

2013 Boys Basketball State Tournament Preview

By Kurt Stubbs, JHuddle.com

The 91st Annual State Boys Basketball Tournaments are here once again with action starting Thursday at 10:45 am inside the Jerome Schottenstein Center on the campus of the Ohio State University.

Fun Facts:

*Only one team returns from last year's state tournament. Ottawa-Glandorf returns to the Division III state tournament after being knocked out by Portsmouth in the semis a year ago.

*Six state tournament newcomers will be in Columbus this weekend, which includes Walnut Hills, Bishop Watterson, Vincent Warren, Leavittsburg LaBrea, Fairfield Christian, and Troy Christian.

*Columbus Northland will try to give the Central District its fourth Division I state title in six years after only winning two (Brookhaven 2002 and Westerville North 1994) between 1980 to 2007.

*The Eastern District is the only district to not have a team at the state tournament after Berlin Hiland won back-to-back state titles in 2011 and 2012.

*Six Division I commits will take part in this year's tournament including Clemmye Owens of Toledo Rogers (Bethune-Cookman), Tony Kynard of Toledo Rogers (Bethune-Cookman), Isaiah Johnson of Walnut Hills (Akron), Dantonio Wingfield of Walnut Hills (Ohio), Demonte Flannigan of Cleveland VASJ (Cleveland State), and Duane Gibson of Cleveland VASJ (Evansville).

*One student-athlete is committed to go Division 2 in Nick Wells of Akron SVSM (Lake Erie).

*Akron SVSM junior Parris Campbell is an Ohio State football verbal commitment.

*Akron SVSM is trying to become the first school to win a football and basketball state championship in the same school year since Cleveland Benedictine did it during the 1996-1997 school year.

*Walnut Hills senior Dantonio "DJ" Wingfield's father, Dantonio Wingfield, played at the University Cincinnati before playing for the Seattle Super Sonics and Portland Trail Blazers from (1994-1998).

*Versailles is the first MAC school to reach the state tournament since New Knoxville cut the nets down in 2008.

*There will be a new champion in all four divisions as nary a state champion from a season ago will be in Columbus. The last time this happened was 2011.

*Columbus Northland is trying to become the first school in OHSAA history to win 30 games in a season. The Twinsburg girls had a chance last weekend, but fell short in the finals against Kettering Fairmont.

*Toledo Rogers will look to win Toledo's first state title since Toledo Scott in 1990.

*Kettering Alter gives the GCL (Greater Catholic League) at least one representative at the state tournament for 15 of the last 19 years.

*Akron SVSM freshman VJ King was selected to the USA Basketball Olympic training roster.

*Three teams are nicknamed the Vikings this year in Northland, Cleveland VASJ and Leipsic.

*The following Associated Press Top 10 teams remain: Columbus Northland (No. 1), Walnut Hills (No. 3), Mentor (No. 8), Bishop Watterson (No. 2), Kettering Alter (No. 7), Vincent Warren (No. 9), Akron SVSM (No. 11), Ironton (No. 3), Ottawa-Glandorf (No. 6), and Cleveland VASJ (No. 2). 12 of the 56 poll champions have won state titles in this century.

*Cleveland VASJ head coach Babe Kwasniak won state titles in 1992 and 1994 as a player for VASJ before playing collegiately at Army. Ironically, in 1993, Kwasniak and the Vikings were knocked out of the tournament by Girard, who was coached by Bob Krizancic, now the headman at state qualifier Mentor. The loss stopped the VASJ from winning its third-straight state championship and Krizancic's squad went on to capture gold.

*Cleveland VASJ is the first school in OHSAA history to qualify for the state tournament in all four divisions winning titles in both Division I and Division II, and a pair of runner-ups in Division III in 1997 and 2006. Dale Thomas, who is an assistant for VASJ, led VASJ in '97. Babe's father, Tedd Kwasniak, who is also an assistant, was the VASJ head coach for the 1994 and 1995 state championship teams.

*Walnut Hills head coach Ricardo Hill is in his first season as lead boss.

*Tyson McGlaughlin, head coach at Ottawa-Glandorf, will be making his second trip to the state tournament as the headman in just his second year at the school. McGlaughlin played at O-G and graduated in 1999 before playing at the University of Findlay where he was a three-year starter.

*Kettering Alter head coach Joe Petrocelli will be retiring at the end of the year. The coaching legend has racked up 806 wins in his remarkable career. At 75-years-young, Petrocelli has won 25 district titles, nine regional championships, and three state championships. He is second all-time in wins behind Kalida's Dick Kortokrax.

*Versailles head coach Scott McEldowney was an assistant for his brother, Roger McEldowney, in the Tigers only other state tournament showing in 2004.

*Leipsc head coach Scott Maag was an assistant at Ottawa-Glandorf under Dave Sweet and Josh Leslie before accepting the position at Leipsc. Maag was the JV coach in 2004 when the Titans won the DII state championship and the freshmen coach in 1996 when they finished state runner-up.

*There is just one undefeated team entering this year's tournament in Columbus Northland. This would be the Vikings first unbeaten season. Dayton Dunbar (2012), New Knoxville (2008), Georgetown (2007), and Akron SVSM (2000) are the only teams to finish the year undefeated in this century. SVSM didn't lose a game on the court in 2003, but was forced to forfeit one of its regular season contests.

Division I

Columbus Northland (28-0) is making its third state tournament appearance and first since 2011. The Vikings won the 2009 state gold and finished runner-up in '11. Northland has yet to taste defeat on the season with a trio of two-point overtime wins over Brookhaven (twice) and Columbus Africentric. Northland has won seven consecutive Columbus City League titles and has not lost a game in conference in seven seasons. This year's squad was expected to be talented, but most thought the Vikings were a year away from being really good with a roster filled with seven juniors, one sophomore and one freshman. The lone senior on the squad, Armani Towns (6-3), is the heart and soul of this club. The senior does a little bit of everything leading the team in points (13.6 ppg.) and rebounds (8.3 rpg.). Towns is joined by a talented group of underclassmen led by juniors Derek McKeithen (10.9 ppg.), Jaylen Tucker (10.8 ppg.), Ty Hairston (10.2 ppg.) and Shemar Waugh (8.0 ppg.) and one of the best freshmen in Ohio in Seth Towns (9.8 ppg.). Waugh, who is a transfer from Canal Winchester, leads the team in assists at (6.8 apg.). The one issue for the Vikings has been free throw shooting, where Northland is making just 57 percent of its freebies. Defensively, Northland is giving up just 47.7 points per game, which is best among the four Division I teams.

Mentor (23-5) is entering its second state tournament. The Cardinals last appeared at the state tournament in 2010, falling to Cincinnati Moeller, 66-59. Mentor enters the state tournament as the highest scoring team of the 16 participants at nearly 84 points per game. The Cardinals got to Columbus thanks to a 20-point win over Shaker Heights, a team they lost to twice in the regular season. Mentor has terrific scoring balance with senior Jeff Foreman averaging 15 points per game, followed by juniors Caleb Potter (14 ppg.), Conner Krizancic (13.3 ppg.) and Brandon Fritts (13.3 ppg.). Krizancic and Fritts were both outstanding wide receivers for Mentor's state semi-finalist football squad. Fritts' brother, Justin, was last year's Ohio Mr. Basketball. He is also the team's leading rebounder at just over seven boards per contest. The Cardinals biggest moment of the year may have come in a loss to Huntington Prep (WV), where Mentor nearly pulled off a huge upset over the nationally ranked Express before falling, 61-59. Mentor has an astounding 315 three-point goals on the year.

Cincinnati Walnut Hills (27-1) is a state tournament rookie, but is currently riding a 23-game winning streak. The Eagles have not lost since a 61-54 defeat to Huntington Prep (WV) all the way back on December 14. Walnut Hills will be the biggest team at the state tournament led by Akron-bound senior Isaiah Johnson (6-9). Johnson averaged 17.6 points per game and 9.2 rebounds for the Eastern Cincinnati Conference Champions. Johnson averaged 16 points and 10 boards in hard-fought regional wins over Springboro and Cincinnati La Salle. He was also named the Southwest District DII Player of the Year. DJ Wingfield (6-6), who transferred over from Lockland High School, averaged just over 17 points per game and seven rebounds. Kodey Jackson (6-6) and Jordan Tyson (6-10) provide even more size. Senior guards Ricardo Hill Jr., Khari Burton, and Sterling Gilmore make up a very good and veteran backcourt. The Eagles are a senior dominated team, which is a good recipe for tournament success. Walnut Hills is also a very good defensive team giving up just 48.4 points per outing.

Toledo Rogers (20-7) is one of the tournament's biggest surprises, with many thinking if a team from Toledo made it to Columbus it would be St. John's, Central Catholic or Whitmer. The Rams are making their second state tournament appearance and second in three years. Rogers, which is an exciting and high scoring basketball team, recorded upsets of Toledo St. John's, Toledo Central Catholic, and Anthony Wayne along the tourney trail before outlasting Brecksville-Broadview Heights in overtime in the regional finals. Senior Tony Kynard scored 20 points in the win over Broadview Heights. Kynard is averaging 15.9 points and just below five assists a game. Backcourt mate and future college teammate at Bethune-Cookman, Clemmye Owens, leads Rogers at 17.1 points a night. Seniors DeVonte Pratt (11.1 ppg.) and Tribune Dailey (11.1 ppg.) combined for over 22 points a game and both are pulling down 8.7 rebounds per contest. Junior Fadil Robinson and senior Keondre Gilmer are both key contributors as well. Rogers, who averages 75 points per game, is one of the best rebounding teams in the state especially at the offensive end. Rogers was a heavy favorite to win the Toledo City League Tournament Championship, but was upset by Toledo Start (54-53) and hasn't lost since. The Rams played a great out-of-conference schedule, which included games with Northland, Chandler Parker (IL), Hyde Park (IL), Dayton Thurgood Marshall, Norwalk and Toledo St. John's.

Division II

Akron SVSM (19-9) is no stranger to the state tournament. The Irish are looking for their seventh state title, which would tie Middletown for the all-time lead. This will be SVSM's 11th appearance in the final four. The Irish have won two of the last four Division II gold trophies. Freshman VJ King leads the Irish at 16.3 points per game adding nearly five rebounds a game. King, who is regarded not only as the best 2016 prospect in Ohio but also one of the nation's best, played varsity basketball as a 7th and 8th grader at United Faith Christian Academy in Charlotte, NC. The 6-foot-7 King has season highs of 25 points against Cleveland Central Catholic and Cleveland VASJ. Junior Jalen Hudson (6-6), who is another Division I recruit, comes into the weekend averaging 14 points per game. Harding-working senior Nick Wells averages nearly 12 points and nine rebound an outing. He was a member of the 2011 state championship team. Jordan Hargrove (6-0), Jarel Woolridge (5-8), and Fransohn Bickley (5-8) can also provide scoring punch. Juniors Travonte Junius and Dante Booker give the Irish with a pair of defensive stoppers off the bench. Booker is one of the top linebacker recruits in the country. Junius, Booker, Hargrove, Bickley, and Parris Campbell were all member Akron SVSM's state championship football team. The tournament trail for the Irish has been much easier than their 22-game regular season slate, which resulted in just a (9-9) start before winning 10-straight games to reach Columbus.

Vincent Warren (26-1) had never won a district championship despite all of its basketball success, but that all changed this year, as the Warriors not only won their first district, but also a regional title. Evan Yabs put a shot in at the buzzer following a Dylan Leffingwell miss to give Warren a thrilling 49-47 victory over New Philadelphia in the regional finals after nearly squandering a 17-point third quarter lead. If that wasn't enough, Warren overcame a 13-point fourth quarter deficit against Athens in the regional semis to win in overtime thanks to 27 points from junior Evan French in the 12-minute span. French (6-4) can get it done outside/in for the Warriors averaging 19.3 points and 5.4 rebounds a game, which led to him being named Southeast District DII Player of the Year. Classmate Reese Patton (6-4) is another deadly pull-up shooter scoring just over 14 points per game and grabbing a little over six boards a night. Talented sophomore Michael Hall (6-5) is a versatile player scoring 11.6 points, grabbing 5.6 rebounds, and dishing out a team-leading 3.5 assists per contest. Leffingwell (6-2) is another viable option on the interior. Warren, who has now won 21-straight contests, hasn't lost since a December 29 setback to Division I Upper Arlington at the Ohio River Classic at Marietta College. The Warriors can also get it done on defense, giving up just over 46 points per game. Key bench players Adam Lang and Danny Pannell are both excellent defenders.

Columbus Bishop Watterson (26-1) will be making its first state tournament appearance in boy's basketball thanks to regional wins over Sandusky Perkins (53-34) and Lima Bath (57-47). However, the Eagles toughest obstacle came in the district title game where Watterson avenged its only loss of the year, a three-point defeat to Columbus Brookhaven, by surviving the Bearcats in overtime, 59-56. The Eagles start four juniors, but senior Bryan Jackson (6-4) has been the team's leading scorer and rebounder throughout the year. Jackson, who earned First Team All-Central District honors, averages 13 points and nine rebounds per game to lead a very balanced Eagles squad. Juniors Matt Hughes (6-5) and Matt Lehmann (6-4) each average 10 points per game, while the two combined for 37 points in the win over Bath. Classmates Andy Grieser (6-3) and Cody Calhoun (5-10) are tallying eight points apiece. The Eagles have won 20 consecutive contests. Watterson, who went 10-0 in the rugged CCL, is giving up just over 45 points per game.

Kettering Alter (21-5) is in the midst of a movie-like tournament run. The Knights will be making their ninth trip to the state tournament, all of them coming under current head coach Joe Petrocelli. This will be Petrocelli's final year at age 75 and he will be looking for his fourth state championship. Alter had a good regular season, but very few thought the Knights were capable of making it this far. For starters, the Knights had to beat No. 1 ranked Dayton Thurgood Marshall in the district semis, which many believed to be the best team in Ohio regardless of division. Alter was able to pull off the shocker thanks to star senior guard Jaaron Simmons. The 6-foot-2 senior, who has plenty of D1 interest, completely took over at the offensive end against Thurgood Marshall, scoring 29 points against one of the best defensive teams in Ohio. He followed that up with a 33-point showing against Wilmington and then 28 against Columbus Marion-Franklin. The next and final hurdle was Dayton Dunbar, the defending state champs, standing in the way of Alter and a trip to the state capital. Simmons was marvelous once again, pouring in 26 points to help secure the one-point triumph. He is averaging just over 28 points per game in the tournament and 24.4 points per outing on

the year, which earned him GCL North Player of the Year. Simmons has received help from classmate Michael Spencer (10 ppg./5.4 rpg.), who was the GCL North Defensive POY, and sophomores Dean Lemon (8.0 ppg/6.0 rpg.), Michael Schwieterman (7.6 ppg.), and Kraig Howe (4.8 ppg.). The Knights also get support off the bench from senior Ben Joseph.

Division III

Ironton (23-2) is making its third trip to the final four after ousting Martins Ferry and Oak Hill in regional play by an average of 24 points a game. The Tigers have won their five tournament games by a margin of nearly 26 points per game. Ironton, which has won 17-straight games, was the 2005 state runner-up losing a heartbreaker to powerful North College Hill led by OJ Mayo and Bill Walker. Seniors Zac Carter (23.9 ppg.) and Trey Fletcher (20.4 ppg.) lead Ironton, and are arguably the best one-two combination in Ohio. Carter (5-9), who scored 71 points in the two regional wins, is the school's all-time leading scorer and Fletcher has over 1,000 points and 500 rebounds for his career. Trevor White (6-4) is another solid performer totaling 9.2 points and 7.2 rebounds a game. White is coming off a 14-point and 12-rebound effort in the regional final win over Oak Hill. Aaron Stephens (6-4), who is an Ohio Dominican football commit, and Josh Glover (5-10) round out an all-senior starting line up. Senior guard Darius Boykin is a key contributor off the bench. Ironton hasn't lost to a team from Ohio with its only setbacks coming to Hialeah Gardens (FL) and Coral Reef (FL) at the Junior Orange Bowl Classic.

Ottawa-Glandorf (24-3) has earned its seventh trip to Columbus thanks to a grueling regional that resulted in wins over Lima Central Catholic (60-52) and Bloom-Carroll (60-56) in overtime. The win over LCC avenged a three-point regular season defeat to the Thunderbirds and marked the fourth year in a row O-G and LCC met in the tournament, with the Titans winning the last three meetings. Senior T.J. Metzger leads the Titans in scoring at 16.1 points per game to earn DIII Northwest District POY. Metzger scored 22 points in the win over LCC and added 13 in beating Bloom-Carroll. Classmate Michael Rosebrock (6-4) has been solid as well netting nearly 13 points a game and pulling down eight rebounds. Sophomore Noah Bramlage (6-7), who started as a freshman, totals 10.5 points and seven boards a game. Bramlage has offers from Miami (OH) and Wright State. Caleb Siefker (6-4), who was the O-G quarterback, is another scoring threat recording 22 points in the victory over LCC. Matthew Kaufman is a solid lead guard handing out a team-best 3.6 assists per encounter. The Titans will play 10 kids and eight are seniors. O-G won state championships in 2004 (DII) and 2008. The Titans have won nine games in a row.

Leavittsburg LaBrae (24-3) is playing as well as anyone in Ohio right now, which earned the Vikings their first state tournament appearance. No one in the state, other than maybe Jaaron Simmons, is getting it done like junior Peyton Alrdidge (6-7), who is a two-time DIII Northeast Inland Player of the Year. Alrdidge had 28 points and 12 rebounds in a regional semis win over Oberlin than followed that up with a 14-point, 18-rebound and seven-block effort in a 59-30 drubbing of a very good Beachwood team. Beachwood was held scoreless in the first quarter and was 7-of-50 from the field for the game and 0-of-24 from behind the arc. Alrdidge, who is one of the more underrated D1 prospects in the state of Ohio, is averaging 20.4 points, 12 rebounds and four assists. Junior Marcell Richardson (6-3) and senior Carl Brown (5-10) contributed 15 points each in the win over Beachwood. Brown averages 10.5 points per game and classmate John Richards is at nine points a night. Richardson chips in with seven tallies per contest. Senior Nate Middleton and Chris Clevenger have also been key contributors for the Vikings. After losing three of five games in early to mid January, LaBrae has now won 15-straight games. The Vikings are trying to make good on their trip to Columbus after falling in the districts last year following an undefeated regular season.

Versailles (22-5) will be making just its second state tournament appearance in school history with the other coming in 2004 losing to conference rival St. Henry in the championship game. The Tigers appeared dead in the water finishing 4-3 down the stretch, which included a 56-37 thumping from Delphos St. John's on senior night. The Tigers have turned the ship around breezing through the sectional and district before handling Worthington Christian in the regional semis by 15 points. In the regional finals, Versailles was an underdog to Roger Bacon, a team that just knocked off heavy favorite and defending state champions Cincinnati Summit Country Day in the semis. However, the Tigers showed their resiliency yet again, outlasting the Spartans 56-53 behind 18 points from sophomore Kyle Ahrens and 12 by junior Evan Philpot. Versailles used a 9-2 run to the end the game. Ahrens (6-5) leads the team in scoring (20.0 ppg.), rebounding (6.0 rpg.) and assists (3.5 apg.) and is being recruited by several D1 schools. Chad Winner (6-4), who is one of just two seniors in the nine-man rotation, averages 15 points per game and can be a very streaky shooter from behind the arc with deep range. Damien Richard (6-3), who is a terrific athlete, scores 11 points and grabs five rebounds a game. Nick Campbell, a weight room fanatic and the football team's quarterback, senior Jacob Heitkamp (6-2) and junior Evan Philpot (6-4) give the Tigers a real strong core.

Division IV

Troy Christian (26-2) is embarking on uncharted territory after upsetting previously undefeated Tri-Village and Midwest Athletic Conference power Delphos St. John's in regional play. TC needed overtime to handle Tri-Village and two free throws to earn a two-point over the Blue Jays. The Eagles have not lost since January 8, which was a 56-40 loss to Tri-Village. Troy Christian had never won a sectional, district or regional title until this year. Sophomore Grant Zawadzki leads Troy Christian in scoring (16.1 ppg.) and assists (5.9 apg.) and was named the Metro Buckeye Conference POY. Senior Christian Salazar (6-5) chips in 13.2 points and a team-leading 8.9 rebounds per game. Junior Spencer Thomas (9.4 ppg.), senior Nathan Kirkpatrick (8.8

ppg.) and junior Holden Varvel (6.3 ppg.) are also reliable scoring threats. Kirkpatrick had a team-high 15 points in the win over Delphos St. John's. Sixth man Logan George (6-3) is another option at nearly four points per contest. The Eagles were 12-0 in conference play and have won 18-straight games.

Cleveland VASJ (23-4) will be making its 12th appearance in the final four. The Vikings will be looking for their fifth state championship, but first since 1995. VASJ got to Columbus by destroying its five tournament opponents by an average score of (86.2 to 44.8). The Vikings faced a rugged regular season slate, which included wins over Africentric, Cleveland Central Catholic, John Hay, Brush, Martinsburg (WV) and Akron SVSM. VASJ's only defeats came to Division I's Lakewood St. Edward, Westerville North, Cleveland St. Ignatius and Shaker Heights. The Vikings are led by seniors Demonte Flannigan (6-7) and Duane Gibson Jr. (6-3). Flannigan is second on the team in scoring (16.2 ppg.) and leads the team in rebounding (8.5 rpg.). Gibson is the engine to this runaway train averaging 11 points, nine assists, and just over six rebounds a night. Gibson recorded a triple-double in the regional semis win over Windham and also leads the team in blocks and steals. Sophomore Carlton Bragg (6-9), who is one of top prospects in the nation, leads the team in scoring (16.6 ppg.) and three-point field goals made (41). He is also collecting five boards a game. Bragg has several offers already, including Ohio State, along with attracting programs from all over the country. Sophomore Brian Parker (6-2), yet another D1 prospect, nets 13.7 points and pull down 4.5 boards per contest. The lefty is one of the better offensive rebounders in Ohio. Junior Deandre Forte brings energy off the bench and is second on the team in three-point makes (38). Sophomore Simon Texidor Jr. has 24 three-point baskets on the year and senior Patrick Mastalski is a glue guy. Sophomore Derek Pardon (6-7), who also has a chance to earn a D1 scholarship, is a fundamentally sound lefty averaging nearly five points and five rebounds per game along with being second on the team in blocked shots. The Vikings averaged 78 points per game, which is tops in DIV, while only giving up 53.7.

Leipsic (24-4) is making its first state tournament appearance since 1925. Yes, 88 years ago. The Vikings took down Edgerton and Toledo Ottawa Hills in their regional match ups. Austin Brown had 21 points on 7-of-8 shooting in the win over Edgerton and Devin Mangas added 14. Mangas paced Leipsic with 23 points in the monumental win over Ottawa Hills, while Zach Kuhlman (16) and Brown (10) combined for 26 points. The Vikings earned repeat winners over Arlington and Columbus Grove in district play from the regular season. Leipsic has lost four games this year, and three of those setbacks came by a combined nine points, including a four-point defeat to DIII qualifier Ottawa-Glandorf. Mangas, who was the Putnam County Player of the Year, averages 18 points per game to lead the Vikings. Kuhlman (13.2 ppg.) and Brown (12.5 ppg.) are combining for over 25 points a night. Brown leads the team in rebounding (6.6 rpg.). Caleb Barrera (6.3 ppg.), Derek Steffan (5.4 ppg.), and Aric Schroeder (4.3 ppg.) can also provide scoring punch. Kuhlman is the only junior of the first eight players with the rest being seniors. Leipsic is averaging 71 points per game and giving up just over 50 points a contest.

Fairfield Christian (25-2) is making its initial showing at the state tournament following a terrific tournament run, which included a major upset of Newark Catholic in the district final, one of the Knights' two regular season losses with the other being to DIII power Bloom-Carroll. The Knights trailed Grove City Christian (9-15) by a point heading into the fourth quarter in their second tournament game before escaping with a four-point win. FC went on to defeat Newark Catholic, Danville and South Webster. Junior Steven Carpenter has been sensational in the last three games, scoring 19, 31 and 29 points, respectively. Carpenter (6-3) is averaging 20 points and nearly six rebounds and five assists on the year. He has got plenty of help from senior Justin Potochnik, who is second on the team in scoring (18.4 ppg.) and leads the squad in rebounding (11.3 rpg.). Junior Nick Spurgus (7.6 ppg.) and senior Zach Sullivan (7.5 ppg.) are other solid scoring options. Junior Tyler Stevens and sophomore Keith Dewese provide solid minutes. The Knights are scoring just over 68 points per game, while giving up just under 44 points. Fairfield Christian finished the Mid Ohio Christian Athletic League at 12-0. The Knights have not lost since February 8.