

Some notes, quotes on Kansas cage tournaments

By MIKE GILMORE
 Maybe the organizers of that first high school basketball tournament in May 1908 knew they were onto something when they scheduled the first Kansas Open Basketball gathering of six teams in the newly-constructed Robinson Gymnasium on the Kansas University Campus.

It is possible that the crowd gathered for that first championship game between Halstead and Topeka weren't sure what they were watching. At the time the most important high school sport was football. Track and baseball events were also popular.

But Dr. Naismith's invention caught on with many students as a game to play inbetween the strictly outside activities. So, that May, KU added the sport to the annual track and field competition it sponsored as part of "high school week."

Even today's basketball aficionados would have trouble following the game that Naismith wrought. It started with five players to a side, but a center jump after every made goal slowed play and there was no 10-second half-court line. The ball was big and bulky and was hard to dribble because of the exposed leather lacing over the hard rubber bladder.

Hard iron rims were more efficient than Naismith's peach baskets, but they were often affixed directly to the wall. Substitutions were allowed, but once a player left the game he would not be allowed to return.

Girls could play too, but they had a separate tournament conducted in the women's portion of Robinson gym.

Halstead went on record as winning that first championship game, beating Topeka 30-29. The backstory is, however, that Fort Scott's loss to Topeka in the semifinals, was actually an intrasquad scrimmage; Fort Scott actually loaned a team to Topeka so it could appear in the first tournament.

The next year, KU officials planned to move the tournament event to March so that it would coincide

with the conference of accredited high schools, and "March Madness" was born.

With basketball, also follows controversy – Inaugural champion Halstead was the clear favorite to win the second final against Eudora, but at halftime, information leaked to the tournament director that Eudora was using at least two ineligible players.

After investigation, it was determined that the players were registered under their correct names, but it was confirmed that they were actually attending Central Business College in Kansas City. Eudora refused to take the court without them, and so the championship was awarded to Halstead, on a 2-0 forfeit.

In 100-plus years, the sport has grown some. But at the crux of the sport is the tournament format, bringing in teams out of their normal regions to gather in a winner-take-all conclave.

Now there are tournaments at the beginning, middle and end of the season, providing team checkpoints for coaches and players, trophies for schools, and week-long excitement for parents and fans.

Basketball was born for tournament play. And most of them, in the high school ranks, be

2017 Gene Keady Classic Tournament, Larned – As tournaments go, the Keady Classic Tournament is a youngster, owing to its being remonikered for the famed Purdue men's basketball coach and Larned native Gene Keady 11 years ago.

As a tournament, records report the Larned preseason tournament beginning with a round-robin format in 1983, with Kinsley the first boys' champion, and the hosting Lady Indians champs of the girls' bracket.

Team invitations have changed over the years, with past attendings including Otis-Bison, Cunningham and Pawnee Heights.

The Larned boys have won the tournament title eight times, but only once

since the name change. Hoisington won back-to-back titles in 2010 and 2011.

St. John, however, is the reigning champ in a five-year dynasty begun with the prep career of KSU's Dean Wade. Last year, the Wade-less Tigers claimed a 47-36 win over Spearville in the title game.

On the girls' side, Larned's girls have the longest streak, winning the title eight times, ending in 2005. They haven't won it since. Hoisington took over, winning four straight from 2006-2009 and again in 2011.

The current tiara belongs to Kiowa County, which beat Spearville 57-51 last December.

Amos Morris/Gene Stephens Tournament – This tournament, which alternates annually between the communities of Lincoln and Russell. It is named for Kansas Hall of Fame coaches Amos Morris, who posted a 301-99 record as head of the Bronco boys from 1949-66, with four state championships; and George Stephens, who coached at Lincoln before becoming head coach of the Bethany College Swedes Men's team.

Both were graduates of Kansas Wesleyan, good buddies, and so the rumor goes, set up the alternating format between the two of them so their prep squads could gain tournament experience.

The current brackets feature Russell, Phillipsburg, Lincoln, Plainville, Ellsworth, Nickerson, Ell-Saline and relative newcomer Central Plains. The Oilers have had a stranglehold on the title of late, sweeping last year's brackets and returning to Lincoln as favorites in the 2017 tilt.

Tiger Classic – Out west in Natoma, hosting Western Plains entertains Palco, Pawnee Heights and Healy in next week's Tiger Classic. Pawnee Heights is the reigning boys' champ.

Falcon Classic – The Otis-Bison Cougar cage teams head to Fairfield next week to re-up as respective tournament champs.

TOURNAMENTS
 2017 Tiger Classic
 Dec. 4-8
 at Natoma
 Dec. 4
 W. Plains (g) vs. Palco, 3 p.m.
 W.Plains (b) vs. Palco, 4:30 p.m.
 Pawnee Hts. (g) vs. Natoma, 6 p.m.
 Pawnee Hts. (b) vs. Natoma, 7:30 p.m.
 Dec. 5
 Pawnee Hts. (g) vs. Palco, 3 p.m.
 Pawnee Hts. (b) vs. Palco, 4:30 p.m.
 W.Plains (g) vs. Natoma, 6 p.m.
 W.Plains (b) vs. Natoma, 7:30 p.m.
 Dec. 8
 Pawnee Hts. (g) vs. W.Plains, 3 p.m.
 Pawnee Hts. (b) vs. W.Plains, 4:30 p.m.
 Palco (g) vs. Natoma, 6 p.m.
 Palco (b) vs. Natoma, 7:30 p.m.

2017 KEADY CLASSIC
 Dec. 4-9
 at Larned
GIRLS' BRACKET
 Dec. 4
 Larned vs. Ellinwood, 5 p.m. LMS

Macksville vs. Spearville, 2 p.m. LMS
 Dec. 5
 St. John vs. Kiowa County, 5 p.m. LMS
 Hoisington vs. Kinsley, 2 p.m. LMS
 Dec.7
 Larned-Ellinwood loser vs. Macksville-Spearville loser, 6 p.m. LMS
 St. John-Kiowa Co. loser vs. Hoisington-Kinsley loser, 2 p.m. LMS
 Dec.8
 Larned-Ellinwood winner vs. Macksville-Spearville winner, 5 p.m. LMS
 St. John-Kiowa Co. winner vs. Hoisington-Kinsley winner, 2 p.m. LMS
 Dec.9
 Championship Semifinal winners, 5 p.m. LMS
 Third place Semifinal losers, 1:30 p.m. LMS
 Fifth place Consolation winners, 4 p.m. LMS
 Seventh place Consolation losers, 12:30 p.m. LMS
BOYS' BRACKET
 Dec. 4
 Larned vs. Ellinwood,

6:30 p.m. LMS
 Macksville vs. Spearville, 3:30 p.m. LMS
 Dec. 5
 St. John vs. Kiowa Co., 6:30 p.m. LMS
 Hoisington vs. Kinsley, 3:30 p.m. LMS
 Dec.7
 Larned-Ellinwood loser vs. Macksville-Spearville loser, 6:30 p.m. LMS
 St. John-Kiowa Co. loser vs. Hoisington-Kinsley loser, 3:30 p.m. LMS
 Dec.8
 Larned-Ellinwood winner vs. Macksville-Spearville winner, 6:30 p.m. LMS
 St. John-Kiowa Co. winner vs. Hoisington-Kinsley winner, 3:30 p.m. LMS
 Dec.9
 Championship Semifinal winners, 6:45 p.m. LMS
 Third place Semifinal losers, 3:15 p.m. LMS
 Fifth place Consolation winners, 5:45 p.m. LMS
 Seventh place Consolation losers, 2:15 p.m. LMS
 see Brackets, page 19

Otis-Bison sighting on double double-up at state

By MIKE GILMORE
 At state last year in the United Wireless Arena, coach Robert Trapp watched his Lady Cougar girls steamroll over the Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs in the first half of their third-place game.

Senior Taylor Regan, who came into the game averaging nearly 23 points, played defense and passed to teammates as the Lady Cougars built up and held a 10-point cushion throughout the 41-34-win. The rest of the time she encouraged from the bench.

It was a rite of passage, of sorts. Regan, who was nursing a sore ankle looking ahead to track season as a state long and triple-jumper, had led the team to their first-ever trophy in a state tournament. It was only fitting that the rest of the Lady Cougar team helped to bring it home.

Coach Robert Trapp will be missing four-year starter Regan's dribble-drive in 2017-18, but has some things to look forward to in the upcoming season. A young but talented group will be hitting the hardwood in Otis.

Leading the return is 6-0 sophomore Madeline Wiltse, who brings a 13-point high game from the third-place win and a high-single digit average back to the court this season. Also returning is Cora

Anderson, a 5-10 sophomore; juniors Sheridan Ewy and Sidney Schneider and 5-6 senior Lacey Mitchell.

Cougar boys eyeing state return – Last season, the Cougar boys' ninth appearance at state ended in a 49-46 first-round loss to Hartford at Dodge City's Wireless Arena. Senior Kade Urban led the squad with 20 points.

Urban and senior teammate Trevor Trapp have graduated, but three starters return to build on last season's 16-8 record in 2017-18.

Maitland Wiltse, who last year as a 6-4 junior averaged 16 points and 10 rebounds per game, returns to lead the Cougars through the Central Prairie League gauntlet into postseason. Joining him are senior starters Blake Bahr, and Clade Anderson, center (9 ppg., 7 rpg.).

Anton Foust returns as a junior guard bringing 7 points and 5 rebounds per game, with Luke Higgason also in the middle.

"We should be a good defensive team with some size," notes second-year coach Curtis Little. "We will need to work on scoring, to keep up with the best teams in our league."

Top Cougar newcomers include guards Seth Hoopingarner, a sophomore and Caleb Cheely, a junior.

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