

- \*Sweet 16 boys and girls tournament summaries
- \*Great Five State winners
- \*Pacesetter honors trio

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Summer 2023

# Delano boys, Tonka girls are Sweet 16 champions



Delano's Will Strandemo drives against Mankato East's Amari Nobles.



## GIRLS TOP FOUR

1. Minnetonka (4A)
2. Providence Acad. (2A)
3. Eden Prairie (4A)
4. Albany (2A)

## BOYS TOP FOUR

1. Delano (3A)
2. Mankato East (3A)
3. Totino-Grace (3A)
4. Alexandria (3A)



Minnetonka's Tori McKinnon scores on a breakaway against Providence Academy.

# Delano fends off Mankato East for crown as 3A teams take over

By Bruce Strand

**D**elano led a remarkable 1-2-3-4 sweep by Class 3A teams in the 2023 Pacesetter Sweet 16 tournament, emerging as champion in the 34th annual invitational that brings together four of the leading teams in each of four classes to battle it out for one championship.

The Sweet 16 is usually won by a Class 4A team but this year all four of their entrants lost in the quarterfinals in action at the College of St. Benedict.



**Dwuan Reliford leads a Mankato East fast break.**

Delano prevailed the finals over Mankato East, a perennial Top Ten team, 75-72 on Sunday, Aug. 6.

The Tigers are coming off a 20-8 season ending with a 78-77 section semifinal loss to No. 4 ranked Orono. To reach the Sweet 16 finals, they defeated Albany (reigning Class 2A champion) 77-64, Park Center (defending Sweet 16 champion and state Class 4A runner-up) 86-76, and Alexandria (fourth place in Class 3A this year) 67-60.

The Delano lineup included Will Strandemo, JJ Longstreet, Frankie Nau, Dom Lucarelli, Max Iverson, Bjorn Stewart and Nathan Schneider. Coaching them was Trey Longstreet, Delano alum now playing for Northern State.

“Our kids were very excited about winning the tournament,” said Terry Techam, Delano coach. “Every team in the tourney is very talented, and to come away with four wins is a great accomplishment. Pacesetter puts on a first class event and it was an honor to get invited.”



**Delano --- Bjorn Stewart, Nathan Schneider, JJ Longstreet, Max Iverson, Will Strandemo, Dom Lucarelli, Frankie Nau.**



**Mankato East --- Braden Petzel, Bennett Stevermer, Amari Nobles, Lucas Gustafson, Ganden Gosch, Brogan Madson, Manaow Omot, Dwuan Reliford, Dwayne Bryant, Carson Schweim, Thokwesh Puoch.**

This was Delano’s first Sweet 16 appearance since 2016, also had a good showing as the Tigers faced all four Class 4A teams and went 2-2.

Mankato East, coming off a 24-7 season and state tourney trip, opened the Sweet 16 with a win over Cherry, which has placed fourth in Class 1A the past two years, 80-73, then got past two reigning state champions, Wayzata (Class 4A) 78-68 in the quarterfinals and Totino-Grace (Class 3A) 82-69 in the semifinals.

The Cougar lineup included seniors Manow Omot and Dwayne Bryant; juniors Brogan Manson, Ganden Gosch, Dwuan Reliford, Amari Nobles, Thokwesh Pouch and Bennett Stevermer; and sophomores Braden Petzel and Lucas Gustafson. Coaching them were Joich Gong, Chang Wie-Gong, and Francisco Alhag.



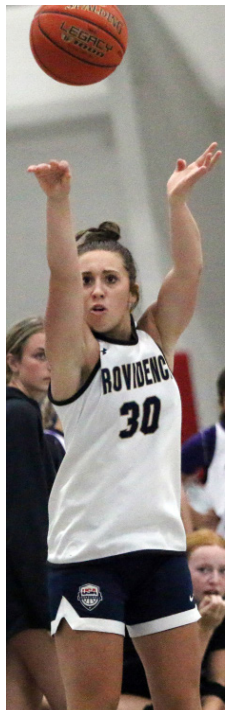
# Minnetonka nips Eden Prairie, Providence Academy for title

By Bruce Strand

Minnetonka pulled out two close wins to capture the championship of the 34th annual Pacesetter Sweet 16, the invitational that brings together leading teams from each of the four classes to battle for one overall title.

Minnetonka edged Providence Academy 62-59 in the finals, after squeezing past Eden Prairie 55-53 in the semifinals, at the College of St. Benedict. In pool play Saturday, the Skippers defeated Totino-Grace 57-54 and Walker-Hackensack-Akeley 57-22.

There were 12 teams, not the usual 16. Hopkins and Lakeville North had to exit due to unforeseen circumstances. After pool play, the 2-0 teams played in D-I, the 1-1 teams in D-II and the 0-2 teams in D-III.



**Maddyn Greenway led the runner-up Lions.**

Minnetonka coach, citing some "good young talent" on display at the Sweet 16 along with the returning starters, and the re-emergence of McKinney: "She is a power five player with numerous offers."

Minnetonka, coming off a 17-11 season, won the Sweet 16 despite missing their top two scorers (all-stater Aaliyah Crump and Lanelle Wright). Top scorer in the lineup was Grace Handorf (7.2 ppg). However, the Skippers regained standout 6-1 guard Tori McKinney, who had a broken tibia last season. The lineup also included Josie Chose, Avery Born, Liesl McCallum, Sydney Cummings, Hallie Hunter, Anna McKinney, Hayley Wock, Delaney Eggert, CeCe Iverseth, Dalia Faye and Chloe Symms. Their coaches were Tim Ties and Terry Brown.

"I think we will be a much deeper team this year," said Brian Cosgriff, Minnetonka coach, citing some "good young talent" on display at the Sweet 16 along with the returning starters, and the re-emergence of McKinney: "She is a power five player with numerous offers."



**Minnetonka --- Front: Anna McKinney, CC Nesseth, Tori McKinney, Delaney Eggert, Sid Cummings, Grace Handorf. Back: Dalia Thornton Fay, Chloe Symms, Josie Chose, Sid Reed, Harley Wock, Hallie Huttner, Avery Boen, Lieselle McCallum. Rear: coaches Tim Ties, Terry Brown.**



**Providence Academy --- Front: Coach Olivia Kammer, Beckett Greenway, Maddyn Greenway, Brooke Hohnacker, Annabel Worner, Lily Sabers, Ali Herlofsky. Back: Coah Maria Counts, Emma Millerbernd, Ari Peterson, Hope Counts, Shannon Healy, Lexie Nicolai, McKenna Schaefer, Tess Klammer**

The finals against Providence Academy — state Class 2A champs the last two years, bidding to become a rare non-4A winner of the Sweet 16 — was close all the way. PA's Ella Millerbernd sank a three-pointer to tie the score at 59-59. Minnetonka worked the ball around until Delaney Eggert was fouled shooting with :22 left and made one of two free shots. PA's superstar guard Maddyn Greenway slashed to the hoop to try to regain the lead, but her shot was short. McKinney rebounded, drew a foul and sank two clinching free shots.

The Lions topped Hill-Murray 80-60 and Kelliher-Northome 84-58 in pool play before edging Albany 63-62 in a rematch of state title game they won 74-60. Greenway slashed for two layups to give them a 60-59 lead. They fell behind 62-60 but she nailed a three-pointer in the final seconds. The lineup included Greenway and her seventh-grade sister Beckett, Hope Counts, Lexie Nicolai, McKenna Schaefer, Shannon Healy, Lily Sabers, Millerbernd, and Ari Peterson. Coaching were alumni Maria Counts and Olivia Klammer.

## Eden Prairie girls nab third place

Eden Prairie, the defending Sweet 16 champion, defeated Albany 69-60 for third place in the Division I tournament. Each team lost a grueling semifinal — Eden Prairie against Minnetonka 55-53 and Albany against Providence Academy 63-62. In pool play, Eden Prairie beat Grand Rapids 82-34 and Hancock 78-50, while Albany foiled Stewartville 59-57 and Cass Lake-Bena 52-26. Eden Prairie's lineup included Camryn Dennin, Kara Hoffman, Jazmyn Hooks, Emerson Johnson, Abby Valiton, Addi Dvoracek, Rae Ehrman, Addi Krueger, Rubi Rock, Tori Schlagel, Vannesa Jordan and Ella Hardwick. Coaching the Eagles was Kylie Kay.

Albany's 63-62 loss to Providence Academy — a rematch of the Class 2A title game — was a thriller. The Huskies took a 57-56 lead on a three-point play by Alyssa Sand, got two free shots from Kylan Gerads to make it 59-56, and two more freebies from Sand for a 62-60 lead with :24 left. PA's Maddyn Greenway beat them with a three-pointer. Albany players were Sand, Gerads, Eva Schwenzfeier, Lauren Nett, Tatum Findley, Callie Holthaus, Larissa Gill, Paisley Ellington and Natalie Blonigen. Coaching them were Tom Findley and Shanna Gerads.

Stewartville, Class 3A runner-up in March, won Division II, beating Hill-Murray 70-51 in the semifinals and Hancock 46-34 in the finals. In pool play, the Tigers lost to Albany 69-57 and beat Cass Lake-Bena 62-41. Hancock beat Totino-Grace 55-50 in the semifinals. Playing for Stewartville were Savannah Hedin, Addison Ruffridger, Audrey Schindelar, Taylor Klement, Danika Shindelar, Kylie Minnich, Jayci Rapf, Katherine Jones, Bella Schwichtenberg, Ella Stier, Delany Sanford, and Gracyn Sorenson. Coaching them were Marty Shindelar and Dave Ruffridge. Playing for Hancock were Kaylynn Christenson, Misty Zempel, Autumn Hubbard, Brooke VerSteeg, Kaitlynn Rohloff, Kaitlynn Staples and Abby Nuest.

Northome-Kelliher captured the Division III championship. The Mustangs lost to Providence Academy 84-58 and Hill-Murray 71-63 in pool play, then defeated Cass Lake-Bena 58-42 and Walker-Hackensack-Akeley 55-52. Playing for Northome-Kelliher were seniors Meleah Grundmeier, Ella Thayer and Kenly Hallstrom, and sophomores Kylee Binkley, Alli Lundin, Kate Thayer, Charli Hallstrom and Emily Mastin. Coaching were Justin Lundin and Amanda Binkley.

## Totino-Grace boys finish third

Totino-Grace, Class 3A champions the past two seasons, claimed third place in the Sweet 16. The Eagles defeated Dawson-Boyd 83-60 and Lake City 97-80 to reach the semifinals, where they lost to Mankato East 82-69. In the third-place game, the Eagles triumphed 71-65 over another 3A power, Alexandria. MBBN was unable to get a list of all the players for Totino-Grace. Three of them were Will Brands, Tyler Wagner, and Dothan Ijadimbola.

Alexandria, which placed fourth in the state Class 3A tournament, took fourth also in the Sweet 16. The Cardinals tripped Spring Grove, a Class 1A state entrant, 57-34, and Hopkins, a perennial 4A top-ten team, 77-70, then lost to eventual champion Delano 67-60 and Totino-Grace. The Alexandria lineup included Dawson Roderick, Evan Moore, Chase Thompson, Samson Hagstrom, Mason Witt, Thomas Hinrichs, Tylan Witt, Myles Gray and Gavin Roderick. Coaching were Jerry Witt and Zach Witt.

Wayzata wound up as the highest finisher among the four Class 4A teams, placing fifth, in a rare instance with all the big schools tripped in the quarterfinals. The reigning Class 4A state champion Trojans were missing their lone returning starter — Jackson McAndrew, who recently signed with Creighton — but won three of four games. The Trojans beat Minnesota Valley Lutheran 75-48 in the first round, then lost to Mankato East 78-68. They edged Class 2A power Lake City 70-66 to reach the fifth-place game, where they nipped Hopkins 61-57. The Wayzata lineup included Evan Johnson, Drew Nepstad, Daniel Grubestic, Ben Shaffer, Brayden Sandmann, Luke Houghland, Adam Dehm, Isaac Olmstead, Collin Berg, and Mike Saphir.

Albany, the Class 2A state champion in March, won three games after a first-round loss and took home the consolation championship. The Huskies lost to eventual champion Delano 77-64 in the first round, then defeated Cass Lake-Bena 88-85, Spring Grove 68-50 and Minnesota Valley Lutheran 87-82. Albany's lineup included seniors Ben Meyer, Tyler Hoffarth, Jack Rieland, and Hunter Hammann; juniors Sam Hondl, Elliott Burnett, Ezekiel Austin, and Bennett Hylla; and sophomore Ashton Olson. They were coached by Scott Hondl.

# Pacesetter Sweet 16 tourney results

## BOYS

### Opening round

Hopkins 75, Waseca 42  
 Alexandria 57, Spring Grove 34  
 Park Center 117, Cass Lake-Bena 37

Delano 77, Albany 64  
 Lake City forfeit from Minnetonka  
 Totino-Grace 83, Dawson-Boyd 60  
 Wayzata 76, Minnesota Valley Lutheran 48  
 Mankato East 80, Cherry 73

### Quarterfinals

Alexandria 77, Hopkins 70  
 Delano 86, Park Center 76  
 Totino-Grace 97, Lake City 80  
 Mankato East 78, Wayzata 68

### Semifinals

Delano 67, Alexandria 60  
 Mankato East 82, Totino-Grace 69

### Championship

Delano 75, Mankato East 72

### Third place

Totino-Grace 71, Alexandria 65

### Fifth place

Hopkins 79, Park Center 77 (2 overtimes)  
 Wayzata 70, Lake City 66  
 Wayzata 61, Hopkins 57

### Seventh place

Park Center 69, Lake City 55

### Consolation quarterfinals

Spring Grove 61, Waseca 48  
 Albany 88, Cass Lake-Bena 85  
 Dawson-Boyd 85, Minnetonka 79  
 Minnesota Valley Lutheran 72, Cherry 64



### Consolation semifinals

Albany 68, Spring Grove 50  
 Minnesota Valley Lutheran 77, Dawson-Boyd 52

### Consolation finals (9th place)

Albany 87, Minnesota Valley Lutheran 82

### Other consolation games

Dawson-Boyd 55, Spring Grove 40  
 Waseca 76, Cass Lake-Bena 67  
 Cherry 62, Sartell-St. Stephen 54  
 Cherry 81, Waseca 59  
 Cass Lake-Bena 65, Sartell-St. Stephen 56

*(Sartell-St. Stephen replaced Minnetonka on Sunday)*

## GIRLS

### North Pool

Eden Prairie 82, Grand Rapids 34  
 Eden Prairie 78, Hancock 50  
 Hancock 70, Grand Rapids 38

### South Pool

Albany 69, Stewartville 57  
 Albany 52, Cass Lake-Bena 26  
 Stewartville 62, Cass Lake-Bena 41

### East Pool

Providence Academy 80, Hill-Murray 60  
 Providence Academy 84, Northome-Kelliher 58  
 Hill-Murray 71, Northome-Kelliher 63

### West Pool

Minnetonka 57, Totino-Grace 54  
 Minnetonka 57, Walker-Hackensack-Akeley 22  
 Totino-Grace 81, Walker-Hackensack-Akeley 47

### DIVISION I TOURNAMENT

#### Semifinals

Minnetonka 55, Eden Prairie 53  
 Providence Academy 63, Albany 62

#### Championship

Minnetonka 62, Providence Academy 59

#### Third place

Eden Prairie 69, Albany 60

### DIVISION II TOURNAMENT

#### Semifinals

Hancock 55, Totino-Grace 50  
 Stewartville 70, Hill-Murray 51

#### Championship

Stewartville 46, Hancock 34

#### Third place

Hill-Murray 58, Totino-Grace 51

### DIVISION III TOURNAMENT

#### Semifinals

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley 57, Grand Rapids 46  
 Northome-Kelliher 58, Cass Lake-Bena 42

#### Championship

Northome-Kelliher 55, Walker-Hackensack-Akeley 52

#### Third place

Grand Rapids 58, Cass Lake-Bena 51



# Sweet 16 boys scrapbook



**Park Center's Chiang Ring shoots, guarded by Lake City's Keegan Ryan.**



**Albany's Jack Rieland goes up for two, guarded by MN Valley Lutheran's Will Kaesermann**



**Above: Spring Grove's Zach Brumm rebounds.**



**Right: Mankato's Duwan Reliford on a fast break.**



**Alexandria's Dawson Roderick vs. T-G's Tyler Wagner**



**T-G's Will Brands**



**MVL's Zander Jacobson vs. Albany's Hunter Hamann (24)**



**Wayzata's Drew Nepstad (34) vs. Hopkins' Davie Hart**



**Talon Witt of Alexandria takes aim.**



# Sweet 16 girls scrapbook



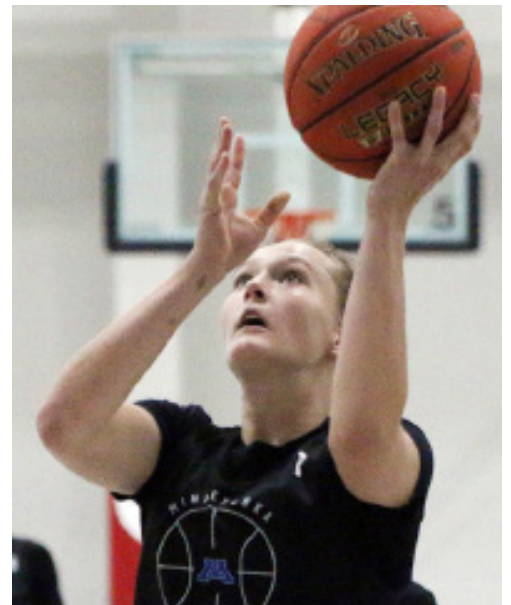
**Eden Prairie's Jazmyn Hooks eyes the hoop, guarded by Albany's Alyssa Sands.**



**Northome-Kelliher's Kate Thayer leads a break against WHA.**



**Albany's Kylan Gerads penetrates against Providence.**



**Minnetonka's Delaney Eggert scores.**



**Hancock's Kaitlyn Rohloff duels Totino-Grace's Maria Radabaugh**



**WHA's Avery Morrison shoots a three.**



**Stewartville's Taylor Klement maneuvers against Hancock.**



# Great Five State champions



**Watertown – Front: Chris Bevers, Lincoln Schutt, Max Martensen, Dane Stark. Back: Coach Michael Bevers, Jake Mack, Isaac Rehorst, Joey Ries.**

## **WATERTOWN (8th grade boys)**

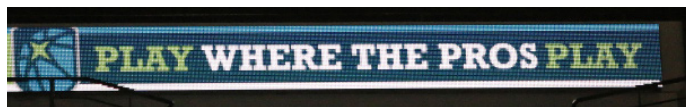
Watertown (SD) foiled Owatonna (MN) 38-34 in a back-and-forth championship game Aug. 5 at Target Center. Watertown trailed by nine in the second half, then caught fire and held a 36-29 lead in the final minute. Owatonna's Jack Hawkins canned a long three-pointer and Jorge Juarez hit a layup after the Huskies stole an inbounds pass, pulling the Minnesotans within 36-34 with :17 left. However, Lincoln Schutt delivered two clutch free shots to clinch for Watertown. The Arrows beat Montevideo 29-23 in the semifinals while Owatonna stooped Sauk Centre 39-37. Montevideo opened with a 45-33 win over Sioux Valley (SD) and claimed third place with a 37-28 win over Sauk Centre. The Mainstreetrs beat Sioux Valley 39-32 to reach the third-place game



**Benson County -- Kaitlyn Maddock, Isabella Engstrom, Ella Fossen, Aubrey Kenner, Vada Fossen, Lacie Fautsch, Pressley Brown**

## **BENSON COUNTY (9th grade girls)**

Benson County (ND) defeated Turtle Mountain (ND) in the finals 28-19 on Aug. 4 after getting past Frazee (MN) 39-28 in the semifinals at Target Center. The Wildcats won with solid fundamentals and effective defensive pressure, both full court and half court. Aubrey Kenner and Kaitlyn Maddock were scoring leaders. Kenner sank three WNBA-length three-pointers and Maddock made two. Turtle Mountain beat Sioux Valley (SD) in the other semifinal 30-25. Frazee nabbed third place over Sioux Valley 39-31.



## **Pacesetter Great Five-State Championships wrap up third weekend of Target Center games**

Pacesetter Sports completed the third weekend of the Great Five-State championships with games at the Target Center on August 4-5. The 5-state playoff begins in March. Wisconsin teams played off in Wausau in early March. North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa teams were invited based on their performance in post-season state tournaments in their own states, and the Minnesota teams played off in the annual 8-region Pacesetter playoff system that culminated with state championships at St. Ben's in June.

Qualifying teams in grades 4-9 then assemble for the "Road to Minneapolis" for the Pacesetter Great Five-State championship with every team guaranteed to play at minimum one game on the main Target Center floor. Some teams played two and three games on the home floor of the Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx. Complete with music and an announcer for introductions...and play-by-commentary, the players have a fantasy experience on the court, and all also attend a Lynx game.



# Great 5 State scrapbook



**Owatonna's Jorge Juarez (15) snared a rebound against Watertown's Joey**



**Benson County players celebrated after winning the ninth-grade finals over Turtle Mountain.**



**Benson County's Aubrey Kenner, Turtle Mountain's Akealyes Azure, Harris Reid**



**Sauk Centre's Gabe Ritter dips under Montevideo's Griffin Epema.**



**Jake Mack of Watertown.**



**Watertown's Lincoln Schutt drives with Owatonna's Jorge Juarez in pursuit.**



**Above: Turtle Mountain's Akealyes Azure eyes the hoop. Right: Montevideo's Adam Van Binsbergen.**





# Three Pacesetter legends receive Lifetime Achievement awards

By Jeff McCarron

Three Pacesetter legends -- Paul McDonald, Dan Freidel, and Dave Walker -- were honored at the Top 100 Expo Showcase in July at St. Ben's for their dedication to Pacesetter and their lifetime achievements in athletics.

All three began working for Pacesetter in the 1980's. All three were state high school champions in basketball as a coach or player. All three have worked in over 100 Pacesetter basketball camps.

Each received a plaque in appreciation from Jeff McCarron, Pacesetter Director.

## Dan "Fry" Freidel

Pacesetter recognizes Dan Freidel for his lifetime dedication to athletics. After being a standout football and basketball player in high school and college, Dan became a college football coach. He also directed over 100 Pacesetter camps and tournaments since the late 1980's and coordinated all programs as director of Pacesetter Sports over five years. Dan's passion, knowledge, character, and sense of humor are a welcome addition to all events. Thank you, Fry, 2023

## Paul "Mac" McDonald

Pacesetter recognizes Paul McDonald for his lifetime dedication to athletics and his continuing service to Pacesetter since 1985 as a camp director, tournament and expo director, and consultant. As one of the most integrated sports figures in Minnesota, Paul has been a coach and athletic director most of his career while also serving as a leading official and board member of the MSHSL. "Mac" is widely known for his insight, good nature, and sense of humor. Thank you, Mac, 2023

## Dave "Walk" Walker

Pacesetter recognizes Dave Walker for his lifetime dedication to coaching basketball. Dave reached a pinnacle of success by leading his Maple River Eagles to the 1993 Class A state championship and earning state Coach of the Year. Dave continued his coaching career over 40 years in both college and pro basketball. He has



Dan Freidel, Paul McDonald, Dave Walker

directed over 200 Pacesetter basketball camps since the late 1980's and is widely considered one of the finest teachers of the game. Thank you, Walk, 2023

## Previous honorees

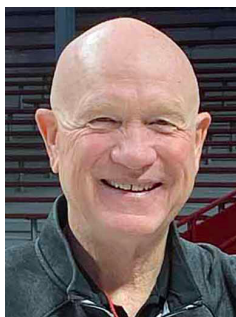
Previously honored individuals were Pat Dewey and Mike Turnbull, who both directed over 200 Pacesetter camps, and Tracey Haines, who has been office manager for Pacesetter since 1991. Dewey is still working for Pacesetter, having just directed the Pacesetter Sweet 16, and is back coaching high school basketball at age 75 as assistant to his son, Paul, head coach at Moose Lake-Willow River. Tracey just completed another stellar season in her 33rd Pacesetter year. Turnbull has just retired (again) from coaching in July after a 42-year career with over 80 teams in four sports: basketball, volleyball, baseball and football. He is also a humorous writer with his Random Thoughts of a Stupid Man series. He resides at the true "end of the road" in Winton, MN, just north of Ely.



# Sweet Memories....

The Pacesetter “Sweet 16” tournament annually marks the last day of the Pacesetter season when it concludes on Sunday at St. Ben’s. What a great way to finish! Wow. Many Sunday games were incredibly close as “The Greatest Gathering of Minnesota Talent under one Roof all Season” played itself out. Bruce Strand, our editor, has done a great job of capturing it in this issue in photos and stories about the final games.

Pat Dewey and I have a little ritual we perform each year once everyone has emptied from the Clemens Field House, and we walk out of the building. I say, “Let me just say...” and jump up to click my heels that all events for the season are done. Dew follows with his rendition. This year we laughed that our vertical jumping inability is making it down right dangerous!



**Jeff McCarron**

Dewey and his wife, Mary Ellen, are becoming Minnesota icons as their legacy grows. Mary Ellen has been featured by MSHSL writer John Milea for her ever-present attendance at all games her husband and son coach and all games her kids and grand kids play - since she keeps the score diligently as the accountant she is and often corrects the score table officials. Pat “Dew” has had an impact on more kids than most coaches can dream of. He coached basketball among three sports and held the athletic director position for a 40+-year career at Sandstone and East Central and is back now at age 75 as an assistant coach to his son, Dr. Paul Dewey, at Moose Lake-Willow River. In addition, he has directed over 200 camps in 6 states since 1982 and directed multiple youth tournaments and summer varsity tournaments, including the Sweet 16 annually. He is a Hall of Famer, who hasn’t been recognized... yet...and is one of the kindest, sweetest people on earth. I have had a pleasure of working with him as best friends for over 40 years.

Just last week, I was in a bind. I was scheduled to run a basketball camp in International Falls on Tuesday-Thursday. My flight from overseas was delayed a day. Yes, you guessed it - Dew came through for me - and then directed the Sweet 16 on the weekend.

Earlier in June, I had the pleasure of recognizing three other Pacesetter “legends”: Dan Freidel, Paul McDonald and Dave Walker, who have not only done so much for kids in Pacesetter camps and tournaments and the Top 100 Expo, but they have had incredible success in their long athletic careers. Together the three have won five state championships. See the stories on Page 10.

A friend of mine said recently, “It is impossible to be grateful and unhappy at the same time.” I am so grateful to these guys and so many others who have loved basketball and volleyball and loved teaching kids. Our 2023 basketball camp coaches’ roster was again loaded with more champions - the very best of the best: Tom Vix, John Carlson, Steve Lingenfelter, Sascha Hansen, Katie Borowicz, and Dave Galovich.

The final count of Pacesetter “camp kids” for the 2022-2023 season was 3,640 - all taught quietly in gyms throughout the 5-state area. The count for 44 years for camps and tournaments is well over 400,000.

The “Great State” youth tournaments were also sweet. The looks on people’s faces as they walk into the “arena” of the 20,000-seat Target Center are priceless. I’m grateful for the parents who support their children by giving them these camp and tournament experiences.

As I left St. Ben’s on August 6, I stopped at the Holiday station to get some gas. Maddyn Greenway and her younger sister were there getting some drinks and snacks. We nodded and smiled, having shared an exciting Sunday under the same roof. Maddyn hit a three to win their semi-final game by one point over Albany. They had just lost the final to Minnetonka by a point or two. I couldn’t help thinking that she and her sister are at the very beginning of their basketball journey while I, as well as many others, are near the end.

What I have experienced in 60 years of basketball has been a treasure. The growth and advancement of girls’ and women’s basketball may be the most remarkable and satisfying. The sportsmanship our youth are extending to each other - helping each other up, for example - their effort, their love of their teammates, and their respect for their opponents and the game itself bodes very well for the future. Thank you to all for growing and honoring this game. Enjoy your journeys! I have.