20, Roseville Area - 1,388
Tamia Ugass, ‘21, Roseville Area - 1,446
Jayna Gronewold, ‘20, Rothsay - 1,688
Jenna Anderson, ‘20, Royalton - 1,065
Emily Malikowski, ‘20, Royalton - 1,090
Julia Dammann, ‘20, Sauk Centre - 1,202
Tori Peschel, ‘20, Sauk Centre - 1,876
Maya Lake, ‘20, Sebeka - 1,521
McKenzie Latzke, ‘20, Sibley East - 1,023
Ysareia Chevre, ‘20, Simley - 1,716
Tiwaah Danso, ‘20, Simley - 1,031
Sydney Stensgard, ‘20, Simley - 1,469
Sydney Windschitl, ‘21, Sleepy Eye St. Mary’s - 1,408
Madison Mathiowetz, ‘22, Sleepy Eye St. Mary’s - 1,923
Jazlynn Prins, ‘20, SW MN Christian - 1,827
Amelia Sulom, ‘20, Spring Grove - 1,198
Sydney Hauger, ‘20, Springfield - 2,219
Brigid Boyle, ‘21, St. Agnes - 1,093
Samantha Sibbet, ‘20, St. Anthony Village - 1,507
Emily Olson, ‘21, St. Clair - 1,093
Shayla Miller, ‘20, St. Louis Park - 1,181
Raegan Alexander, ‘21, St. Louis Park - 1,056
Mackenzie Kramer, ‘20, St. Michael-Alb. - 1,878
Kaylynn Asberry, ‘22, St. Paul Como Park - not avail.
Ronnie Porter, ‘22, St. Paul Como Park - not avail.
Sarah Conlon, ‘20, St. Peter - 1,132
Lily Welch, ‘20, Stewartville - 1,627
Aliza Karlen, ‘20, Stillwater - 2,096
Alexis Pratt, ‘21, Stillwater - 2,197
Carla Meyer, ‘20, Totino-Grace - 1,329
Sydney Gilliland, ‘20, Triton - 1,073
Kendra Petersohn, ‘20, Triton - 1,591
Kayla Rocholl, ‘20, Underwood - 1,268
Amber Biniek, ‘20, Upsala - 1,086
Laura Lange, ‘20, Upsala - 1,421
Tess Johnson, ‘20, Waconia - 1,216
Kennedy Gravelle, ‘20, Wadena-Deer Creek - 1,419
Megan Benjamin, ‘20, Walker-Hacken.-Akeley - 1,430
Brianna Raddatz, ‘20, Walker-Hack.-Akeley - 2,174
Shelby Durand, ‘20, Warren-Alvarado-Oslo - 1,086
Rylie Mortimer, ‘20, Warren-Alvarado-Oslo - 1,088
Gus Boyer, ‘20, Waseca - 1,365
Brielle Bartelt, ‘20, Waterville-Elysian-Morristown - 1,221
Annika Stewart, ‘20, Wayzata - 1,706
Jenna Johnson, ‘21, Wayzata - 1,139
Lexi Bright, ‘22, West Central Area - 1,307
Jordan Rubie, ‘20, Winona Cotter - 1,038
Madison Hinz, ‘20, Yellow Medicine East - 1,215
Ali Hunstad, ‘20, Zumbrota-Mazeppa - 1,739
**BOYS 1,000-PT CLUB UPDATE**

Preston Gwin, ’20, Ada-Borup - 1,052
Mason Miller, ’20, Ada-Borup - 1,801
Jaden Norby, ’21, Ashby - 1,108
Steven Lawver, ’20, Atwater-Cosmos-GC - 1,098
Dawson Miller, ’20, Atwater-Cosmos-GC - 1,544
Colten Jensen, ’20, Bemidji - 1,029
Will Enderson, ’20, Benson - 1,048
Dylan Moen, ’20, Blackduck - not available
Jasper Liu, ’21, Blake School - 1,018
Gabe Ganz, ’21, Blake School - 1,182
Robert Grace IV, ’21, Blake School - 1,102
Gabe Hagen, ’20, Blooming Prairie - 1,251
Kaden Thomas, ’20, Blooming Prairie - 1,107
Jordan Sagedahl, ’20, BOLD - not available
Gavin Vosika, ’20, BOLD - 1,774
Drew Sagedahl, ’21, BOLD - not available
Tanner Bitzan, ’20, Brandon-Evansville - 1,135
Brandon Maatz, ’20, Buffalo - 1,290
Matthew Willert, ’20, Buffalo - 2,005
Noah King, ’20, Caledonia - 2,575
Eli King, ’22, Caledonia - 1,033
Henry Abraham, ’20, Cambridge-Isanti - 3,070
Matt Santkuyl, ’20, Carlton - not available
Ben Soderstrom, ’20, Carlton - not available
Jarell Jacobs, ’20, Cass Lake-Bena - 2,100
Austin TeBrake, ’20, Central MN Christian - 1,197
Reid Johnson, ’21, Chatfield - 1,234
Jonny Hamnes, ’20, Clearbrook-Gonvick - 1,081
Ben Holden, ’21, Cleveland - 1,173
Karl Chapin, ’20, Community Christian - 1,030
Daniel Reid, ’21, Community Christian - 1,426
Essay Hagos, ’20, Concordia Academy - not aval.
Pete Sutton, ’20, Cook County - 1,346
J’Vonne Hadley, ’20, Cretin-Derham Hall - 1,856
Curtis Jones, ’20, Cretin-Derham Hall - 1,557
James Sommer, ’20, Cristo Rey Jesuit - 1,706
Micah Pocernich, ’20, Cromwell-Wright - 1,942
Caden Osborn, ’20, Crookston - 1,071
Zach Durfee, ’20, Dawson-Boyd - 1,352
Romell Horton, ’20, Dawson-Boyd - 1,196
Brady Williams, ’20, Dover-Eyota - 2,289
Josh Reinertsen, ’20, Duluth Denfeld - 1,880
Samuel Lohn, ’20, Duluth Marshall - not available
Julian Benson, ’20, East Grand Forks - 1,584
Sam Votava, ’21, East Grand Forks - 1,562
Nathan Willett, ’20, East Grand Forks - 1,041
Ben Carlson, ’20, East Ridge - 2,003
Steven Crowl, ’20, Eastview - 1,747
Jaylen James, ’20, Eastview - 1,013
Tate Machacek, ’20, Eastview - 1,129
Austin Andrews, ’20, Eden Prairie - 2,025
Connor Christensen, ’20, Eden Prairie - 1,099
Drake Dobbs, ’20, Eden Prairie - 2,027
John Henry, ’20, Eden Prairie - 1,240
Joshua Streit, ’21, Eden Valley-Watkins - 1,185
Dylan Fenske, ’20, Ely - 1,161
Conner Barney, ’22, Fond du Lac Ojibwe - 1,244
Jordan Brown, ’23, Fond du Lac Ojibwe - 1,182
Cole Fleisher, ’20, Frazee - not available
Broden Fleisher, ’21, Frazee - not available
Sam Opsahl, ’20, Goodhue - 1,169
Colt Landers, ’21, Grand Meadow - 1,666
John Sutherland, ’20, Grand Rapids - 1,841
Dylan DeChampeau, ’20, Greenway - 2,989
Luke Dudycha, ’20, Hayfield - 1,058
Ethan Slaathaug, ’21, Hayfield - 1,184
Isaac Fisher, ’20, Henning - 1,010
Blake Wallevand, ’20, Henning - 1,358
Eli Fest, ’21, Heron Lake-Oakabena/Fulda - 1,133
Ayden McDonald, ’22, Hibbing - 1,338
Jax Wysong, ’20, Hills-Beaver Creek - 1,376
Matt Banovetz, ’20, Holy Angels - 1,238
Caleb Hoilien, ’20, Hope Academy - 2,123
Kerwin Walton, ’20, Hopkins - 1,423
Mikkel Schutte, ’20, Houston - not available
Alex Van Gundy, ’20, Houston - not available
Russell Corrigan, ’20, Hutchinson - 1,388
Austin Hanel, ’21, Immanuel Lutheran - not avail.
Andrew Hesebeck, ’20, Jackson Co Central - 1,144
Rudy Voss, ’20, Jackson County Central - 2,108
Kobe Weimert, ’20, Janesville-Waldorf-Pem. - 1,432
Ryan Samuelson, ’20, Jordan - 1,888
Jacob Donnett, ’20, Kaleidoscope Charter - 1,302
Jace Bigelow, ’21, Kasson-Mantorville - 1,048
Tate Erlandson, ’20, Kenyon-Wanamingo - not avail.
Jarrett Kujava, ’20, Kittson Co. Central - 1,556
Zach Todd, ’20, La Crescent-Hokah - 1,206
Austin Bonn, ’20, Lac qui Parle Valley - 1,320
Reid Gastner, ’20, Lake City - 1,504
Nathan Heise, ’20, Lake City - 2,307
Lance Puffer, ’21, Lakeview Christian - 1,100
Gunner Reed, ’20, Lewiston-Altura - 1,242
Matt Kennedy, ’20, Littlefork-Big Falls - 1,203
Jed Nelson, ’21, Lyle/Pacelli - 1,243
Blake Wadsworth, ’20, MACCRAY - 1,078
Brad Kienitz, ’21, MACCRAY - 1,103
Ja’Sean Glover, ’22, Madelia - 1,605
Joich Gong, ’20, Mankato East - 1,000
Jax Madson, ’20, Mankato East - 1,495
Ben Ellingworth, ’20, Mankato Loyola - 1,326
Wyatt Geistfeld, ’20, Martin Co. West - 1,444
BOYS 1,000-PT CLUB CONTINUED

Tristan Aho, ‘20, Menahga - 1,073
Charlie Hodge, ‘21, Menahga - 1,048
Jalen Suggs, ‘20, Minnehaha Academy - 2,945
Nolan Boerboom, ‘20, Minneota - 1,065
Logan Sussner, ‘20, Minneapolis - 1,696
Jace Marotz, ‘20, Minnesota Valley Luth. - 1,076
Dunwa Omot, ‘20, Minnesota Valley Luth. - 1,157
Cameron Steele, ‘20, Minnetonka - 1,622
Austin Wetter, ‘20, Monticello - 1,274
Drew Hagen, ‘20, Moorhead - 1,467
Mason Olson, ‘21, Moose Lake-WR - 1,173
Brady Warin, ‘21, Moose Lake-Willow River - 1,110
Jackson Loge, ‘22, Morris Area/Chokio-Alberta - 1,369
Jameson Sexton, ‘20, Mound Westonka - 1,137
Sam Paulson, ‘20, Mountain Lake Area/Comfrey - 1,004
Abraham Stoesh, ‘20, Mountain LA/Comfrey - 1,036
Luke DeWulf, ‘20, Nevis - 1,102
Parker Johnson, ‘20, New Prague - 1,028
Reece Melby, ‘20, New Ulm - 1,443
James Gillis, ‘20, New Ulm Cathedral - 1,074
Jon Zinniel, ‘20, New Ulm Cathedral - 1,700
Riley Hulke, ‘20, Nicollet - 2,273
Ethan Crandall, ‘20, North Lakes Acad. - 1,061
Trevor Morrison, ‘20, North Woods - 1,525
Cameron Wake, ‘20, Northland - 1,121
Josh Parrow, ‘20, Onamia - 1,736
Daniel Savageau, ‘20, Osakis - 2,020
Corbin Froehlich, ‘21, Paynesville - 1,083
McHale Korf, ‘21, Pelican Rapids - 1,172
Finn Diggins, ‘21, Perham - 1,100
Peter Schommer, ‘20, Pierz - 1,424
Spencer Schaefer, ‘20, Pillager - 1,421
Seth Logan, ‘20, Pine City - 1,594
Carter O’Reilly, ‘20, Pine Island - 1,106
Brady Raph, ‘20, Pine River-Backus - 1,675
Blake Herber, ‘21, Plainview-Elgin-Millville - 1,105
Dawson Garcia, ‘20, Prior Lake - 2,151
Nick Drinken, ‘20, Randolph - 1,008
Delwyn ”DJ” Holthusen III, ‘21, Red Lake - 1,576
Derek Peterson, ‘20 Red Lake Co. Central - 1,447

Luke Pepin, ‘20, Rockford - 1,060
Will Cordes, ‘20, Shakopee - 1,177
Caleb Druvenga, ‘20, Shakopee - 1,184
Charles Katona, ‘20, Shakopee - 1,862
Mason Ollman, ‘20, Silver Bay - 1,725
Riley Tiboni, ‘20, Silver Bay - 1,181
Kegan Heiderscheidt, ‘21, Sleepy Eye - 1,058
Nick Labat, ‘20, Sleepy Eye St. Mary’s - 1,515
Alonzo Dodd, ‘22, South St. Paul - 1,064
Max Lawrence, ‘20, Spectrum - 1,551
Gabe Myren, ‘20, Spring Lake Park - 1,505
Blake Remme, ‘20, Spring Lake Park - 1,488
Mitchell Buerkle, ‘20, Springfield - 1,296
Decker Scheffler, ‘20, Springfield - 2,299
Tait Nelson, ‘20, St. Anthony Village - 2,155
Kooper Vaughn, ‘21, St. Charles - 1,293
Michael Gravelle, ‘20, St. Cloud Apollo - not avail.
Wyatt Schroeder, ‘20, St. Francis - 1,298
Adam Holod, ‘21, St. Paul Academy - 1,175
Simeon Sharp, ‘20, St. Paul Harding - not avail.
Wyatt Olson, ‘20, St. Peter - 1,725
Will Tschetter, ‘21, Stewartville - 1,906
Kade Fey, ‘20, SW MN Christian - 1,011
Avery Pater, ‘20, SW MN Christian - 1,161
Jacob Van Dam, ‘20, SW MN Christian - 1,469
AJ Kloos, ‘20, United So.Central - 1,392
Jayden Bernard, ‘20, Virginia - 1,885
Bereket Loer, ‘20, Wadena-Deer Creek - 1,343
Ryan Dufault, ‘21, Waseca - 1,346
Andrew Morgan, ‘21, Waseca - 1,330
Kyreese Willingham, ‘21, Waseca - 1,147
Ethan Mischke, ‘21, Westbrook-Walnut Grove - 1,000
Matt Thielen, ‘20, Wheaton/Herman-No cross - 1,701
Tertub Ochothow, ‘21, Worthington - 1,278
Randy Wimmer, ‘20, Wrens - not available
Carter McEachern, ‘20, Zimmerman - not available
Zach Hutton, ‘20, Zumbrota-Mazeppa - 1,100
Where the boys section tournaments left off

**CLASS 4A**
Section 1: Rochester Mayo vs. Lakeville South
Section 2: Eden Prairie vs. Shakopee
Section 3: Eastview vs. Lakeville North
Section 4: Cretin-Derham Hall 51, East Ridge 48
Section 5: Park Center vs. Spring Lake Park
Section 6: Hopkins 71, Robbinsdale Cooper 60
Section 7: Cambridge-Isanti 81, Duluth East 73
Section 8: Maple Grove 54, Buffalo 52

**CLASS 3A**
Section 1: Austin vs. Albert Lea
Section 2: Marshall 65, Mankato East 58
Section 3: Richfield 67, Holy Angels 53
Section 4: Minnehaha Academy 94, Totino-Grace 58
Section 5: Delano 80, Fridley 51
Section 6: De La Salle 71, Waconia 45
Section 7: Princeton 67, Hermantown 64
Section 8: St. Cloud Apollo 72, Alexandria 70

**CLASS 2A**
Section 1: Caledonia 71, Stewartville 55
Section 2: Waseca 56, Blue Earth Area 36
Section 3: Jackson County Central 69, Minnewaska Area 60
Section 4: Cristo Rey Jesuit vs. Concordia Academy
Section 5: Blake vs. Minneapolis North
Section 6: Mora 57, Pine City 51
Section 7: Esko vs. Pierz
Section 8: Perham 66, East Grand Forks 63

**CLASS 1A**
Section 1: Blooming Prairie 59, Hayfield 51
Section 2: New Ulm Cathedral vs. Springfield
Section 3: Southwest MN Christian 71, Central MN Christian 64
Section 4: Legacy Christian vs. Christ’s Household of Faith
Section 5: Nevis vs. Hinckley-Finlayson
Section 6: Henning 57, West Central 45
Section 7: North Woods vs. Nashwauk-Keewatin
Section 8: Cass Lake-Bena vs. Ada-Borup

---

**“TOUR OF CHAMPIONS” BASKETBALL CAMPS**

The camp that comes to YOUR gym! To be a Champion... Learn from a Champion!

Contact Tracey at info@pacesetterbasketball.com or call 320-243-7460 for details on having a Pacesetter basketball camp at your school next summer.

www.pacesettersports.net
The Pacesetter Minnesota Invitational Tournament has been one of the premier summer tournaments in the Midwest since 1991. NBA players Joel Przybilla, Mike Miller, Kris Humphries, and Nate Wolters are a few of the many top players who have played in the MIT.

The top teams from the 5-state area of Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin are invited annually.

All teams play 5-6 games in two days. Teams play in “regional” brackets on Saturday (3-4 games) and advance based on Saturday results for Sunday Final Four brackets (2 games).

Teams that win the prestigious MIT championship will receive individual plaques. Teams with high finishes receive medals with neck ribbons.

One of the top facilities in the state will host this event: Clemens Field House at the College of St. Benedict (St. Joseph, MN).

Register Early for VMIT & Save BIG!

New Tiered Pricing!

• 1st - 8th teams to register/pay $250
• 9th - 16th teams to register/pay $280
• All other teams to register/pay $310

Registration Deadline: July 15
Online Registration: www.pacesettersports.net
Contact Information:
Email Jeff McCarron at info@pacesetternet.com or call 320-243-7460