

# Sweet 16 patriarch reflects on long-running classic

*Pacesetter's Sweet 16 tournament, held the first weekend in August each year, has been a state summer basketball highlight since 1991. "Four Classes, One Champion" is the message proudly emblazoned on the championship banner. Following is an interview with its creator and patriarch all those years, Jeff McCarron.*

**When you started the tournament, was it the only one of its kind?**

We were running close to 100 basketball and volleyball camps in the late 1980's, when we decided to add varsity-level "jamborees" – probably in 1987 or 1988. We held some jamborees in Esko, Sandstone, Barnum, Park Rapids, Mapleton, and Fairmont and eventually held varsity and B tournaments throughout Minnesota. We inaugurated the Pacesetter Sweet 16 in 1991 in the St. Cloud Civic Center. We still hang the same banner now that we used that year. A lady in Eden Valley created it in her garage.

The North Star Games offered the only other major tournament option at the time.

**How did you clear this with the MSHSL?**

We battled a bit with Skip Peltier from the high school league as I remember. Teams weren't allowed to use their high school names or any school equipment... and definitely no school coaches.

**How did you line up teams then with no internet?**

It is hard to imagine now communicating without email or cell phones, but we didn't have much trouble. We



**Rosemount, the 2025 Sweet 16 champion, went on to win the 2026 MSHSL championship.**

sent a formal invitation by mail to 16 girls' teams and 16 boys' teams and asked them to call or write their response. Most accepted.

**Was the Sweet 16 idea largely from your affinity for the old one-class format?**

You know me well. Yes, after playing in the final one-class state tournament (Sherburn 1970) and experiencing our team winning it as a small school, I wanted to see a one-class tournament stay alive.

Otherwise, it is always assumed that the larger schools are better. That was also assumed the year we won. South St. Paul and Robbinsdale played in the first semi-final while tiny Sherburn and Marshall played in the other. Many called the first game the state championship – until it wasn't, and a little school walked away with the final one-class championship on Saturday night. We didn't know it would be the last one-class tournament, so that makes it even sweeter for the re-

spect of all small schools. The big schools had won it five years in a row — Minnetonka-Edina-Edina-Edina-Rochester John Marshall — so the thought was that the small schools could no longer compete.

### **Any thoughts on the 4-class format?**

The MSHSL, to their credit, did offer a high school Sweet 16 format, in 1995 and 1996. Minneapolis North, with Kalid El Amin, was historically one of the best Minnesota teams ever, so Class AA (the large school class) was represented both years by one of the state's best ever in those two championships. They won both over-all championships, but Staples-Motley with the Joerger brothers played them close.

I don't disagree with the four-class format. It offers so many teams a chance to "Make it to State" – which is great. It was a greater experience in the one-class tournament, with 18,000 fans at every game, but the difference in over-all team strength has changed.

We've had only a few small-school Sweet 16 champions in 35 years – New London-Spicer boys, Braham boys, Litchfield boys, and Providence Academy girls come to mind.

### **What teams do you reckon have won the most titles?**

Hopkins and Hopkins. The girls won something like nine titles in a row. We don't keep records, but I think that is close.

### **Have there been some power teams that you have not been able to sign up?**

The only power team that wouldn't come was DeLa-Salle. Dave (Thorson) finally told me he just couldn't promise he could bring all his players together at that time of the summer. Jeff Buffetta at Mountain Iron-Buhl, one of the most dominant girls' teams, told me he won't enter because he can't coach the team. I imagine other coaches feel the same way now that they are allowed to coach in the summer.

### **You are proud that Paige Bueckers played in the Sweet 16. Any other luminaries come to mind?**

Tyus and Tre Jones at Apple Valley, Nia and Amir Coffey with (dad) Richard (former Gopher star) watching, Maddyn Greenway ... There have been so many as 90 percent of the best teams play each year. Going back through the years, Sam Jacobson, Jake Sullivan, and the Dahlman brothers come to mind. Kris Humphries.

The greatest rivalry and most intense championship battle two years running was Litchfield and Minneapolis Patrick Henry. I think Patrick Henry won four straight 3A titles while Litchfield won three out of four Class AA titles during those years. People were standing four deep around center court. Both games went down to the wire, and they split 1-1. (Coaches) John Carlson and Larry McKenzie were watching closely.

### **Concerned about girls' teams turnouts?**

I wish more of the best girls' teams would play. I'm a great fan of girls' basketball, so I'm always disappointed when the girls don't match the boys in some way. I think the girls' champions have been as good as the boys – in some cases, recently especially, they've been better over-all as some of the historically-best teams in Minnesota history: Hopkins, Minnetonka and Providence Academy. But overall, there aren't as many state tournament-aspiring girls' teams jumping into the battle. It could be that they don't like the prospect of playing such great teams! It could also be that so many girls' basketball players also play volleyball. The Sweet 16 edges into family time and precious free time.

### **More thoughts on the Sweet 16**

—We have traditionally held the Sweet 16 on the first weekend in August – first because AAU finished by July 31, and now high school teams coached by their head coaches, must complete play by July 31 – and that allowed the best players to be available, making the Sweet 16 the great tournament it has been for 35 years.

—Imagine watching four high-powered games on four courts at the same time. Minnesota's greatest fan, Terry Kunze, ex-Gopher and Duluth Central state champion, never misses. He loves to watch great players.

—The Sweet 16 definitely provides a good idea of which teams are going to be strong the next season. Like the Rosemount girls last summer. They won the Sweet 16 and looked unbeatable – and proved to be in the 4A high school state tournament. It gives the winners a special confidence.

—The Sweet 16 is usually my last event of the Pacesetter season, so I do a traditional Sweet 16 "kick" when we finish the tournament. Pat Dewey holds the camera, and I jump up and click my heels together. That click is becoming tougher to do, but I hope to be able to click my heels for another 3-5 years. Then I hope I can pass Pacesetter and The Sweet 16 on to someone with a great vertical jump!

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August 1-2



## College of St. Benedict - St. Joseph, MN

The Pacesetter "Sweet Sixteen" Basketball Championship has become the premier summer tournament for varsity players as 32 top boys' and girls' teams in Minnesota gather to play for two over-all championships.

Four Class A, four Class AA, four Class AAA and four Class AAAA teams are invited to make up the 16-team fields for both boys and girls. One team from each class will be placed into each 4-team section of the 16-team bracket.

All teams will play 4 regulation-length games in a 16-team format. Teams that win the championships will receive beautiful individual plaques. Top finishers will be awarded individual medals with neck ribbons.

The College of St. Benedict Fieldhouse in St. Joseph, MN, is a first-class facility with four full air-conditioned courts with ample seating.



# FOUR CLASSES... ONE CHAMPION

# Triple quad: Thayer, prolific scorer, rebounder, master thief

By Bruce Strand

Only three players in Minnesota hoops history have achieved a career Triple Quadruple, all of them 2026 graduates. The other two are far more famous but Kate Thayer's prodigious feats, amassed up near the Canadian border, deserve accolades too.

The Northome-Kelliher guard amassed 3,544 points, ranking No. 14 all-time, along with 1,119 rebounds and a state record 1,147 steals in 160 games. Oh, and 656 assists also.

Asked to assess her game, Thayer reflected: "I got the bulk of my points off rebounds, turnovers and drives. My whole career, I have always penetrated the lane, trying to get two easy points, along with fast breaks and working hard to crash the boards."

About all those steals, more than 200 ahead of the second-place player, she attributes to her quickness and "my awareness of the ball at all times." In short: "My defense fuels my offense; that was my mindset going into every game."

Her coach, Kevin Waldo, observed that Thayer has amazingly quick hands and that she is one of the rare girl athletes who kept getting quicker as she got older. He added that ball pressure applied by her teammates led to many of her steals, even though they are not a full-court pressing team.

Northome-Kelliher was 130-30 in her six seasons, including 105-14 the last four seasons — and finally broke through to the state tournament this year after three straight section runner-up finishes. Sharing in that success were classmates Kylie Binkley (2,577 points) and Allison Lundin (1,389 points). Thayer averaged 22.15 points in her career. As a senior she averaged

27.9 points, 9.0 rebounds, 8.7 steals and 4.6 rebounds. Reaching state, a first for her school, ranks up there with all her laurels: "Our team has played together since we were in third grade," she noted. "It felt so amazing finally getting to the state tournament, representing our schools and communities. The outcome was not what we were hoping for, but we were grateful to be there."

In the Mustangs' 66-45 section finals win over East Grand Forks Sacred Heart, Thayer had 24 points, 11 rebounds and 13 steals. At the state tournament, the Mustangs lost 82-69 to Central Minnesota Christian and 70-67 to Mayer Lutheran. Thayer got the last 53 points and the last 23 steals of her career and made the all-tournament team.



Northome-Kelliher's Kate Thayer

The other Triple Quads are the two luminaries who scored over 5,000 points, Providence Academy's Maddyn Greenway (Kentucky recruit) and Crosby-Ironton's Tori Oerhleim (Gopher recruit). For them, rebounds and assists were the other two categories.

Thayer also plays softball (short-stop, pitcher) and volleyball. She's been all-conference in all three since ninth grade and reached state in softball in 10th grade. Thayer's 20 steals against Laporte and 279 for the season are records. She had 40 or more points four times with a high of 45 in a 105-94 win over Duluth Marshall.

Asked about career highlights, she cited the MACCRAY game where they trailed by seven points with 30 seconds left and she scored seven quick points to knot the score, and a teammate (Binkley) hit a buzzer beater. She also listed the 45-point game, hitting a half-court shot at the buzzer in eighth grade during a playoff game, and a 44-point game against Warren-Oslo-Alvarado during another playoff game.

Thayer, who holds a 4.08 GPA, will continue her hoops career at North Dakota College of Science.

# Triton's Petersohn: a man for all seasons, elite in all of them

By Bruce Strand

Pierce Petersohn never got to play in the state basketball tournament or the Prep Bowl. He would have made a huge impression on fans had his team gotten to either of them — like he did last spring when he starred at the big show in track-and-field.

The Triton senior, regarded as one of the elite all-around athletes in the state — who made the Mr. Basketball top ten list and will play Division I football — was by far the top scorer in the Class 1A track meet. He placed second in the 400 with 48.16, fourth in high jump with 6-4, fourth in the 200 at 22.18 and sixth in the 100-meter with 11.24.

Petersohn currently leads the state track honor roll in the 400 with his 47.24 to win the Hamline Elite Meet, and his 6-10 high jump is one-quarter inch off the top spot.

In basketball, the 6-foot-5, 205-pound guard averaged 33 points, 11.6 rebounds and 4.3 assists for the Cobras this past season. Triton was 25-5 and lost in the section semifinals to eventual state runner-up Goodhue 83-71 despite his 38 points. He amassed 2,859 points and 938 rebounds for his career.

“He’s a real athlete,” said Terry Kunze, MBBN analyst and Mr. Basketball committee member, noting Petersohn’s track-and-field prowess. “He’d be a Division I small forward. He does a little of everything; he shoots, he puts it on the floor, he’s a good teammate. Great hops, great quicks. He could play with anyone in the metro.”

Petersohn will be a tight end for Virginia Tech. He originally committed to Penn State, but when coach James Franklin was dismissed by the Nittany Lions and was quickly hired by Virginia Tech, Peterson switched to the Hokies, too.

For Triton, he was a quarterback and linebacker. He passed for 3,826 yards and 43 touchdowns in three seasons as a starter, and ran for seven TD’s as a senior. Growing up, he played mostly basketball.

While top athletes at the big schools usually concentrate on one sport, maybe two, Petersohn is glad to play three sports, common among small-school athletes. “I think it’s really important to do many sports in high school,” he said. “I’m actually going to give a speech in class about playing multiple sports instead of specializing. They all help each other in different ways.”



**Triton triple threat Pierce Petersohn**

The Gophers wanted him as an outside linebacker. Petersohn prefers to play offense, ever since he high-jumped 6-10 for the first time as a sophomore and within days Oklahoma and Nebraska contacted him about playing tight end. “That jump started helping me get recruited and getting my name out there,” he acknowledged.

Petersohn is regarded as a coach’s dream. “Very humble, leads by example, His work ethic is unmatched,” said Zak Hanegraaf, Triton basketball coach. “He’s able to adjust on the fly and take what you give him and put it into action. In the classroom he’s a 4.0 student that truly cares about his grades and wants to do better in every aspect of life.”

When Petersohn was named Rochester Area Athlete of the Year in February by the Post-Bulletin, the paper asked him if he has any regrets about giving up basketball.

“No, I don’t second guess it. I’m pretty locked in. I really don’t think about it too much. But I am having a lot of fun with basketball,” he responded. “I’m just trying to soak it all in because this is my last year of playing basketball. I’m just out there having fun. I just want to get the whole benefit of my high school career. I want to do the whole thing, basketball and track, too, because I’m only in high school once.”

# How many points did Grandpa score? How about Mom?

For the first time in 32 years, Minnesota Basketball News is offering players, parents, friends or family members a chance to celebrate the “Shooters” in their families with a special commemorative plaque. See ad below.

Minnesota Basketball News has the point totals for all players in the history of Minnesota high school basketball.

Other accomplishments could also be recognized: Coach, Team Captain, Champion, Most Valuable Player, etc.

The plaques will be 7 x 9 horizontal as pictured. Cost: \$45.00

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Matt Peterson of Starbuck is retiring from his role as passionate keeper of MN basketball records. We will be providing him with a gift from the plaque sales in appreciation of his efforts

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 MN Basketball News

# Pacesetter Tour of Champions camps feature all-star lineup

By Bruce Strand

An impressive array of high school and college coaches will be molding the skills of players attending Pacesetter basketball camps this summer.

“We have a heckuva lineup which took a lot of time to assemble,” said Jeff McCarron, Pacesetter camps director. “A large number of Minnesota’s best coaches are stepping up to offer their best tips to players AND coaches.”

McCarron calls the camp series the Pacesetter Tour of Champions. The camps are also available to coaches to attend as free clinics. A list of camps and who’ll be coaching there appears on page 13.

McCarron is pleased to have **Greg Troland** assisting him at several sites. Troland was an all-tournament player for Moorhead on two state runner-up teams, losing to Edina in 1967 and 1968, and was a teammate of McCarron’s on the Gophers’ Big Ten champion team in 1972.

This will be the 41st year that **Paul McDonald** has graced the Pacesetter camps. McDonald is a two-time state champion as a player at Chisholm (’73 and ’75), who coached Vermilion to a 539-248 record and four juco national tournaments. “I still get excited,” he said, “walking into the gym and sharing knowledge about the great game of basketball. Giving back to the game is still my passion.”

“It’s always a great day,” said **Wendy Kohler**, coach of 15 state teams and one state title at Alexandria, and three-time state coach of the year, “when I can be in the gym teaching and stacking skills to help athletes be a more efficient basketball player — but also to reinforce so many other things that will help them be successful in the game of life. Standards, work ethic, preparation, leadership, vision, energy, joy and confidence are just a few intangibles that have served our program in Alexandria.”

**Tom Vix**, who had a 684-239 record at Rushford-Peter-



**Paul McDonald, Vermillion CC**



**Wendy Kohler, Alexandria**

son with 16 state tournament appearances, three state champions and two runners-up, said, “I’m looking forward to motivating young athletes to continue their efforts to become the best basketball player and person they can be. I want hard work to be fun.” The two-time state coach of the year added, “The young athletes will gain knowledge, work on skill development and take-home drills that they can use for the rest of their careers. I think stories of what it takes to be successful will be life lessons to benefit all athletes.”

**Dave Cresap** was national Coach of the Year in 2011, had five state teams and one championship at Perham, and coached M State of Fergus Falls to a 30-4 record

and national fourth-place junior college finish in 2024-25. Cresap looks forward to “helping players grow their skills and confidence in a fun, competitive environment while sharing my passion for the game.” He added, “Campers will benefit from great instruction, positive energy, and fundamentals that will help them succeed on the court.”

**Seth Anderson**, former MIAC MVP and D-III All-American at Gustavus Adolphus, has a 252-96 record at Waseca with six state trips and one championship in 2025. “I’m excited to bring some of the drills and skills that I think are important to new people,” he said, “and give them a chance to grow in the game of basketball.”

The Pacesetter lineup also includes:

—**Jeff Buffetta**, coach of 14 state teams with one state title and three runner-up finishes, with Mountain Iron-Buhl girls.

—**Tim Anderson**, three state tournament teams and a 408-158 record with Maple River, and an assistant on two state champion teams.

—**Joel McDonald**, 1991 Mr. Basketball and leader of a Chisholm state champion team 1991, starred at St. Cloud State and coached Hibbing for 23 seasons, specializes in Skills Specific training.

—**Sascha Hansen**, played for two state champion teams at Marshall, was a three-year St. Cloud State captain, all conference player, Female Athlete of the Year, and coached Southwest MN State and St. Cloud Tech.

—**Katie Borowicz**, Roseau state champ team member, 2,000-pointer and state record holder with a 21-assist game, was a Gopher starter at age 17, and was Hamline assistant coach

—**Jeff Wall**, coach of two state runner-up boys teams at Maranatha Christian and later Anoka coach with a 640-302 composition record

—**Gary Thomas**, coach of a South Dakota state boys champion at Watertown with five state trips in six years,



**Tom Vix  
Rushford-Peterson**



**Dave Cresap, Perham and M State**

and later Augustana College head coach for 5 seasons

— **David Iverson** took Deer River boys to its first state tournament, now coaching St. Paul Harding girls, was NAIG silver medalist coach in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

— **Ryan Zyla**, women’s coach at MN North juco in Ely, after high school stints in Texas and Michigan.

— **Ayden McDonald**, over 2400 points, 1000 assists and 500 steals for Hibbing, currently with UM-Duluth coaching staff.

— **Jeff McCarron**, Pacesetter founder/owner since 1980, member of state champion team at Sherburn (1970) and Big Ten champs with Gophers (1972), director of over 300 camps, founder of IBA (1995) which became NBA D League.



**Seth Anderson, Waseca**

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# TOUR OF CHAMPIONS Basketball Camps

Date	Location	Directors	Gender/Grades
June 8-9, M-T	Austin, MN	Tim and Seth Anderson	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-5
June 8-9, M-T	Sartell, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 7-12
June 10-11, W-TH	Austin, MN	Tim and Seth Anderson	Boys & Girls Gr. 6-8
June 10-11, W-TH	Sartell, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-9
June 10-12, W-F	Tower, MN	Paul McDonald	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-7
June 10-12, W-F	Willmar, MN	Gary Thomas	Boys & Girls Gr. 5-12
June 13, SAT	Eagan, MN	Katie Borowicz	Girls Gr. 3-12
June 15, M	Grand Rapids, MN	David Iverson (shooting)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-12
June 15-16, M-T	Austin, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 7-12
June 15-16, M-T	Willow River, MN	Dave Cresap/Jeff Wall	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-12
June 16-18, T-TH	Grand Rapids, MN	David Iverson	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-12
June 17-18, W-TH	Austin, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-8
June 22, M	Sartell, MN	Wendy Kohler	Girls Gr. 4-7
June 22-23, M-T	Rochester, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 7-12
June 23, T	Sartell, MN	Jeff McCarron (shooting)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
June 24, W	Sartell, MN	Wendy Kohler	Girls Gr. 7-12
June 25, TH	Sartell, MN	Jeff McCarron (1-on-1 moves)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
June 24-25, W-TH	Rochester, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-9
June 24-25, W-TH	Willow River, MN	Gary Thomas	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-12
June 29-30, M-T	Walker, MN	Dave Cresap/Jeff Wall	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-9
June 29-July 1, M-W	Stewartville, MN	Joel & Ayden McDonald (shooting/offensive)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
June 30-July 1, T-W	Grand Rapids, MN	Sascha Hansen	Girls Gr. 4-12
July 6-7, M-T	Paynesville, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
July 6-9, M-TH	Willow River, MN	Jeff Buffetta	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-12
July 8-9, W-TH	Paynesville, MN	Ryan Zyla (college prep)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 8-12
July 8-9 W-TH	Redwood Falls, MN	Paul McDonald (shooting)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
July 13-14, M-T	Madelia, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 7-12
July 14-15, T-W	Grand Rapids, MN	Ryan Zyla (college prep)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 8-12
July 14-15, T-W	Paynesville, MN	Jeff McCarron (shooting)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
July 15-16, W-TH	Madelia, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-9
July 18, SAT	Eagan, MN	Katie Borowicz	Girls Gr. 3-12
July 20, M	Walker, MN	Wendy Kohler	Girls Gr. 4-12
July 20-21, M-T	Redwood Falls, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 7-12
July 20-21, M-T	Paynesville, MN	Jeff McCarron (offensive skills)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
July 21, T	Walker, MN	Ryan Zyla (college prep)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 8-12
July 22-23, W-TH	Redwood Falls, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-9
July 22-23, W-TH	Walker, MN	Jeff McCarron (shooting)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
July 24, F	Grand Rapids, MN	Paul McDonald (shooting)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-12
July 27-28, M-T	Rochester, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 7-12
July 27-29 M-W	Sartell, MN	Ryan Zyla (college prep)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 8-12
July 29-30, W-TH	Redwood Falls, MN	Dave Cresap/Jeff Wall	Boys & Girls Gr. 3-12
July 29-30, W-TH	Rochester, MN	Tom Vix	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-8
August 3-4, M-T	Willow River, MN	Joel & Ayden McDonald	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12
August 5, W	Willow River, MN	Joel & Ayden McDonald (shooting/offensive)*	Boys & Girls Gr. 4-12



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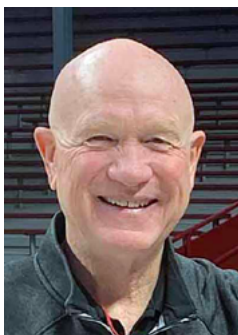
# Want to score 30 points and win the championship game?

By Jeff McCarron

Score 30 and win a Championship - every 10 minutes!

How many of you have ever imagined you were playing a championship game while shooting baskets alone?

Almost all former players over 60 in the room will raise their hand. Why? We had time, we had heroes, and we didn't have a cell phone! If we were lucky enough to have a basketball and a hoop with a good net - and we had it all to ourselves - we were in paradise!



When there were not thousands of screen images flashing in front of our eyes every day, we used our imagination. We could imagine other images. other players.

Wouldn't you like to score 30 and hit the winning shot to win a championship for your team, your town, your state or your country? You can do it - every 10 minutes - by yourself with a ball and a hoop.

And there are more benefits than just the fantasy and joy of winning. You will be taking a variety of shots - which will give you confidence in taking those same shots as the opportunities arise in a real game.

Let's get started. Imagine the game. Who's playing who? Maybe start with your town's biggest rival. Or the team that too often beats your school.

The tip goes to you! You pivot and face the basket at the top of the key. The defense is giving you room. Bam! You just opened the game with a 3-pointer! Or you miss, and race for the rebound. Now here's the important part - you shoot it immediately from wherever you get the ball. Miss? Get it again and shoot it from

that spot. Keep following up your shots until the ball is in the basket. Two points.

Go back out to the perimeter and this time dribble hard and pull up for a three! Miss? This time, grab the rebound, fake up and drive under the giant defender for a layup. Two. Back out to the perimeter. Jab step and shoot! Make it? Go get the ball where it is bouncing and turn your back to the basket. Fake and shoot a turn-around jump shot, follow it, two-arm power fake, and rip through the defender's arms to bank it home. Fouled! Go to the free throw line to make it a 3-point play. Keep your team always 3-4 points behind in your mind. You'll stay aggressive.

The next time you get the ball near the basket, power fake and shoot a jump hook. The next time dribble under and spin it off the board. Make every one of your field goals a different shot in some way - never the same shot twice in one game. Think of how you can make it different - different spot, dribble or no dribble, bank shot or swish, fake or no fake or multiple fakes, crossover and drive. Take a break at halftime - your team is down five.

When you get to 27 points, your team is down two points. There are ten seconds left and you have the ball. You are going for the win. Take your defender off the dribble with a crossover or two and pull up for your shot with seven to eight seconds left. Bang, you win it with a three! Or no, you miss it, but through a heroic jab step, you leave your boxing-out defender on the floor, and you race for the ball, and shoot it from where you get it to try to tie the game - four seconds - you miss, but scramble for the ball and get it. You pump fake and shoot it off the board. You either tie the game and GET FOULED - or shoot it until you make it at the last second...and GET FOULED!

You are at the FT line, game tied - one shot. You either make it for the WIN - or you miss it and race to get the ball for the WINNING SHOT - or you GET FOULED!

Get the idea? You are going to score 30, and you are going to win the game – it is just a matter of how you do it. Do it in 5-10 minutes. Take a break. Shoot one “pressure” free throw each day – a 1-and-1 with no time on the clock and behind by one. If you shoot only one pressure FT each day, it is really pressure. But that’s 365 FT’s in a year. You’ll get used to the pressure.

Finish your post-game interview with a charming quip and smile...and then start “The Section Finals”. Then state, then....whatever you imagine.

How many championship games do you want to win and score 30 points? You could do it all day, right? Think about how many different shots you’d be trying if no two shots are the same – except the free throws - make 10-15 different shots each “your specialty” shot!

Let’s see how many you can name:

- 3-pointer off dribble hard right
- 3-pointer off dribble hard left
- 3-pointer after jab step – no dribble
- 3-pointer off pass from right (spin ball to self)
- 3-pointer off pass from the left
- 3-pointer off pass from the post
- 3-pointer step back after hard dribble toward basket
- 3-pointer dribbling forward from half court

Then jump shots from 15-16 feet – using all 8 ways above – shoot from all angles – around the world - from 15 feet, then from 10 feet, then 5. Next time 17, 12, and 7 feet. Use the board on the 45-degree angle.

Within 5-7 feet, turn your back to the basket:

- Step fake right, turnaround jumper left
- Step fake left, turnaround jumper right
- Turn and face – fake down, shoot over
- Turn and face – fake up, step under for shot off one foot
- Turn and face – cross-step to shoot Mikan shot off board
- One-dribble drop step, pivot, pump fake, lean and power off board
- One-dribble drop step, pivot, pump fake, lean and jump hook
- One-dribble drop step, pivot, and shoot fade off board
- Duck under and drive to hoop for layup by rim
- Duck under and drive to hoop for long layup over 7-footer’s hand
- Duck under and shoot reverse with left hand
- Duck under and shoot reverse with right hand
- Dribble out turnaround jump shot

The moves are almost endless – as are the situations in

a basketball game. Imagine them all, win a championship with each of them, make each your “go-to” – and my what an arsenal of shots you’ll have!

Now let’s talk players. I don’t want to name a name on this one, but I recall a very talented high school player. Maybe I shouldn’t say talented. I’ll say, “blessed with quickness and jumping ability”. Those aren’t really talents. He loved to dunk and could “fly”! The crowd rose to their feet when he got a breakaway. It was going to be something special. You’ve seen this guy. He went for a dunk every chance he had. He also liked to shoot three’s, but he was just a fair shooter. He’d score 30 a game in his high school games, mostly on fastbreaks off defensive pressure against weaker teams.

A major college recruited him. A long, quick, explosive 6-foot-8 body will always be given a chance. He had the natural ability to become a pro. No doubt. But he didn’t. Why? While he could get 5-6 dunks in high school games, he might get one in a D1 game – or might not. In college, you better shoot 35% or better or someone else should be shooting the 3’s. He shot a few in college, but the coaches preferred he stay near the basket for the rebound and put back. So with few to no dunks and few if any 3’s, he went from averaging 30 in high school to scoring 5-6 points in college. The pros had no use for him.

Why? He didn’t know how to score in other ways. He had only dunked and shot threes. He didn’t have all those other shots. And defense was not really his thing. He could have really become special at a higher level with different thinking when he was 13-14 years old.

Watch the Knicks’ Brunson or OKC’s Shay G-A. They are so tough to guard or stop because you never know what shot is coming next or from where.

If you want to get better and win those important games – and maybe even an important championship one day – get out there and win it at a basket every chance you get. Imagine it, and then do it every way possible.

You are guaranteed to score 30 and win the game, so have fun with it and try to make it as exciting as possible – and one day you will make that special shot in a special game in real life – as if you’d done it a hundred times before.

# Top 100 Expo Showcase slated

Minnesota Basketball News and Pacesetter Sports will again offer the Top 100 Expo Showcase for a field of over 100 of the state's top players at Clemens Field House at St. Ben's in St. Joseph, Thursday, July 2.

A Player Watch List has been created by MBBN editor, Bruce Strand, from nominations by high school coaches and various sources of information gathered. Approximately 200 boys and 200 girls will be invited. The first 64 players for each gender will be accepted into the field. Players will be divided into 8 teams and play 3 games in an 8-team Expo championship tournament in one day before the eyes of all college coaches attending as well as the MN BB News staff.

All college coaches from a 6-state area are invited to attend. Players are also asked to invite all college coaches who have contacted them to invite them to watch them play.

A 10-player all-tournament team will be selected along with a Most Valuable Player for each gender. The boys' and girls' teams will be playing at the same time on the four courts in Clemens Field House. Play is expected to run from approximately 10 am to 4:00 pm.

A complete schedule with a list of players will be sent

to all college coaches and will also be posted on the Pacesetter website at [www.pacesettersports.net](http://www.pacesettersports.net).

All players will also be invited to attend the College Prep Camp on Wednesday, July 1, featuring the staff of the Top 100 Expo, comprised of current or former college coaches or players. The program will feature the best teaching tips and drills to prepare for college basketball. The camp program will run from 1:00-5:00 p.m.

The College Prep Camp and the Top 100 Expo will again be conducted by Paul McDonald, long-time head men's coach at Vermilion Community College and 2-time high school state champion at Chisholm. Paul also played for both the Nebraska Cornhuskers and the South Dakota State Jackrabbits. His talk on "Preparing for College on and off the Court" will headline the beginning of the day. All parents, family members and friends are welcome to attend. No admission.

Players will be sent invitations throughout the next two weeks. Head coaches may nominate their own players who are interested in playing college basketball. Email Pacesetter Director, Jeff McCarron, at [jmac8144@yahoo.com](mailto:jmac8144@yahoo.com).

## Great 5 State at Target Center set

The 17th Annual Pacesetter Basketball Great 5-State Championships will be held again at Target Center over three weekends this summer, July 11-12, July 17-18, and August 8-9.

Top youth teams in grades 4-9 from five states will gather in Minneapolis for the Pacesetter championships. Minnesota teams qualified through the 5-region Pacesetter playoffs and the Pacesetter Minnesota State Championships in March.

Teams from North Dakota qualified through the Jr. Grand Am in Grand Forks, South Dakota teams qualified through the Tri-State championships in Sioux Falls, and Wisconsin and Iowa teams qualified by invitation and via various playoffs and tournaments in their state.

Each grade/gender bracket will feature an Elite 8 bracket for boys in grades 4-5-6-7-8-9 and girls in grades 4-5-6-9 with teams playing 3 games. Girls' teams in grades

7-8 will feature a Final Four bracket with teams playing two games. Offsite games will be held at Mounds View High School and Eagan Community Center with each team guaranteed to play a minimum of one game on the main Target Center floor. Target Center games feature a game announcer and musical introductions of all players and coaches.

Groups playing July 11-12 are 4th grade girls, 6th grade boys, and 7th grade boys. Groups playing July 17-18 are 5th and 6th grade girls and 5th grade and 9th grade boys. Groups playing August 8-9 are 4th grade and 8th grade boys and 9th grade girls.

All players and families will be attending a Minnesota Lynx game in conjunction with the Pacesetter championship weekend. NY Liberty – July 11 • Portland Fire – July 18 • Las Vegas Aces – August 8 • Dallas Wings (with Paige Bueckers) – August 9

2026 Minnesota Basketball News • An Invitation-only Event

# Top 100

## Expo Showcase

## Thursday, July 2

### College of St. Benedict • St. Joseph, MN

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



## College Prep Camp • Wednesday, July 1

The Pacesetter "College Prep Camp" 4-hour program is presented to all players seeking to play college basketball - from 9th graders through college freshmen in 2026-2027. No invitation required. All players invited to the Top 100 Expo Showcase are encouraged to attend the College Prep Camp. Players will be taught the most important skills for on and off the court success. The coaching staff will be comprised of current or former college coaches or players.

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