

2026 Pacesetter 5-State Youth Basketball Playoffs: MN-IA-ND-SD-WI

Frequently Asked Questions • Answers by Jeff McCarron, Director

What is Pacesetter Sports? *Celebrating our 47th Year!*

Pacesetter Sports was created in 1980 to provide high-level coaching through low-cost basketball camps for players of all ages. Pacesetter grew from offering 8 camps in 1980 to over 100 camps annually throughout North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. In 1992 Pacesetter began offering low-cost varsity/JV tournaments. Since 1993 Pacesetter Sports has conducted a youth basketball state tournament system for Minnesota teams with an average of 600+ teams playing annually. In 2010 Pacesetter added state tournaments in Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota with the top two teams from each state advancing to the Pacesetter Great Four-State Championship at the Target Center in Minneapolis. Wisconsin joined in 2018.

What is the background and mission of Pacesetter?

Message from Jeff McCarron, Pacesetter Director

“Our mission at Pacesetter is to provide high-quality, low-cost basketball and volleyball camps and tournaments for players, coaches, and parents and enhance these sports and events with news coverage. I am from a small town, Sherburn, MN (pop.approx.1100), just 10 miles from the Iowa border. Three of my high school and college coaches were from South Dakota and North Dakota. This regional background is the reason we are focusing our efforts in this five-state area and the reason we focus on helping “Hometown Teams”. We love basketball, small towns, teaching kids and providing high-quality experiences at an affordable cost. I thank our staff and all who have participated in making Pacesetter a success for 46 years as we continue to provide programs for over 12,000 players annually.”

MINNESOTA: 5-region playoff system

What are the Pacesetter Minnesota Region Playoffs?

The Pacesetter Minnesota Youth Basketball State Tournament for 2026 will again involve a 5-region playoff system for grades 4-7 leading to the over-all Minnesota state championships. All teams that enter the region playoffs will play 3-4 games in one day. The five region champions and runners-up in grades 4-7 will be invited to play in the over-all Pacesetter Minnesota Youth Basketball State Tournament in St. Cloud on Sunday, March 29. All 8th and 9th grade teams are invited to enter the statewide bracket for the Minnesota State Championship – also on Sunday, March 29, in St. Cloud.

Pacesetter Minnesota Invitational Tournament – School/community teams in MN-IA-WI-ND-SD invited to play!

Pacesetter will host the first 5-state international Minnesota Invitational Tournament in St. Cloud on Saturday, March 28. All school/community teams in MN-IA-WI-ND-SD will be invited to play for the Pacesetter MIT Championships, along with invited teams from other countries and states. Top finishers from MN-IA-WI-ND-SD will be considered as wild cards for the Pacesetter Great Five-State Tournament at the Target Center in the summer.

Can Minnesota teams play in more than one region?

YES. Teams may play in any region and in more than one region.

Can a team win more than one region?

YES. However, once a team wins a region, they will not be allowed to play in another region – unless they are already registered for a region being held on the same weekend - such as winning Saturday and already being in another regional bracket for Sunday.

What is the Pacesetter Minnesota Youth Basketball State Tournament?

GRADES 4-7

The Pacesetter Minnesota State Tournament for grades 4-7 will be played on Sunday, March 29 and feature an 8-10 team bracket of regional qualifiers. All teams will play 3-4 games at state with the top two teams invited to represent Minnesota in the Great Five-State Championship at the Target Center in Minneapolis.

GRADES 8-9

The Pacesetter Minnesota State Tournament for Grades 8-9 will be an open tournament in St. Cloud on Sunday, March 29. All Minnesota 8th-9th grade school/community teams are invited to play.

What is the Pacesetter MIT?

All regional teams in grades 4-7 will be invited to play in the first Pacesetter 5-state international MIT (Minnesota Invitational Tournament) on Saturday, March 28. Teams from IA-WI-ND-SD as well as other states and countries will be invited to play. Each MIT bracket will be limited to 16 teams so teams will play 3-4 games in one day.

“GREAT STATE” – Pacesetter Great Five-State Championships

Invitations to IA-ND-SD-WI teams

Teams from IA-ND-SD-WI will be invited to play in the Pacesetter Great Five-State Championships, which include a minimum of one game for each team on the main Target Center floor, which is the home court for the Minnesota Timberwolves (NBA) and Minnesota Lynx (WNBA) and the Minnesota High School state championships.

QUESTIONS

May players play at an older or younger grade level?

Players may play at an older grade level, but older players may not play at a younger level.

May players play on more than one team?

Players may play at more than one grade level and may even play at two grade levels on the same day if that is the decision of their coaches and parents.

Do we have to fill out a roster and waivers if we play more than once?

Your online roster and waivers will be honored for each tournament. Please bring a paper copy of the roster you submitted online to each tournament you play in.

Can I add players or update my roster?

Yes, if you have already submitted your roster and need to make changes or add eligible players, you can do so by emailing pacesettersportsmbbn@gmail.com. Please provide your team name, grade, gender, players' names, and the school they attend. Be sure to bring your updated paper roster to the tournament.

Are teams separated by class?

Teams are not separated by class. We will seed the teams roughly based on their team rating in an attempt to balance the bracket and divide the strongest teams. We look at the previous year's bracket to help assess the strength of returning teams. As the tournament progresses, all teams will be playing teams that have fared the same, whether winning or losing, so the competition becomes more balanced as the day progresses.

What is the Great Five-State Championship?

Eight qualifying teams from five states are invited to play in the Pacesetter Great Five-State Championship, which is held in cooperation with the 3-time world champion Minnesota Lynx and Minnesota Timberwolves. Players and parents from these teams will be treated to a special weekend that will provide them with a chance to meet teams from the five-state area, play in a highly competitive play off tournament in a world-class setting, and enjoy activities off the court as well in the Twin Cities. All “Great State” tournaments are held in conjunction with Minnesota Lynx WNBA games, so players and families attend a Lynx game. It is a unique weekend with lifetime memories.

Which teams qualify for the Pacesetter Great Five-State Tournament?

The state champion and runner-up from Minnesota and six high-level invited teams from IA-ND-SD-WI will receive bids to the Great Five-State Tournament 8-team fields. Pacesetter will be holding “Great State” qualifying playoffs in Iowa and collaborating with Willie Mac in SD, the Jr. Grand Am in ND, and Badgerland in WI to invite the best teams from their state tournaments. The dates and sites of these tournaments will be announced on each state's page on the Pacesetter

website at www.pacesettersports.net. Teams interested in playing may contact our office at pacesettersportsmbbn@gmail.com or Director Jeff McCarron at jmac8144@yahoo.com for further details.

Do all players have to be from the same school?

All MN youth teams in grades 4-9 are eligible to play with certain restrictions. All players on a team must either be enrolled in the same school, or live or attend school in the same city, the same school system, or the same tribal community. Two or three smaller school teams may combine, however, to form one team if the combined enrollment of these schools for grades 9-12 is 400 or fewer. Teams that combine should be neighboring schools. If any combining schools are not adjacent to the other school or schools, Pacesetter must approve the combination.

All teams must have played together as a team during the season. All-star teams from large cities with more than one high school will not be allowed. Teams involving players from multiple schools not in the same neighborhood are also not allowed.

All tribal communities with a high school in their tribal community must abide by the school guidelines. Only tribes without a high school in the tribal community may play as one tribal community. Multiple tribal communities without a high school may not combine to play as one team.

Some exceptions include private schools whose “feeder” schools are located in another school district, schools or programs consolidating for the following year and transfer students who have officially enrolled. In these circumstances, players are allowed to play together with their future teammates if the connection is official. The philosophy behind this decision is that the whole system is designed to help “hometown teams”, or area community-based teams, improve with their future teammates, and these players are part of that future. A player who is “thinking” about transferring to another school would not be allowed to play for that school until the transfer is official.

Who should I contact with a question?

Please feel free to email our office at pacesettersportsmbbn@gmail.com or me at jmac8144@yahoo.com or call us at 320-243-7460 with any thoughts or questions.

Thank you for your cooperation and your efforts to make this tournament system a success.

Jeff McCarron
Director