

- *Top 20 teams in each class
- *RTR boys are 23-0
- *How about MN Basket Ball?
- * Couple No. 1's beaten



Jerry Chiabotti posed last year with grandsons T.J. (3), Brenden (1) and Jared (2) Chiabotti.

The Chiabotti 7

*Two generations light up scoreboards
at Bigfork & North Woods*

By Bruce Strand

Chiabotti is a prominent name on the state thousand-point club list. The family added one more entry Feb. 10 when Brenden Chiabotti, North Woods senior guard, went crazy for 50 points in 115-68 win over Littlefork-Big Falls.

Brenden is the seventh descendent of retired coach Jerry Chiabotti and wife Suzy to score in quadruple figures, including three sons who played for him at Bigfork, then three grandsons and a granddaughter at North Woods, where Jerry served as assistant boys coach until this year.

The family and the school usually anticipate such occasions and are prepared to commemorate them, but Jerry's youngest grandson, who's averaging 14 points, caught everybody by surprise.

"Brendie needed 42 points (to reach 1,000), so who knew he'd get 50? We didn't even have a sign made," Jerry complained, good-naturedly.

Brenden hit seven three-pointers and his cousin Jared (also a thousand-pointer) did a good job getting the ball to him, Jerry said. Brenden set a family record, no small feat. T.J. had a 38-point game and Jared had a 37.

Two epic feats in same game by Providence star Greenway

Maddyn Greenway, Providence Academy's freshman luminary, pumped in 60 points against one of top teams on their schedule, Minnehaha Academy, leading a high-octane 126-94 win over the Redhawks — and became the first ninth-grader in state history to reach 2,000 points in the process, on Friday, Feb. 17.

Greenway, who also logged 12 rebounds and 11 assists for a remarkable triple double, achieved the third-highest points in state history. Gianna Kneepkens had 67 points for Duluth Marshall in a state tournament game in 2021 — ironically, in a 94-91 loss to Greenway's team. McKenna Hofschild had a 63-point game for Prior Lake in 2018, which was also in a loss, to Park Center.

Addi Mack, Minnehaha Academy sophomore, also a 2,000-point scorer, drilled 45 points in the loss to Providence Academy.

The two teams' 221 points was second-most in state history behind Waconia beating Glencoe-Silver Lake 122-115 in overtime in 2014 for 237 points. Providence's 126 points tied for second-most in history as New York Mills hit 129 points in 1977 and Maranatha Christian 126 in 2013.

Jerry, a retired elementary teacher, coached Bigfork for 34 years, including his three sons. Scott Chiabotti (1988 graduate) scored 1,305 points, Bryan Chiabotti (1990) scored 1,019 and Neil (1996) scored 1,161. Jerry's two state trips were, happily, with his sons: Scott and Bryan in 1998 and Neil in 1994. Scott is an elementary teacher at Tower-Soudan. His brothers work for U.S. Steel, Bryan as a mine supervisor and Neil as a driller.

At North Woods, T.J. Chiabotti, a 2022 graduate, set the family record of 2,114 points. TJ and Brenden are Neil's sons. A third son, Dylan, also played. Their sister Presley, in eighth grade, plays volleyball. Bria Chiabotti (2019), who tallied 1,256 points, and Jared Chiabotti, a senior who has close to 1,400, are Bryan's sons. All the boys also played football. T.J. rushed for over over 5,000 yards in addition to his 2,000-point buckets career.

Jerry's sons all helped coach their kids in youth basketball. Grandpa pitched in, too. "I would take them out in the hall and turn the lights out so they'd have to dribble without watching their hands," he said. "And they've all been really good ball-handlers." They have to be — all are 5-foot-9 to 5-foot-11 guards, except for Brenden, who shot up to 6-foot-1. Bria (5-foot-9) played forward.

Jerry, eager to help coach another generation at the high school level, came out of retirement to serve as assistant under Will Kleppe for the last seven years. That seven-year stretch got Jerry back to the state tournament three more times as North Woods was Class 1A runner-up in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

(Both coaches retired after last season. Andrew Jogovich, former Chisholm athlete, took over as head coach. Another note: top scorer for the 13-9 Grizzlies this year is junior Jonah Burnett with 24.9 per game)

In his own playing days at Tower (to which he returned after retiring at Bigfork) in the 1960's, Jerry estimates he scored 465 points. "But we only played 16 games a year then, and didn't have the three-point shot," he said.

Brenden and Jared are the end of the line, for now anyway; maybe in coming years another generation will rise up. After this year, the only active Chiabotti will be Presley, who doesn't play basketball.

The Chiabotti contingent in the 1,000-point club ranks just behind the 13 McDonalds, with seven boys and six girls on the list, all descended from longtime Chisholm coach Bob McDonald. Meanwhile, the family with the most siblings in the club is the Hanson's of Maranatha Christian, as seven of eight brothers were over 1,000 points, the last graduating in 2015.

Ten in contention for Mr. Basketball

Ten semifinalists for the Minnesota Mr. Basketball award were announced recently by the committee. Five finalists will be named before the state tournament. They are:

Taison Chatman, Totino-Grace 6-foot-4 guard, floor leader averaging 10.4 points, signed by Ohio State.

Nate Dahl, Buffalo 6-foot-1 guard, averaging 24.6 points.

Quyavant Douglas, Brooklyn Center 6-foot guard, averaging 31.6 points.

Boden Kapke, Holy Family Catholic 6-foot-11 forward, averaging 22 points, signed by Butler.

Ben Kopetzke, Andover 6-foot guard, averaging 25.7 points, signed by Concordia-St. Paul.

James O'Hara, Park Center 6-foot-4 forward, averaging 18.8 points.

Max Shikenjanski, Stillwater 6-foot-3 guard, averaging 26 points, committed to Minnesota for football.

Hayden Tibbits, Wayzata 5-foot-10 guard, averaging 19.9 points.

Nasir Whitlock, DeLaSalle 6-foot-1 guard, averaging 27 points, signed by Lehigh (PA).

Nolan Winter, Lakeville North 6-foot-11 forward, averaging 23 points and 11.5 rebounds, signed by Wisconsin.

Eden Prairie halts Wayzata streak

Eden Prairie came up with its best game of the season to snap Wayzata's 17-game win streak 92-86 on Thursday, Feb. 16, in Wayzata. The Eagles (10-11) had JJ Sullivan with 22 points, Max Lorenson with 20, Nolan Anderson 19, Joey Flom 10 and Luke Ramp nine. Wayzata (18-4), which started 0-3 but hadn't lost since, had Spencer Hall with 24 points, Jackson McAndrew 19, Hayden Tibbits 18, Isaiah Habte 16, and Jake Schmitt nine. Wayzata bounced back to win a duel of Top Five teams over Minnetonka 89-65 on Tuesday, led by Tibbits with 26 points and McAndrew with 22.

2023 **PACESETTER**

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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RTR: on a roll all season



Good times: Russell-Tyler-Ruthhton starters cheered as a reserve made a basket.

By Bruce Strand

Russell-Tyler-Ruthhton, which has played in five state boys championship games, winning three of them, is making a bid to return to the top of the heap, while pursuing the program's second undefeated regular season.

The Knights were 23-0 with two games left before playoffs as this edition of the MBBN was posted, one of two unbeaten teams in the state along with Park Center.

"We appreciate the recognition, even if it makes the target on our backs a bit bigger," said Darren Gravley, when told his team would be spotlighted this week.

RTR will close the regular season Monday hosting Dawson-Boyd for the overall Camden Conference championship, pitting the two division leaders. The Knights beat the Blackjacks 64-53 on Jan. 10 in Dawson. Other top teams they've beaten are Lakeville (21-3) by 71-65, Southwest Minnesota Christian (20-4) by 89-86, and Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg (18-5) by 73-44.

The Knights placed sixth in the state tournament last season and returned six of their top nine. Experience and depth are the team strengths, said Gravley, in his second year as head coach after 16 years assisting Ted Kern. He added, "We win with a combination of pressure defense, and the ability to score in transition or execute in the half court set."

RTR is led by Aiden Wichmann, senior 6-foot-1 point guard, averaging 17.4 points and 2.1 steals, and Drew Werkman, junior 6-foot-3 post, averaging 17 points,



**Aiden
Wichmann**

7.6 rebounds and 2.3 steals. On last year's 24-9 team, Wichmann averaged 14.8 points and Werkman 12.8.

"They run the pick and roll extremely well together," Gravley said. "Aiden has the ability to score at all three levels and Drew is able to finish around the rim."

Cody Wichmann, Aiden's cousin, averages 10.5 points and leads the team with 58 three's. The 5-foot-9 senior guard is "very active in our motion offense, and is a good cutter, and a good on-ball defender," said Gravley.

The other starters are seniors Hayden Gravley (8.2 points per game, after missing last season with a football injury) and Camden Hansen (6.5 points, 5.0 rebounds). Both are also versatile defenders, the coach said. Contributing off the bench are junior Blake Christianson (6.8 points) and seniors Tucker Haroldson (3.4 assists), Matt Weber and Skyelar Martinez.

RTR had one previous unbeaten regular season, in 1989. That team lost in the state finals. The 1988 team was also state runner-up. The Knights broke through for state championships in 2004, 2005, and 2018, the latter of which had a 33-1 record.

Top section challengers appear to be Dawson-Boyd, Westbrook-Walnut Grove, and Murray County Central.

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

PACESSETTER**Scan Code:****Or For More Info/To Register:****www.pacesettersports.net**

Two No. 1's fall

Osseo trips Totino-Grace

Osseo stymied Class 3A's top-ranked, defending state champion Totino-Grace 51-43 on Tuesday, a stark contrast to their Jan. 19 game won by Totino-Grace 94-73. Osseo (13-10), which lost scoring leader Trey Smith (broken hand) three weeks ago, was led by De'Mari Larkins with 19 points. Ty Swanson added 11. Coach Tim Theisen, asked how his team held the Eagles to 51 fewer points in the rematch, quipped, "Good question. I have no idea!" But he added, "Our focus has been on defense since Trey Smith went out. Our kids are buying in, and doing a great job switching in our man-to-man defense. Without Trey, we lose 20 points per game, so to replace it, our defense must pick up its intensity and get some buckets off turnovers." For Totino-Grace (15-7), Patrick Bath had 13 points and Taison Chatman eight. In the Northwest Suburban, Park Center is 16-0, Andover 14-2, Totino-Grace 13-3, Maple Grove 12-4 and Osseo 10-6. After T-G's seventh loss, the MN BB News moved sophomore-led Benilde-St. Margaret's (19-3) into the top spot in the rankings.

Fosston snags Cass Lake-Bena

Fosston handed Cass Lake-Bena, top-ranked in Class 1A, a 54-47 setback on Tuesday in Cass Lake. Cullen Norland scored 18 points and Aaron Norland 14 for Fosston (20-5). Carson Bouchée and Zach Theis added nine each, with Theis making eight assists. CLB had Kaydin Lee with 20 points, and nobody else with more than seven. "We were able to hold them down by controlling the pace of the game. We did a pretty good job in that for the most part," said Ben Hemberger, Fosston coach. "We have pretty good guard play. We've built our program on tough physical defense and taking care of the ball." Cass Lake-Bena (23-2) was having a very good week before that, winning 57-52 over Cherry (18-4) and 98-83 over Nevis (16-6). After CLB's loss, the MN BB News reshuffled the top five in the rankings and moved Goodhue (21-3) to No. 1. The Wildcats have beaten Class 3A's No. 11 Stewartville twice, along with defending state champion Hayfield, while losing two close games to Class 2A's No. 2 Lake City.

Articles are written by Bruce Strand, MBBN editor. Anyone who has a suggestion for an item about a player, coach, team, event or issue is welcome to send an e-mail to bruce.a.strand@gmail.com

AROUND THE STATE

Tori Oehrlein, Crosby-Ironton's freshman standout, scored her 2,000th point and led a Rangers victory over previously-unbeaten New London-Spicer 59-58 on Saturday afternoon at home. Oehrlein, who sank 28 points, became the second Minnesota freshman to reach 2,000, a few days after Providence Academy's Maddyn Greenway. Hannah Compton added 17 with five 3-pointers **Kadence Hesse**, Sleepy Eye senior guard, reached 2,000 points while scoring 25 in a 60-28 win over Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop on Feb. 20. She's her school's all-time scoring leader **Adella Olesiak**, South Ridge senior, reached 2,000 points during a 58-28 win over East Central on Feb. 17 ... **New London-Spicer** was the last unbeaten girls team before losing to Crosby-Ironton in the final game of the regular season. On the upside, the Wildcats won their fifth consecutive Wright County Conference West championship ... **Avery Rich** and **Jaden Coahran**, NLS senior guards, have each collected five conference titles, having debuted in eighth grade as the top two subs. **Underwood** (22-3) girls snapped a 23-game win streak by **Henning** (23-2) on Tuesday 44-41 in Henning, led by Kailyn Grove with 15 points, seven rebounds and five blocks. Liz Lukken added 10 points and four assists. Henning lost its opener to Perham and had not lost since **Park Center** boys remained unbeaten by fending off No. 8 **Andover** 97-91 on Tuesday evening as JJ Ware hit 21 points, CJ O'Hara 20 and Jackson Fowlkes 19. For Andover (17-6), Sam Musungu tallied 28 points and Ben Kopitzke 24. Baraka Tarleton had 10 points and 10 rebounds ... **Jhace Pearson** of Bigfork scored 49 points, 38 in the first half, in leading the Huskies past Greenway 71-55 on Tuesday. The senior guard sank eight 3-pointers in the first half and finished the game 20-for-28 overall (8-for-11 on three's) ... **Nolan Winter** of Lakeville North had two big games recently: 32 points and 13 rebounds against Lakeville South in an 81-60 win on Feb. 7, and 47 points and 14 rebounds against Farmington in a 92-77 win on Feb. 10 ... **Minnetonka** girls, ranked No. 6, edged No. 4 **Wayzata** 57-54 on Tuesday, with Aaliyah Crump and Grace Hamdorf scoring 20 points each and Lanelle Wright 13. For Wayzata, Shannon Fornshell sank 15 points and Abby Krzewinski 14 No. 5 **Eden Prairie** girls tripped No. 7 **Maple Grove** 77-72 last Saturday, led by Molly Lenz with 21 points and Tori Schlagel with 18. Kennedi Klick tallied 27 for the Crimson **Brainerd** boys (19-3) probably earned the Section 8AAAA top seed by downing Buffalo 73-59 on Saturday as John Pecarich sank 39 points, shooting 8-for-13 on three-pointers and 9-for-9 on free shots. Nick Evanson was next with 15 points. Nate Dahl tallied 30 points for Buffalo.

MBBN BOYS TOP 20

CLASS 4A

1. Park Center 22-0
2. Lakeville North 21-2
3. Wayzata 18-4
4. Minnetonka 17-6
5. Eastview 17-6
6. East Ridge 16-6
7. Hopkins 16-7
8. Andover 17-6
9. Brainerd 19-3
10. Edina 13-10
11. White Bear Lake 14-7
12. Duluth East 18-5
13. Buffalo 19-5
14. Shakopee 14-9
15. Eagan 14-9
16. Stillwater 13-9
17. Lakeville South 14-9
18. Osseo 13-10
19. Farmington 13-10
20. Maple Grove 17-6

Note: records are through Tuesday.

CLASS 3A

1. Benilde-St. Margaret's 19-3
2. Totino-Grace 15-7
3. DeLaSalle 18-4
4. St. Thomas Academy 18-5
5. Mahtomedi 20-3
6. Orono 18-5
7. Alexandria 17-4
8. Princeton 20-3
9. South St. Paul 18-5
10. Mankato East 18-5
11. Stewartville 20-4
12. Delano 17-6
13. St. Paul Johnson 15-7
14. Detroit Lakes 15-7
15. Herman-town 17-6
16. New Ulm 18-5
17. Worthington 17-4
18. St. Anthony Village 14-8
19. St. Paul Highland Park 13-6
20. Rocori 13-9

CLASS 2A

1. Holy Family Catholic 21-2
2. Lake City 23-1
3. Maranatha Christian 21-3
4. Lake Crystal-Wellcome-Memorial 23-1
5. Maple River 23-2
6. Minneapolis North 15-7
7. Albany 22-1
8. Minnehaha Academy 16-8
9. Perham 18-4
10. Esko 18-3
11. Plainview-Elgin-Millville 21-4
12. Mora 18-4
13. Norwood Young America 21-3
14. Minneapolis Edison 16-7
15. Thief River Falls 20-2
16. Eden Valley-Watkins 19-5
17. Paynesville 18-5
18. Osakis 17-5
19. Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton 18-6
20. Two Harbors 19-3

CLASS 1A

1. Goodhue 21-3
2. Cass Lake-Bena 23-2
3. New Life Academy 17-5
4. Henning 22-1
5. Cherry 18-4
6. Russell-Tyler-Ruthton 23-0
7. Spring Grove 23-1
8. Hayfield 20-5
9. Lyle-Pacelli 20-4
10. Northland 21-2
11. Belgrade-Brooklyn-Elrosa 17-4
12. Dawson-Boyd 21-3
13. Sacred Heart 23-3
14. Lakeview 21-3
15. Border West 20-2
16. Nevis 16-6
17. Southwest MN Christian 20-4
18. Warren-Alvarado-Oslo 22-3
19. Fosston 19-4
20. Westbrook-Walnut Grove 19-4

MBBN GIRLS TOP 20

CLASS 4A

1. Chaska 24-1
2. Hopkins 21-2
3. St. Michael-Albertville 22-3
4. Wayzata 20-4
5. Eden Prairie 16-9
6. Minnetonka 16-9
7. Maple Grove 21-4
8. White Bear Lake 20-4
9. East Ridge 21-4
10. Stillwater 20-4
11. Lakeville North 18-6
12. Rosemount 18-6
13. Rogers 18-6
14. Elk River 19-6
15. Prior Lake 14-9
16. Roseville 14-10
17. Rochester Mayo 21-4
18. Blaine 14-11
19. Robbinsdale Cooper 19-5
20. Lakeville South 16-9

CLASS 3A

1. Becker 22-3
2. Benilde-St. Margaret's 19-6
3. Grand Rapids 23-2
4. Stewartville 23-2
5. Jordan 22-2
6. DeLaSalle 19-6
7. Holy Angels 20-5
8. Alexandria 21-4
9. Detroit Lakes 22-3
10. Mahtomedi 18-5
11. Monticello 20-5
12. St. Peter 18-6
13. Mankato East 18-6
14. Visitation 16-7
15. Delano 19-6
16. Red Wing 18-6
17. Marshall 18-8
18. Orono 14-11
19. Austin 17-8
20. Hill-Murray 14-11

CLASS 2A

1. Providence Academy 23-3
2. Albany 24-1
3. Goodhue 23-3
4. Minnehaha Academy 18-6
5. New London-Spicer 24-1
6. St. Croix Lutheran 21-3
7. Rochester Lourdes 22-4
8. Pequot Lakes 21-3
9. Perham 22-2
10. Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial 24-1
11. Montevideo 20-3
12. Caledonia 22-3
13. Holdingford 20-3
14. Luverne 22-3
15. Minneapolis Roosevelt 23-3
16. Pine City 19-6
17. Crosby-Ironton 17-7
18. Glencoe-Silver Lake 19-6
19. Southwest Christian 16-8
20. Pipestone 16-7

CLASS 1A

1. Mountain Iron-Buhl 21-3
2. Mayer Lutheran 20-3
3. Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 24-1
4. Hayfield 24-3
5. BOLD 20-5
6. Badger-Greenbush-Middle River 22-3
7. Grand Meadow 24-2
8. Underwood 22-3
9. Henning 23-2
10. Belgrade-Broten-Elrosa 19-4
11. Hancock 19-4
12. Cromwell-Wright 20-5
13. Barnum 21-3
14. Kelliher-Northome 23-2
15. Nevis 20-3
16. Fosston 21-3
17. Lac qui Parle Valley 23-3
18. Breckenridge 15-8
19. Sleepy Eye 20-6
20. Braham 19-5

Note: records are through Tuesday.

The road to Target Center

Players in grades 4-9 start playoffs in March, April

Teams in the grades 4-9 levels will be able to participate in Pacesetter's Minnesota post-season playoffs that will lead to the Great Five-State Championships at the Target Center in Minneapolis.



The playoff road begins with eight regionals from Rochester to Bemidji to earn advancement to the Pacesetter Minnesota Youth Basketball State Championships in St. Cloud.

The Minnesota champion and runner-up in each grade/gender group then advance to the Great Five State 8-team bracket with top teams from North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

Pacesetter has provided statewide youth basketball playoffs for over 20,000 Minnesota teams since 1993.

See the Pacesetter 8-region Minnesota State flier in this issue.

Teams may play in any region. Groups are scheduled so

that teams could play in two regions on the same weekend.

The Pacesetter playoff system is for school/community teams. All players must live in, or attend school, in the same city or tribal community. Two or three smaller schools may combine if the total enrollment of their high

schools for grades 9-12 is 400 or fewer.

Each region is limited to the first 16 teams to register.



Minnesota Regionals, grades 4-9

Region 1 — Rochester, March 25-26

Region 2 — Lake Crystal, April 22-23

Region 3 — Redwood Falls, March 25-26

Region 4 — Moose Lake/Willow River, April 15-16

Region 5 — Paynesville, April 1-2

Region 6 — Alexandria, April 15-16

Region 7 — Grand Rapids/Mt. Iron Buhl, April 1-2

Region 8 — Bemidji, April 22-23

Pacesetter Winter Classic for grades 5-8 on tap March 4-5

The 2023 Pacesetter Winter Classic Basketball Tournament for grades 4-8 will be held at Clemens Fieldhouse at St. Ben's on Saturday-Sunday, March 4-5.

Girls in grades 4-5 and boys in grades 6-8 will play Saturday, March 4. Boys in grades 4-5 and girls in grades 6-8 will play Sunday, March 5.

All teams will play 3-4 games in one day. Each bracket will be limited to the first 16 teams to register.

Registration is open through noon, Monday, Feb. 27, at www.pacesettersports.net.



Hey Cinderellas, how about a ‘Minnesota Basket Ball?’

By Jeff McCarron, MBBN Publisher

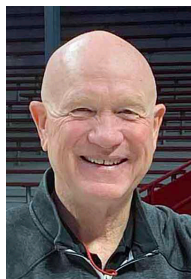
Sometimes very cool things start with an idea. Who thought of “Final Four”?

How about holding an annual “Minnesota Basket Ball”? Yes, Cinderella, that kind of ball...sort of.

This idea occurred to me last month when I heard that the Minnesota Basketball Hall of Fame committee was in need of funds to carry out their nomination and awards recognition processes in the professional way they have chosen to do it.

The Minnesota Hall of Fame was initiated in 2018 and added second and third classes in 2019 and 2022 (after a two-year COVID delay).

“The Minnesota Basket Ball” could be held each year on the night before the last Timberwolves home game, so the date would be known well in advance. The award winners would be recognized at the ball, and the following evening they would be recognized again at the Timberwolves game.



I have had some experience attending balls. Not as a prince, I can assure you. When our family lived overseas, my wife and I taught at the American School of Warsaw, where our kids were able to attend. The American community included the Ambassador to Poland, who became a friend of our family when our daughters became friends. Board members included US Embassy personnel. Many heads of corporations operating in Poland were also parents of ASW students. It was a fascinating mix of adults – Americans and others - associated with a school comprised of about 30% Americans with the rest being students from 36 countries. What a wonderful, diverse mix of cultures with a common bond.

Each spring a gala was held for the adult community. Drinks, dinner, and dancing were on the agenda with a few brief comments by the school director and the ambassador. The Gala Ball served as a great way to connect the ASW community and celebrate the year.

We could do the same in Minnesota to help connect our basketball communities – high school, college and professional. What a diverse mix we would have also with a common bond – Minnesota basketball. It is a large family that deserves a bonding social event to celebrate the seasons.

So let’s imagine our own “Minnesota Basket Ball”. Let’s say \$30,000 is needed to finance the Hall of Fame operation each year. The cost of dinner, rent of the facility, and paying the band may be \$120/person alone. If 600 tickets are sold for \$170/person, the profit of \$30,000 would be attained. All high school coaches would be invited, all college coaches, all sportswriters, TV and radio personalities, MN Lynx/Timberwolves staff members and players, and it would also be opened to Minnesota basketball fans for a limited number of

tickets. Maybe the tickets could be sold for \$200 by groups choosing to earn \$30 per ticket as a fundraiser – if needed. Maybe sponsors would be more willing to get involved in an event like this. A silent auction of autographed items or special basketball memorabilia could also be displayed around the perimeter of the event. If extra money is raised, it could be donated to a special basketball-related cause – maybe basketball clinics in economically depressed areas, for example.

“The Great Minnesota Basket Ball” could become the most coveted ticket of the year. If the Timberwolves/Lynx and Gophers support it, the rest would follow and make it an instant success. I think that could happen. Who wouldn’t want to be involved in the main basketball celebration social event of the year?

If “The Great Minnesota Basket Ball” were held this year – and it won’t be - it would fall on Saturday, April 8. The last Wolves home game is Sunday, April 9. In a weird twist of scheduling with two consecutive games, the Wolves also play on Saturday in San Antonio, so the coaches and staff would be late coming to the “Ball”. What an entrance they could make! There is not enough time to plan it for this year, but it could get started for 2024 with early ticket sales providing some needed funds for the Hall of Fame committee.

What a great way to celebrate the incredible network of friends and connections that basketball offers. Holding it in April each year would be a perfect time to celebrate seasons since all seasons but the Timberwolves would be finished.

No, tuxes and Cinderella dresses would not be required or allowed. Let’s keep people on a similar level with dress clothes but not overdone. No carriages either.

Each major head coach – Timberwolves, Lynx, Gophers – could say a few words. An MC would conduct a program of 60-90 minutes with award winners recognized. Maybe other special awards suggested by other groups could be presented at this time also. After all, it is an all-encompassing Minnesota basketball event. Maybe there would be some special entertainment added or a video. Then the music and mixing and dancing could commence until Cinderella has to leave with slippers intact!

Social 5:00
Dinner 6:30
Program 7:00-8:30
Mixing and dancing 8:30-12:00

Getting \$200 from 600 people by offering an exciting basketball year-end social may be easier than getting \$1000 from 30 people or companies. The next day, maybe the 600 attendees of the ball could get some type of special “event” or privilege associated with the Timberwolves game and sit together in one group.

Pacesetter Basketball and Minnesota Basketball News will commit today to buying four tickets.

So there’s the idea and an early commitment. Let’s get this BALL rolling!

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