

Minnesota State Basketball Tournament Class A team reviews

By Pat Haugen

Cass Lake-Bena (3) vs. Rushford-Peterson

Cass Lake-Bena (29-1) Ranking: 4 QRF: 4

Key Wins: The Panthers had two wins over 23rd ranked Nevis, two wins over 19th ranked Fosston, and two 29 point wins over Section 6A champion, Mahnomen-Waubun, as well as a solid win over 7th ranked (QRF) Ada-Borup in the section championship.

Key Losses: The Panthers only loss was a 2 point loss to top QRF ranked, Mayer Lutheran.

Key Players: The Panthers run deep, but are led by two 1,000 point scorers, senior Arnold Kingbird and senior Noah Delapaz.

Rushford-Peterson (23-7) Ranking: Not Ranked QRF: 8

Key Wins: Big wins for the Trojans included a win over Caledonia (#7 in Class AA), a 21 point win over St. Charles (#16 in Class AA), and two wins over #13 Spring Grove, including a 33 point blow out in the section championship. The Trojans began the year at (3-3), but are 20-4 since.

Key Losses: The Trojans losses came at the hands of Kingsland (#49), Planview-Elgin, Millville (#30 in Class AA), Dover Eyota (#62 in Class AA), Gale-Etrick-Trempealeau (Wisconsin), Lacrescent (#47 in Class AA) and a 27 point loss to Caledonia (#7 in Class AA).

Key Players: The Trojans have a balanced attack, led by 6'4" senior Ben Ansell (12 ppg). Like the Panthers, they have several, athletic, 6'2" players.

Thoughts

While North Woods and Mayer Lutheran drew surprise section winners in the random draw, the third seeded Panthers drew the Trojans, who are coming off of their strongest win of the season in the section final against Spring Grove. The Panthers are hunting for their first state basketball title in nearly a 100 years, but will need to take care of the Trojans first.

North Woods (2) vs. Heritage Christian

North Woods (29-1) Ranking: 2 QRF: 2

Key Wins: The Grizzlies biggest win came over Virginia (#15 in Class AA). They also had a win over Nevis (#22), and two 30 point wins over Ely (#24).

Key Losses: The Grizzlies only loss was at Virginia (#2 in Class AA).

Key Players: The Grizzlies are led by a pair of 1,000 point scorers, senior Tate Olson and junior Cade Goggeye.

Heritage Christian (13-17) Ranking: Unranked QRF: 54

Key Wins: The Lions beat CHOF (#11) in their section semifinal. It was their only win of the season against a team with a winning record.

Key Losses: The Lions lost to CHOF (#11), Breck (#18 in Class AA), West Lutheran (#85), Legacy Christian (#125), Trinity School (#34 in Class AA), Spectrum (#66 in Class AA), Southwest Christian (#43 in Class AA), PACT Charter (#95 in Class AA), De Soto (Wisconsin), Lester Prairie (#59), Maranatha (#17 in Class AA), St. Croix Prep (#38 in Class AA), New Life (#22 in Class AA), a nineteen point loss to Hinckley-Finlayson (#5), a 15 point loss to Mayer Lutheran (#1), and a 50 point loss to Minneapolis Roosevelt (#21 in Class AAA).

Key Players: The Lions are led by Seth Halvorson (18 ppg).

Thoughts

North Woods led the state in margin of victory, but also had the softest schedule of any team in the state tournament. Heritage Christian (who may have one of the worst records in history for a state tournament team) played a much tougher schedule. Will their experience help them to keep up with the Grizzlies?

Mayer Lutheran (1) vs. Mahnomen-Waubun

Mayer Lutheran (27-3) Ranking: 5 QRF: 1

Key Wins: The Crusaders had big wins over Cass Lake-Bena (#4), Maranatha (#17 in Class AA), Jordan

(#12 in Class AA), two wins over Cleveland (#26), two wins over BOLD (#11), and a three point buzzer beater in the section championship against top ranked Springfield.

Key Losses: The Crusaders were defeated by Minnehaha Academy (#1 in Class AA), St. Paul Johnson (#19 in Class AAA), and Jordan (#12 in Class AA).

Key Players: The Crusaders have two 1,000 point scorers, senior Kobey Woolhouse, and 6'6" junior Baden Noening. The Crusaders are also led by 6'7" post man, Garrett Tjernagel.

Mahnomen-Waubun (18-11) Ranking: Unranked QRF: 31

Key Wins: The Thunderbirds had playoff wins over NCE-UH (#10), and 7th ranked, Hancock.

Key Losses: The Thunderbirds lost to Breckenridge (#21), Hillcrest (#66), Park Christian (#79), Fosston (#19), Fertile-Beltrami (#22), NCE-UH (#10), Win-E-Mac (#40), two losses to Ada-Borup (#7) and two losses to Cass Lake-Bena (#4).

Key Players: The Thunderbirds are led by Jayden Heisler, who recently scored 50 points in a win over Red Lake.

Thoughts

Mayer Lutheran has been near the top of the polls all season while the Thunderbirds were a surprise section winner. Mahnomen-Waubun finished the season strong, but could struggle to keep up with the loaded Crusaders.

Russel-Tyler-Ruthton (4) vs. Hinckley-Finlayson (5)

Russel-Tyler-Ruthton (30-1) Ranking: 3 QRF: 6

Key Wins: The Knights had two wins over Pipestone (#28 in Class AA), two over Minneota (#14), including a come from behind win the section final, and two over Dawson-Boyd (#25).

Key Losses: The Knights only loss was at Minneota.

Key Players: The Knights have two 1,000 point scorers, Garrett Kern and Westin Kirk.

Hinckley-Finlayson (26-4) Ranking: Not ranked

QRF: 5

Key Wins: The Jaguars had wins over Pequot Lakes (#26 in Class AA), Proctor (#20 in Class AA), Section 4A champion, Heritage Christian, and a 32 point win over Cromwell-Wright (#15) in the section final,

Key Losses: The Jaguars lost to Esko (#4 in Class AA), Superior (Wisconsin), Virginia (#15 in Class AA), and a bad 32 point loss to Pine City (#42 in Class AA).

Key Players: Travis Visser is one of the Jaguars top players.

Thoughts

This one should prove to be the best first round match up. RTR is the only team in the state to win 30 games, while Hinckley-Finlayson compiled 26 wins with a schedule that included 15 games with Class AA opponents.