

- \*Top 20 teams in each class
- \*Another 3,000-pointer
- \*Holiday break victors

# New era in New Ulm

By Bruce Strand

New Ulm is not a Top Ten team yet, not quite. But after 14 seasons of futility, the Eagles last year and this year have mightily revived boys hoops in this historic river town of 14,000.

“We have players that believe in what we are doing. They love the game, and they love winning. They hold each other accountable,” assessed Eagle coach Matt Dennis.

New Ulm is 6-1 with a current No. 11 ranking in Class 3A, on the heels of a 22-7 campaign last year, including their first Big South Conference title since 1995.

Before that, the Eagles averaged six wins a year over 14 winters since their last previous winning season (13-12 in 2006-07). The school has made nine state tournament trips but none since 1975.

“Last year was the result of building a player-led culture with the right guys at the right time,” said Dennis about the breakout season. His first two teams were 5-11 and 7-18.

The Eagles have four juniors and one senior starting. Their scoring star is Colton Benson, 6-foot-5 junior forward, knocking down 29 points per

**Colton Benson, New Ulm scoring leader, celebrates a 3-pointer.**

Travis Rosenau,  
New Ulm Journal



game, after a 40-point game Thursday against Mankato Loyola. He’s a 45-percent three-point shooter.

Nathan Firle, 6-foot-9 junior who missed much of last season with a medical issue, is averaging 16 points, 12 rebounds and close to four blocks. Junior guard James Osborne averages 12 points.

“Colton Benson is a tough kid who can shoot as well as anyone we’ve seen,” the coach said. “James Osborne is explosive on both ends of the floor. Nate Firle at 6-9 is really coming into his own.”

Guards Collin Horning (senior) and Easton Clark (junior) add six points per game for the Eagles.

They have beaten four teams with winning records. Their lone loss was

by 63-61 to Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial (6-1) on Wednesday.

When Dennis, previously a boys and girls head coach in Wisconsin, was hired in 2019, he was the program’s fourth head coach in four years. “That’s very tough on any program. The boys didn’t have any continuity so every year they were starting over with a new philosophy,” Dennis said. There’s stability now.

Last year, the Eagles started 5-0, then lost four of five, then went 16-3 the rest of the way. They were 9-1 in conference to win the Big South East, twice beating long-time power Marshall, the Big South West champs.

A signature win, said Dennis, was over Jordan 82-78 during a 10-game win streak. “We circled the Jordan

game as a must win to get noticed," he said. "We knew they were tough. It was on the road in a hostile environment. It came down to the wire, and we pulled it off." The Eagles beat Jordan (4-2) again this year 74-53.

Their biggest win was an 85-78 conquest of another long-time power, Mankato West, in the Section 3AAA semifinals. The Eagles were edged by Mankato East 77-68 in the finals. "We battled very hard.... We came up short, but we came out believing," the coach said.

One standout player graduated: Charlie Osborn, who led them with 24 points per game.



**James Osborne scores on a breakaway for the Eagles.**

Ulm for some time, averaging 16 wins over the last decade. This year, the hockey and wrestling teams were both 7-0 in December, giving New Ulm a combined 20-1 record in those three sports.

The basketball team has at long last joined the hockey team as a consistent winner.

"Like most schools, we want to play at the state tournament," Dennis said. "That is where our sights are set. We have a lot of growing to do to make that a reality, but that's what we are aiming at."

New Ulm, located in a triangle formed by the confluence of the Minnesota and Cottonwood rivers, is home to the August Schell Brewing Company and Minnesota Music Hall of Fame. The burg is known for its German heritage, and for historical sites and landmarks dating back to the Dakota War of 1862.

Sports-wise, the hockey teams have been the winter standard bearer at New



**Eden Prairie's Max Lorenson dipped under Shakopee's Isaac Cordes to sink a layup.**

Bruce Strand, MN BB News

## Big holiday wins for EP, Zephyrs, CDH, Chaska

**H**oliday break tournaments were held at numerous locations this past week. Among the highlights for boys:

No. 7 Eden Prairie handed No. 3 Shakopee its first loss 80-68 at Eden Prairie, led by guards Max Lorenson and Luke Rapp. Class 2A's top-ranked Holy Family fended off No. 11 Albany 76-68 at St. John's. Mahtomedi, No. 5 in Class 3A, edged Farmington, No. 7 in 4A, 80-78 at Hamline. Will Underwood had 31 for the Zephyrs.

Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial won a duel of unbeaten teams over New Ulm 63-61, then lost to Class 2A's No. 5 Maple River 62-52, at Mankato Bethany.

Princeton, No. 9 in 3A, dealt 2A's No. 4 Maranatha Christian its first loss 79-74 with Aaron Keykel and Cooper Drews sinking 17 points each at St. Cloud State.

Cretin-Derham Hall clipped 4A's No. 4 Eastview 72-69 in overtime at East Ridge, led by Luke Jacobson with 20 points and Jake Little with 17. Jonathan Mekonnen had 25 for Eastview.

In girls notable matchups, Class 4A's No. 4 Chaska beat No. 3 Eden Prairie 72-63 with Kennedy Sanders hitting 22 points and Ashley Schuelke 17 at Park Center. Fergus Falls (4-3) handed Class 1A's top-ranked Hancock its first loss 63-59 at Fergus Falls.



# 2023 **PACESSETTER**

## Minnesota YOUTH BASKETBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP Region Playoffs

### Boys & Girls Grades 4-9

#### ALL GRADES REFER TO THE 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR

4B = 4th grade boys, 4G = 4th grade girls, etc. Teams may register for more than one region.

Region 1 Site	Date	Grade/Gender
Rochester-RCTC	March 25	4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B
Rochester-RCTC	March 26	5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B
Region 2 Site	Date	Grade/Gender
Lake Crystal	April 22	4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B
Lake Crystal	April 23	5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B
Region 3 Site	Date	Grade/Gender
Redwood Falls	March 25	5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B
Redwood Falls	March 26	4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B
Region 4 Site	Date	Grade/Gender
Moose Lake/Willow River	April 15	4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B
Moose Lake/Willow River	April 16	5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B
Region 5 Site	Date	Grade/Gender
Paynesville	April 1	5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B
Paynesville	April 2	4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B
Region 6 Site	Date	Grade/Gender
Alexandria	April 15	5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B
Alexandria	April 16	4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B
Region 7 Site	Date	Grade/Gender
Grand Rapids	April 1	8G, 5B, 7B
Grand Rapids	April 2	7G, 9G, 4B
Mt. Iron-Buhl	April 1	4G, 6G, 9B
Mt. Iron-Buhl	April 2	5G, 6B, 8B
Region 8 Site	Date	Grade/Gender
Bemidji	April 22	5G, 7G, 9G, 4B, 6B, 8B
Bemidji	April 23	4G, 6G, 8G, 5B, 7B, 9B

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Champions from each regional site will be invited to the MN State Championship. Other top finishers will receive an invitation to the Minnesota Invitational Tournament (MIT).

MN State Championships	Location	Date	Grades
MIT - MN Invitational	College of St. Benedict	June 10	B & G 4-6-8
State Championship	College of St. Benedict	June 11	B & G 4-6-8
MIT - MN Invitational	College of St. Benedict	June 17	B & G 5-7-9
State Championship	College of St. Benedict	June 18	B & G 5-7-9



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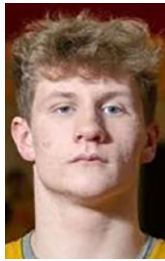
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# MIB's Zubich joins 3,000 club

Asher Zubich scored his 3,000th point for Mountain Iron-Buhl on Monday evening while hitting 22 in a 77-58 loss to Northland. The senior guard is the 14th boy in state history to reach 3,000 and the fifth-fastest to get there, in his 121st game, according to Matt Pederson, state basketball historian. He's behind only Joel McDonald, Chisholm 1991, 110 games; Isaiah Dallman, Braham 2006, 113 games; Anders Broman, Lakeview Christian 2013, 114 games, and Jake Sullivan, Tartan, 2000, 116 games (estimated). There were four players on the floor with nearly 7,500 points between them in this game. Zubich's teammate Nick Jesch is over 1,400. Northland's Alec Wake is over 2,000 and Nolan Carlson is over 1,000. Meanwhile, Zubich's sister, Jordan, a junior, will break 2,000 soon. She had 1,941 heading into the Christmas break.



**Asher  
Zubich**

Providence Academy's girls team now has players descended from three prominent professional athletes — up from two the last two years. In addition to freshman guard Maddyn Greenway (daughter of ex-Viking linebacker Chad Greenway), and senior forward Grace Counts and sophomore forward Hope Counts (grand-daughters of 12-year NBA center Mel Counts), the Lions now have speedy seventh-grader Ari Fleis-Peterson as their top sub. The daughter of the great Vikings back Adrian Peterson is contributing 7.3 points per game off the bench. Greenway averages 29.5 points, Grace Counts 15 points, and Hope Counts 8.5 points. Brooke Hohenecker, junior guard with no known major-leaguers in her family tree, averages 9.5 points. The defending state Class 2A champions are 6-2 and ranked No. 1.

Tyrell Terry played on three state championship teams for DeLaSalle, including his senior year in 2019, and was the 31st pick in the NBA draft a year later. Last week he retired from basketball at age 22. Terry had played in 11 games with the Dallas Mavericks, who made him the 31st pick in the draft, and two games with the Memphis Grizzlies, on a 10-day contract. Waived by both teams, he played two seasons in the G League

## AROUND THE STATE

with the Memphis Hustle. Terry cited mental health concerns in a lengthy Instagram post. Along with great experiences, achievements, and friendships basketball gave him, he said, "I've also experienced the darkest times of my life. To the point where instead of building me up, it began to destroy me." In one season at Stanford, he made the All-Pac 10 freshman team, averaging 14.6 points, 4.6 rebounds and 3.1 assists.

Winter Classic pairings have been announced. That's the annual fund-raiser for the Minnesota High School Basketball Hall of Fame, coming up Jan. 14 at Anoka-Ramsey Community College. The girls matchups will be Benilde-St. Margaret's vs. Minnetonka at 11 a.m., Goodhue vs. Pine City at 12:45 p.m., and Hopkins vs. Roseville Area at 2:30 p.m. The boys matchups will be Hopkins vs. Andover at 4:15 p.m., Austin vs. St. Francis at 6 p.m., and Eden Prairie vs. Lakeville North at 7:45 p.m.

Ancient basketball rivals White Bear Lake and Stillwater used to battle each year for what was called the Old Oil Can Trophy from the mid 1920's until the tradition faded in the 1940's. The Star-Tribune recently featured current Stillwater coach Brady Hannigan bringing back that tradition this year — with a new trophy built by associates of his — after he researched the rivalry that started in 1915-16 and has continued non-stop for 218 games now. Stillwater beat the Bears 57-43 on Dec. 16 at home so the Ponies possess the (new) Old Oil Can for now. The Ponies lead the series 132-86. Hannigan said that Ponies vs. Bears is touted as the longest uninterrupted rivalry in the state. At least, he said, "until somebody proves us wrong."

-- Bruce Strand



**March 4 & 5****College of St. Benedict  
St. Joseph, MN****Boys & Girls Grades 4-8****2023 Pacesetter****WINTER CLASSIC****Basketball****Tournament****Saturday, March 4:**

Girls Grades 4-5 | Boys Grades 6-7-8

**Sunday, March 5:**

Girls Grades 6-7-8 | Boys Grades 4-5

Each tournament is a ONE-day tournament.

Limit 16 teams per grade/gender

All teams will play 3-4 games.

All players on a team must either be enrolled in the same school system or live or attend school in the same city, the same school district or the same tribal community.

**\$190/team before Feb 5****\$210/team Feb 5 or later**

Registration Deadline: Feb 22

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# MBBN GIRLS TOP 20

## CLASS 4A

1. Hopkins 6-0
2. St. Michael-Albertville 7-0
3. Eden Prairie 7-1
4. Chaska 6-1
5. Wayzata 7-1
6. Rosemount 6-0
7. East Ridge 8-2
8. Minnetonka 5-2
9. Maple Grove 5-3
10. Lakeville South 7-0
11. Anoka 7-1
12. White Bear Lake 8-1
13. Lakeville North 5-2
14. Stillwater 6-1
15. Rochester Mayo 6-1
16. Rogers 5-2
17. Champlin Park 3-2
18. Elk River 4-3
19. Blaine 8-1
20. Robbinsdale Cooper 5-2

## CLASS 3A

1. Becker 4-0
2. Benilde-St. Margaret's 5-2
3. Jordan 5-0
4. Holy Angels 7-1
5. Marshall 3-1
6. Grand Rapids 6-2
7. Byron 6-1
8. Stewartville 6-2
9. Red Wing 5-1
10. Orono 4-2
11. Cloquet 7-1
12. Detroit Lakes 4-1
13. Alexandria 4-2
14. Mahtomedi 4-2
15. North St. Paul 7-0
16. Monticello 6-1
17. St. Peter 4-2
18. Hill-Murray 3-3
19. Austin 5-2
20. New Prague 5-2

## CLASS 2A

1. Providence Academy 5-2
2. Minnehaha Academy 4-2
3. St. Croix Lutheran 6-2
4. Montevideo 5-0
5. Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial 6-0
6. New London-Spicer 6-0
7. Perham 7-0
8. Duluth Denfeld 5-0
9. Albany 6-1
10. Goodhue 5-2
11. Rochester Lourdes 6-1
12. Sauk Centre 6-1
13. Holy Family 4-4
14. Luverne 5-0
15. Minneapolis Roosevelt 7-1
16. Pine City 3-1
17. Caledonia 6-1
18. Plerz 4-0
19. Southwest Christian 5-0
20. Chatfield 8-1

## CLASS 1A

1. Hancock 4-0
2. Mountain Iron-Buhl 7-1
3. Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 6-0
4. Minneota 3-0
5. Mayer Lutheran 8-0
6. Hayfield 6-1
7. Underwood 6-1
8. Fosston 5-0
9. Lac qui Parle Valley 6-1
10. Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa 2-1
11. Grand Meadow 5-0
12. Tracy-Milroy-Balaton 4-0
13. Kelliher-Northome 7-0
14. BOLD 5-1
15. Braham 7-0
16. Henning 6-1
17. Badger-Greenbush-Middle River 5-1
18. Breckenridge 6-0
19. Goodridge-Grygla 6-0
20. Cromwell-Wright 6-1

*Note: records are through Tuesday.*

# MBBN BOYS TOP 20

## CLASS 4A

1. Park Center 5-0
2. Lakeville North 4-1
3. Shakopee 4-0
4. Eastview 3-1
5. Hopkins 6-1
6. Maple Grove 4-1
7. Farmington 3-2
8. Eden Prairie 3-1
9. East Ridge 3-2
10. Wayzata 2-3
11. Robbinsdale Armstrong 3-2
12. Robbinsdale Cooper 3-1
13. Andover 3-2
14. Minnetonka 3-2
15. Prior Lake 3-2
16. Stillwater 5-2
17. Lakeville South 4-2
18. Rochester Mayo 5-0
19. Buffalo 4-0
20. Cambridge-Isanti 3-1

## CLASS 3A

1. Totino-Grace 2-1
2. Orono 4-0
3. Benilde-St. Margaret's 4-0
4. DeLaSalle 4-2
5. Mahtomedi 2-1
6. Alexandria 4-1
7. Mankato East 4-1
8. Austin 4-1
9. Princeton 4-0
10. St. Anthony Village 4-1
11. New Ulm 5-0
12. Delano 5-2
13. Hermantown 3-0
14. Winona 2-1
15. Mankato West 3-2
16. Jordan 3-1
17. North Branch 4-1
18. Simley 3-1
19. St. Cloud Tech 2-3
20. Marshall 2-0

## CLASS 2A

1. Holy Family 4-0
2. Lake City 6-0
3. Minneapolis North 3-4
4. Maranatha Christian 3-0
5. Maple River 6-1
6. Minnehaha Academy 6-2
7. Plainview-Elgin-Millville 2-2
8. Perham 5-0
9. Pequot Lakes 4-0
10. Watertown-Mayer 4-0
11. Albany 3-0
12. Mora 3-1
13. Sauk Centre 4-0
14. Esko 3-0
15. Thief River Falls 6-0
16. Rock Ridge 8-1
17. New London-Spicer 2-0
18. Crosby-Ironton 5-1
19. West Central Area 4-1
20. Two Harbors

## CLASS 1A

1. Cherry 3-2
2. Hayfield 5-1
3. Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa 2-0
4. New Life Academy 6-0
5. Cass Lake-Bena 4-0
6. Henning 6-0
7. Deer River 5-1
8. Goodhue 5-1
9. Russell-Tyler-Ruthton 4-0
10. Mankato Loyola 6-0
11. Legacy Christian 6-2
12. Lakeview 3-1
13. Lyle-Pacelli 6-0
14. Ada-Borup-West 5-0
15. Browerville-Eagle Valley 3-1
16. Border West 3-1
17. Battle Lake 4-0
18. Southwest MN Christian 4-1
19. Mahnomon-Waubun 4-2
20. Lester Prairie 7-1