

- Novak at 950 wins
- Top 20 teams listed
- Mack reaches 3,000
- Miss BB's, now coaches

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# HOLIDAY FARE



*Marquee matchups spice things up during the break*

By Bruce Strand

Post-Christmas basketball expos bring about intriguing matchups of leading teams around the state every year. Following is a roundup of some of the duels during the holiday break that inspired excellent performances and in some cases impacted rankings.

## Hopkins trips Providence, Minot

The Hopkins girls handed Providence Academy an 80-73 loss on Dec. 29 at the Granite City Classic, with Liv McGill (above) pumping in 36 points, on Dec. 2 at the College of St. Benedict's. Maddyn Greenway tallied 32 for the Lions. Hopkins beat Minot, ND, 97-77, the next day, with Tatum Woodson scoring 22, Emma Walker 18 and McGill 16. Providence beat Duluth Marshall 89-54 with five double-digit scorers. Hopkins is unbeaten in Minnesota while losing to Johnston and Dowling Catholic, ranked one and three in Iowa's largest class. Also at the GCC, Wayzata beat Minot (7-3) 60-58 with Sophie Hawkinson scoring 20 points and Lakeville North 71-59 with Kate Amolette



**NLS's Piper Barney, Taylor Munsch and Ava Carlson, and Willmar's Lyza Gustafson, in the Wild Card.**

Brett Blocker, Lakes Area Review

hitting 21 points and Katie Kelzenberg 19. Gabby Betton had 18 for North.

## Wild Card's 34th year; NLS wins

The Wild-Card girls tournament, co-hosted by the New London-Spicer Wildcats and Willmar Cardinals, is possibly the longest-running holiday event in the state, in its 34th year. NLS, the host this year, won it for the fourth straight time, beating Redwood Valley 73-61 and Willmar 67-43. The Wildcats (9-0) were 29 for 33 on free shots. Dakota Rich hit 25 points each game and was 8-for-9 at the line. Ava Carl-

son added 14 and 22 points and was 7-for-7. Former NLS activities director Ron Dobbs and former Willmar coach Shorty Schroeder started the Wild-Card. Schroeder wanted to play the smaller but strong neighborhood schools, especially NLS. Attendance has been great, benefiting both schools' programs. "It has worked out a lot better than we ever thought it would. I'm glad it's still around," Dobbs said. "There's been a lot of good basketball played in this tournament."

## Mankato East tops Orono, Alexandria

The **Mankato East** boys won a pair of top-five duels at the Granite City Classic on Dec. 28-29 while coach Joe Madson recorded his 400th win. The Cougars (9-1) beat **Orono** 77-64 at St. Cloud State with Brogan Madson sinking 19 points, Carson Schweim 16, Lucas Gustafson 13 and Gandon Gosch 11. Brady Wooley netted 29 points and Mitchell Kauch 17 for Orono. That was No. 400 for the coach, who's now 401-223 in 23 seasons. Mankato East then fended off an **Alexandria** rally 69-63 after taking a quick 22-4 lead at St. John's. Madson netted 18 points and Schweim 13. Alexandria was missing 6-foot-9 Gopher recruit Grayson Grove with an ankle injury. Chase Thompson scored 22 points for the Cardinals and Braylyn Steffensmeier 16.

## Park Center downs Minnetonka, Cherry

**Park Center** (11-1), No. 2 in 4A, beat a pair highly-ranked opponents, **Minnetonka** and **Cherry**, in the Capitol City Classic at Concordia-St. Paul on Dec. 28-29. Chiang Ring pumped in 29 points and grabbed 15 rebounds as the Pirates edged Minnetonka 92-89. Ring went over 1,000 points, in a four-year career that started at Minneapolis South. Casmir Chavis notched 24 points and nine assists. Jackson Fowlkes added 15 points, Ari Gooch 12 and Xavier Frelix 10. Minnetonka had Jordan Cain with 27 points, Grayson Uelmen 20, and Andy Stefanowicz 19 points, seven rebounds and seven assists. Gooch and Chavis tallied 27 points each to lead a 92-73 win over Cherry. Ring logged 14 points and 13 rebounds. For Cherry, Isaiah Asuma notched 16 points, Noah Sundquist 15 points, and Isaac Asuma 14 points, eight rebounds and eight assists. Cherry, top-ranked in Class 1A, was 7-0 before losing to another 4A team, **Forest Lake**, 69-65 and then Park Center in this event.

## MIB loses to Goodhue, beats Albany

**Mountain Iron-Buhl** won a duel of girls top-ranked teams over Albany 76-68, after losing to **Goodhue** 67-62, during the Granite City Classic, Dec. 28-29 at St. Cloud Tech and St. Ben's. Goodhue also toppled **Crosby-Ironton** 83-64 in the GCC. Heading into holiday tournaments, Albany (9-1) was No. 1 in Class 2A, MIB (11-2) No. 1 in Class 1A, Crosby-Ironton (9-2) No. 4 in 2A and Goodhue (8-3) No. 5 in Class 1A. The Rangers were red-hot from long range to hand Albany its first loss, going 17-for-28 on three-pointers, plus 9-for-10 at the line. Jordan Zubich tallied 34 points (7-for-10 on three's) and Hali Savala 14 (4-for-7 on three's). Albany then handed Crosby-Ironton its first loss 79-76 with

Kyran Gerads scoring 29 points, Alyssa Sand 21 and Tatum Findley 19. Tori Oehrlein poured in 42 points for the Rangers.

## Goodhue upends Crosby-Ironton, also

**Goodhue** had four double-digit shooters in their win over MIB as Kendall Lodermeier sank 23 points, Elizabeth Gadiant 16, Julia Carlson 14 and Natalie Thomforde 11. MIB's Zubich had 32 points and Savala 15. Goodhue then handed Crosby-Ironton its second loss 83-64 Saturday as Gadiant sank 32 points and Lodermeier 20. Oehrlein tallied 37 for Crosby-Ironton.

## No. 1 Minnetonka rolls to 3 wins

**Minnetonka**, top-ranked in Class 4A girls, cruised in three holiday road games, over **Owatonna** 86-31 and **St. Louis Park** 85-24 at Park Center on Dec. 27-28 and **Stewartville** 74-47 at St. Benedict's on Dec. 30. Aaliyah Crump is averaging 27 points, Lanelle Wright 15.2 and Tori McKinney 14 for the Skippers (9-0).

## No. 1 Breck tips Hopkins, Osseo, Southwest

**Breck**, top-ranked in Class 2A boys, went 3-0 in the TCO Holiday Classic at Augsburg, capped by an 87-80 win over **Hopkins**. Breck had five double-digit scorers against Hopkins with JP Musoke netting 21 points, Daniel Freitag 17, Hanif Muhammad 14, Miles Newton 13 and Mu Muhammad 11. For Hopkins (8-2), JJ Semanko sank 22 points and Jayden Moore and Anthony Smith 20 each. Breck (8-0) beat **Osseo** (8-3) 85-58, also with five in double figures led by Newton with 19, and **Minneapolis Southwest** (6-4) 75-56 led by Freitag with 20 points. Hopkins beat Osseo 89-82 with Semanko sinking 28 points and Moore 19. De'Maari Larkins led Osseo with 20.

## No. 1 DeLaSalle wins Moorhead tourney

The **DeLaSalle** girls, top-ranked in Class 3A, won the Moorhead tournament, beating **Osseo** 81-50 and **Moorhead** 65-44. Against Osseo, Dilan Tubbs scored 19 points, Jordyn Johnson 15 and Erianna Moeschter 12. Against Moorhead, Moeschter scored 15, Johnston 12, and Aneisha Scott 11. DeLaSalle is 7-2 with six straight wins after losing to Minnehaha Academy 61-58 and Hopkins 68-55.

# Miss BB's Robinson, Hollie are new head coaches this year

By Bruce Strand

Two former Miss Basketball winners who played in Division I have joined the ranks of girls basketball head coaches this season.

Angel Robinson of St. Paul Central and Marquette University is coaching at Tartan.



**Angel Robinson**  
Tartan coach



**Nia Hollie**  
Two Rivers coach

Nia Hollie of Hopkins and Michigan State is coaching at Two Rivers.

Robinson, the 2007 Miss Basketball, led the Minutemen to a 32-0 season her senior year. She scored 2,375 points and her 776 steals ranks No. 4 all-time in the state.

At Marquette, she was an all-Big East pick three times while logging 1,699 points, 507 assists and 640 rebounds. She played three seasons in the WNBA with Seattle and Phoenix, averaging 2.6 points in 64 games, then continued her pro career in Europe.

Hollie, the 2016 Miss Basketball, helped the Royals win state titles her freshman and junior years. She scored 1,588 points.

Hollie played in 124 games over four seasons for Michigan State, including 28 starts, scoring 421 points.

Hollie was an assistant at Cretin-Derham Hall the past three seasons and has coached in many camps and AAU teams. She took over a Two Rivers program that went 11-43 the last two years. The Warriors are 8-3 this year.

Robinson took over a Tartan program whose last winning season was 2017-18. The Titans are 1-8 this year.

# Minnehaha's Mack passes 3,000 points

By Bruce Strand

Addi Mack of Minnehaha Academy scored her 3,000th point, on a breakaway layup, against Hill-Murray on Dec. 29 during the Hill-Murray Holiday Tournament. The 5-foot-9 junior guard had 31 points to lead a 70-46 win.

Mack is averaging 30.6 points, five rebounds, seven assists and 5.6 steals for the Redhawks. They were 12-0 after beating Hill-Murray, then absorbed their first loss in the tournament finals against Lakeville South, 64-56. Mack had 30 points in that game.



**Addi Mack**

"When your best player, one of the most dominant scorers since seventh grade, is still looking for ways to develop and improve, it is such a joy to coach," coach Daniel Lolar told the Star-Tribune early in the season.

Mack averaged 28.8 points as a sophomore, 23.0 as a freshman, and 22.7 in eighth grade. She played in her first state tournament last season, scoring 55 points in three games as the Redhawks reached the semifinals, then lost twice.

Reaching 3,000 in her 124th game, Mack is the 23rd girl to pass 3,000 points and the fifth-fastest to do so, behind Kierah Kimbrough (Badger-Greenbush-Middle River, 2005) in 112 games. Megan Taylor (Roseau 1997) in 116, Madison Mathiowetz (Sleepy Eye St. Mary's, 2022) in 116 and Janet Karvonen (New York Mills 1980) in 118.

## Providence nips Minnehaha 83-81

Providence Academy edged Minnehaha Academy 83-81 Tuesday in a duel of teams ranked 1-2 this week. Emma Millerbernd's three-pointer with 16 seconds left was the game-winner. Maddyn Greenway led with 32 points. Millerbernd added 12 and Hope Counts 11, each snagging 12 rebounds. Angel Hill scored 31 points and Addi Mack 29 for the Redhawks.

*To suggest an item for Minnesota Basketball News, e-mail to [bruce.a.strand@gmail.com](mailto:bruce.a.strand@gmail.com)*

# Hopkins' Novak posts 950th win

By Bruce Strand

Ken Novak, Hopkins boys coach, notched his 950th victory Dec. 28 as the Royals beat Minnehaha Academy 85-72 in the first round of a tournament at Augsburg. Novak has a 951-183 ledger, along with eight state championships, most recently in 2019. His current team is 8-2. Novak, who coached briefly at Blaine before succeeding his father as Hopkins coach, ranks second all-time in victories behind the late Bob McDonald, who had 1,012, mostly at Chisholm.



**Ken Novak, Hopkins coach**

Sun-Post photo

The next five are all retired: the late Bob Brink with 936, mostly at Rocori; Dave Galovich with 791, mostly at Crosby-Ironton; Ziggy Kauls with 739 at Mounds View; Tom Vix at Rushford-Peterson with 684; and Lynn Peterson with 683, mostly at Staples-Motley.

After Novak, the next two active leaders in victories are John Oxtan with 671, mostly at Lakeville North, ranking seventh all-time, and Mark Klingsporn with 659 at Tartan. He'll be No. 8 with two more wins. Dave Cresap retired with 660 wins, mostly at Perham, after last season, and is now coaching the community college team at Fergus Falls.

Ten schools are ranked in the top ten for both boys and girls heading into the 2004 portion of the season. They are: Class 4A: Wayzata (boys first, girls fifth), Minnetonka (girls first, boys third), Lakeville North (boys fifth, girls sixth), and Hopkins (girls third, boys seventh). Class 3A: Totino-Grace (boys first, girls eighth), Alexandria (girls second, boys third), Delano (boys fourth, girls fourth), DeLaSalle (girls first, boys ninth). Class 2A: Albany (girls third, boys eighth). Class 1A: Sleepy Eye (girls fifth, boys sixth).

Eli Hoelz of Brainerd recorded 22 assists in a 100-69 win over St. Cloud Apollo on December 15, according to coach Charlie Schoeck, who verified the total after reviewing game film. (The state record is 28 by Martin Wind of Cass Lake-Bena in 2008.) The bulk of those assists went to Luke Diem, who scored 37 points. Hoelz is averaging 13.9 points and 11 assists

for the Warriors (4-4 with losses to four teams with a combined 26-8 record). Hoelz averaged 15 points and 4.4 assists on a 22-6 team last year. He is also a stand-out quarterback. This fall, Hoelz passed for 1,482 yards and 15 touchdowns, and rushed for 633 yards and 12 touchdowns, leading an 8-2 season.

## AROUND THE STATE

### JUMP SHOTS

- Totino-Grace boys, top-ranked in 3A boys, journeyed to Mitchell, SD, for the Corn Palace Hoop City Classic, where they defeated Wauwatosa West (WI) 69-55 and lost to Cordova (TN) 67-55, Dec. 29-30. Wauwatosa is 8-4 and Cordova 16-0.

- The top two girls scorers in the state had a shootout Dec. 21 as Crosby-Ironton sophomore Tori Oehrlein (35.3 ppg) sank 31 points to lead an 84-75 win over Duluth Marshall, led by eighth-grader Chloe Johnson (30.9 ppg) with 38 points.

- The Climax-Fischer boys are struggling (1-8) but had a memorable night Dec. 21, picking up their lone win, 98-72 over Northome-Kelliher, with senior Ryan Morris notching his 1,000th point and Ethan Evitts pumping in 43 points.

- Dawson-Boyd (10-0) had a close call against Pipestone, winning 74-73, on Dec. 22 at Pipestone. Brayson Boise sank 27 points for the Blackjacks and Rysley Borman pumped in 29 points for Pipestone (6-2). D-B, up 74-71, missed two free shots with a few seconds left, but prevented Pipestone from getting a three-pointer off. The Arrows made a two-pointer at the buzzer.

- Minneapolis North boys (7-2) broke the century mark three straight games in wins over Minneapolis Henry 110-72 at home, then Bemidji 101-83 and Hibbing 109-74 at the Hibbing tournament. Tartan stopped the Polars 76-73 in the finals of tournament.

- Caledonia boys (8-1) beat two Iowa teams, Melrose-Mindoro 92-37 and West Salem 85-77, at West Salem's tournament.

- The top three boys in points per game are CJ Armstrong of Richfield with 34.2, Tameron Ferguson of St. Cloud Tech with 34.0, and Azayah Washington of St. Cloud Apollo with 33.9.

- State leaders in three-pointers made are MIB's Jordan Zubich with 62 and Kim'Ron Solomon of Hiawatha Collegiate with 45.

- Leaders in rebounds per game are Brooks Johnson of Duluth Marshall with 21.3 and Callie Oakland of St. Croix Lutheran with 14.8.



2024 Minnesota Basketball News • An Invitation-only Event

# TOP 100 EXPO SHOWCASE

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The Top 100+ Players in each class are being invited along with select players from North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Iowa.

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Regional teams have first priority to fill spots - through November 30  
Non-region teams that have registered will get any open spots on Dec. 2



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ALL GRADES REFER TO THE 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR

### Region 1

Stewartville/Rochester • March 16 • Boys & Girls Grades 5 & 7  
Stewartville/Rochester • March 17 • Boys & Girls Grades 4 & 6

### Region 2

Lake Crystal • March 23 • Boys & Girls Grades 4 & 6  
Lake Crystal • March 24 • Boys & Girls Grades 5 & 7

### Region 3

Redwood Falls • March 9 • Boys & Girls Grades 5 & 7  
Redwood Falls • March 10 • Boys & Girls Grades 4 & 6

### Region 4

St. Cloud • February 25 • Boys Grades 4-7  
St. Cloud • March 3 • Girls Grades 4-7

### Region 5

St. Cloud • February 24 • Boys Grades 4-7  
St. Cloud • March 2 • Girls Grades 4-7

### Region 6

Alexandria • February 17 • Boys & Girls Grades 4 & 6  
Alexandria • February 18 • Boys & Girls Grades 5 & 7

### Region 7

Grand Rapids • February 17 • Boys & Girls Grade 5  
Grand Rapids • February 18 • Boys & Girls Grade 4  
Mt. Iron-Buhl • February 17 • Boys & Girls Grade 7  
Mt. Iron-Buhl • February 18 • Boys & Girls Grade 6

### Region 8

Bemidji • March 16 • Boys & Girls Grades 5 & 7  
Bemidji • March 17 • Boys & Girls Grades 4 & 6

### Southeast Super Section-Regions 1 & 4

Rochester • March 17 • Girls Grades 8 & 9  
Rochester • March 24 • Boys Grades 8 & 9

### Southwest Super Section-Regions 2 & 3

Lake Crystal • March 17 • Girls Grades 8 & 9  
Lake Crystal • March 24 • Boys Grades 8 & 9

### Central Super Section-Regions 5 & 6

Monticello • March 17 • Boys Grades 8 & 9  
St. Cloud • March 24 • Girls Grades 8 & 9

### North Super Section-Regions 7 & 8

St. Cloud • March 17 • Girls Grades 8 & 9  
St. Cloud • March 24 • Boys Grades 8 & 9

### Post-season Invitations

Region champ & Section champ/runner-up - Pacesetter MN STATE  
Region/Section high finishers - Pacesetter MIT - Minnesota Invitational Tournament  
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# MBBN BOYS TOP 20

## CLASS 4A

1. Wayzata 9-0
2. Park Center 10-1
3. Minnetonka 6-1
4. Farmington 9-1
5. Lakeville North 6-3
6. Shakopee 5-2
7. Hopkins 7-2
8. Minneapolis Washburn 7-1
9. Osseo 7-3
10. Rogers 9-1
11. Lakeville South 6-3
12. Waconia 5-2
13. Rosemount 5-3
14. Apple Valley 5-3
15. Cretin-Derham Hall 6-2
16. Eagan 5-3
17. Woodbury 6-2
18. Sauk Rapids-Rice 6-2
19. Owatonna 6-2
20. Buffalo 7-2

*Records are through Tuesday*

## CLASS 3A

1. Totino-Grace 5-3
2. Mankato East 8-1
3. Alexandria 6-2
4. Delano 8-2
5. Orono 5-3
6. Minneapolis South 7-1
7. Stewartville 5-2
8. Fridley 6-0
9. DeLaSalle 3-4
10. Columbia Heights 6-0
11. Benilde-St. Margaret's 3-4
12. Richfield 3-3
13. Mankato West 7-2
14. Hutchinson 8-2
15. Chisago Lakes 6-3
16. St. Cloud Tech 5-3
17. Byron 6-1
18. St. Paul Johnson 5-1
19. Fergus Falls 5-2
20. Detroit Lakes 8-1

## CLASS 2A

1. Breck 8-0
2. Holy Family 6-3
3. Minneapolis North 7-2
4. Esko 5-1
5. Caledonia 8-1
6. Maranatha Christian 4-1
7. Eden Valley-Watkins 7-1
8. Albany 6-1
9. Morris Area/Chokio-Alberta 8-2
10. Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial 7-2
11. MN Valley Lutheran 7-1
12. Melrose 6-2
13. Minnehaha Academy 4-5
14. Blake 6-3
15. Sauk Centre 7-1
16. Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton 6-3
17. Belle Plaine 6-2
18. Annandale 6-2
19. Crosby-Ironton 8-0
20. Spectrum 6-1

## CLASS 1A

1. Cherry 7-2
2. Dawson-Boyd 10-0
3. Nevis 5-0
4. West Central Area 6-2
5. Ada-Borup West 7-0
6. Sleepy Eye 7-1
7. Red Lake County 7-0
8. Blooming Prairie 8-0
9. Henning 7-2
10. Sleepy Eye-St. Mary's 7-2
11. Heritage Christian 6-1
12. Southwest MN Christian 4-2
13. Northern Freeze 8-2
14. Fertile-Beltrami 4-1
15. Sacred Heart 8-2
16. Hills-Beaver Creek 6-1
17. Mt. Lake Area/Comfrey 7-1
18. Spring Grove 5-0
19. Rushford-Peterson 8-3
20. Kingsland 5-0

# MBBN GIRLS TOP 20

## CLASS 4A

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

## CLASS 3A

1. DeLaSalle 8-2
2. Alexandria 9-1
3. Benilde-St. Margaret's 3-5
4. Delano 11-0
5. Marshall 8-1
6. Monticello 11-1
7. St. Peter 8-1
8. Totino-Grace 10-1
9. Byron 7-1
10. Winona 8-1
11. Fridley 7-3
12. Rock Ridge 8-1
13. Minneapolis Roosevelt 8-3
14. Stewartville 8-4
15. New Ulm 8-2
16. Cretin-Derham Hall 6-4
17. Orono 5-4
18. Cloquet 8-3
19. Mankato East 5-5
20. Hill-Murray 4-6

## CLASS 2A

1. Providence Academy 10-2
2. Minnehaha Academy 12-2
3. Albany 8-1
4. Jordan 9-1
5. New London-Spicer 9-0
6. Crosby-Ironton 8-2
7. Pelican Rapids 9-0
8. Dover-Eyota 12-1
9. Perham 10-2
10. Holdingford 8-2
11. Pequot Lakes 7-1
12. Watertown-Mayer 9-1
13. Winona Cotter 7-2
14. Sauk Centre 7-3
15. Rochester Lourdes 7-3
16. Fairmont 8-2
17. St. Croix Lutheran 3-5
18. Holy Family 8-3
19. NRHEG 10-1
20. Duluth Marshall 5-4

## CLASS 1A

1. Goodhue 8-3
2. Mountain Iron-Buhl 11-2
3. Hayfield 12-0
4. Hancock 8-1
5. Sleepy Eye 10-1
6. Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart 6-2
7. Fosston 9-0
8. Braham 9-0
9. Kelliher-Northome 6-1
10. Mayer Lutheran 7-3
11. Cass Lake-Bena 7-1
12. Underwood 8-1
13. Minneota 9-2
14. Nevis 6-2
15. Southwest MN Christian 7-1
16. Cromwell-Wright 9-3
17. Westbrook-Walnut Grove 9-1
18. Ogilvie 8-1
19. Walker-Hackensack-Akeley 7-3
20. Kittson County Central 5-1

*Records are  
through Tuesday*

# The Rise and Fall of Girls' Basketball?

By Jeff McCarron

Say it isn't so!

On the surface it appears it isn't so. Minnesota is producing some of the highest-level players in the country...and some of the top high school teams in the country. Women's basketball reached its highest level worldwide when the USA won the Olympic gold medal with several Minnesota Lynx players on the team, including our own homegrown Lindsay Whalen.



Minnesota high school boys' and girls' basketball became nationwide news when two college freshmen – straight out of Minnesota high school basketball – led their college teams to Final Four appearances. Jalen Suggs and Paige Bueckers, who were friends since childhood became a leading story in 2021 college basketball. Paige earned college Player of the Year honors – the first freshman ever to win a national player of the year award. Jalen Suggs was strongly considered for the men.

Recently, Katie Borowicz of Roseau, was recruited right out of her high school senior class to step onto a Big Ten floor to play for the Gophers. And she did it, starting as point before the end of the year – her senior year of high school.

Pacesetter Basketball annually features the top high school teams in the state playing in the "Sweet 16". Each year the top girls' teams have battled in championship games – Hopkins vs. Minnetonka, Providence Academy vs. Albany, for two examples. The gym is full of players who will start on top college teams the next year – and in Paige's case, win national college Player of the Year honors. She returned to the Sweet 16 the following summer to cheer on her former teammates. Being a classy individual helped both Paige and Jalen rise to the top.

So what's the problem with girls' basketball? Is there a problem?

I could be wrong, but I am seeing fewer girls' teams participating. While the very top players and many great teams are shining, the number of girls participating and youth girls' teams playing is falling off. Pacesetter runs the 8-region Minnesota Youth Basketball State Championships for grades 4-9. Last year, girls' teams represented 28% of the teams – while boys' teams made up 72% of the teams. Less than one in four teams were girls' teams. For grades 7-9 it was 22%-78%.

Wow, that's significant.

It isn't a question of ability. For the first time in 40+ years of Pacesetter – in a non-playoff tournament, a 7th grade girls' team beat a 7th grade boys' team. Straight up. The girls' bracket didn't have enough teams, so I invited the girls to jump into the boys' bracket, and they did. The boys' teams didn't know it in advance. The funniest part was watching the 7th grade boys watching the 7th grade girls warm up at the other end of the court. They thought one of the teams had to be on the wrong court. Girls are often bigger than boys in 7th grade, and they didn't hold back on using their size and strength to push the boys around.

It also isn't a case of girls not loving the game or playing as a team. I asked to have girls' TEAM photos placed in this column just to give two examples of thousands we've seen of girls showing their love and unity with teammates. Girls are often better teammates and opponents than boys – from a sportsmanship point of view – which could be directly attributed to the on-court behavior of their role models in the WNBA in comparison to the boys' role models in the NBA. Count the number of times a player offers an opponent a hand to get up from the floor.

So what's the problem? Is there a problem?



One girls' factor that is different from the boys is that girls can play volleyball in the winter and spring...and many do. The number of girls' teams playing basketball shifted dramatically after COVID-19. Perhaps given the option to play basketball with a mask or volleyball with a mask, more girls chose volleyball. Just breathing is hard enough in basketball without a mask.

There also seems to be more turnover in coaches in girls' basketball – for whatever reason. There aren't nearly as many women coaching high school basketball as I expected there would be in the 2000's. Is this a factor?

Let me check the early team registration list for the 2024 Pacesetter regionals.... Girls 36%, Boys 64%. The 36% is a nice uptick from last year's 23%. Maybe the trend is reversing. Most of the increase for girls is in grades 4-5-6, where volleyball does not compete as much. These younger grade levels also did not have to play with masks on. Hmmmm...we may be on to something.

Promotions of individuals over teams is also something creeping into the media world – social media and national media. How often do you hear about basketball players instead of teams. Individuals are focusing on promoting themselves more often. Individuals are jumping teams. Team basketball becomes the casualty. I don't think girls care much for that world – and the lack of loyalty it shows.

I am only speculating. Local basketball associations and high school coaching staffs may have better insight. I'll survey some of these people and write another column soon with their thoughts.

As far as participation in basketball camps in 2023, girls seem to be just as active as boys, so I'll focus on over-all season participation and team participation in-season and post-season.

I love girls' basketball. I love teaching girls. I love to watch them play. I hope everyone involved in girls' basketball statewide will keep working to increase excitement and enrollment in this great game. Volunteer to coach at practices, volunteer to coach a team. Keep the love going for playing basketball in your community – girls and boys.

Being on teams with great teammates will always be one of the greatest experiences a young person could have.

**45th Year!****More info:**<https://www.pacesettersports.net/host-a-camp/>

or scan QR code

**2024 PACESETTER**

# Basketball Camps

Pacesetter has been providing high-quality, low-cost camps since 1980. Highly experienced directors and low player-coach ratios are a Pacesetter standard. Pacesetter focuses on teaching the most important skills to make the greatest possible improvement in a few days...for a cost most families can afford.

**Area Camps**—Pacesetter Area Camps serve players in many regions of the 5-state area. Camp hosts design the time schedule of the sessions and the grades and genders to meet their needs. These camps range from 3-4 days and provide sessions ranging from 1-6 hours per day for players in grades 1-12.

**"Tour of Champions" Camp**—Pacesetter also offers a special "Tour of Champions" series of camps in the 5-state area. These camps will be 1-2 days and feature the very best coaches in the Midwest – coaches who have won state championships or head college coaches or coaches who have reached other high levels of success – Hall of Fame, Coach of the Year, etc. Host coaches may also invite their coaching staff to attend these special camps as a free coaching clinic.

## Camp of Champions...that comes to YOUR gym!

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