

Metro stars shooting on state tourney stage

Written by Jim Ecker

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High school basketball fans in the Metro area have been treated to something very special in local gyms this season, something they may never see again.

Jarrold Uthoff, Josh Oglesby, Marcus Paige, Wes Washpun, Matt Bohannon. Remember those names.

All five of them will play Division I college basketball at a high level. There could be a Mr. Basketball (or two) in the group, and there might be a couple of NBA players.

It's been a special season, and the best part of the campaign begins this week with the Class 4A boys state tournament at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines.

Uthoff has Cedar Rapids Jefferson in the field. Oglesby and Washpun have led Cedar Rapids Washington back to Des Moines. Paige and Bohannon have top-ranked Linn-Mar looking for another state title.

All five of those players and their schools played in the state tournament last year. None of them came home with the grand prize, but Linn-Mar is the No.1 seed and the favorite this time around.

It starts Wednesday.

Linn-Mar (23-0) faces Washington (17-8) in an all-Metro opener at 1:45 p.m. at Wells Fargo Arena. Jefferson (17-5) plays Des Moines Hoover (21-2) in the nightcap at 8:15 p.m.

The semifinals are Friday, with the finals and consolation game for third place on Saturday.

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All three Metro schools have won state titles before. Washington claimed championships in 1914, 1916 and 1922 - before the IHSAA began sanctioning the tournaments - and prevailed again in 1969. Jefferson was the state champion in 1967, while Linn-Mar has captured titles in 1983, 2004 and 2007.

It usually takes at least two ingredients to win a state title: Talent and experience. Jefferson, Washington and Linn-Mar have both. All three schools played in the state tournament last year, and all three teams have star players.

Uthoff, a 6-foot-8 senior, leads the state in scoring at 26.2 points and averages a double-double. He'll play in the Big Ten at the University of Wisconsin next season.

Oglesby, a 6-6 senior, averages 21.4 points and is one of the top 3-point shooters in the state. He'll join the Iowa Hawkeyes. Washpun, a 6-1 senior, averages 17.8 points and is one of the top point guards in the state. He has a scholarship offer from Missouri State of the Missouri Valley Conference.

Paige, a 6-1 junior, is considered the No.1 point guard in the state, a do-everything guard who has committed to the North Carolina Tar Heels. Bohannon, a 6-4 senior, is a solid all-around player who has signed with the University of Northern Iowa.

Linn-Mar drubbed Washington in both of their meetings this season in the Mississippi Valley Conference, 80-55 and 62-41, so the Warriors will have to try something new this time. Washpun and Oglesby versus Paige and Bohannon might be a fair fight, but Linn-Mar pours it on with Shane Benton, Ian McBrayer and Josh Montague, although Montague is questionable with an injured knee. Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson said after Linn-Mar's substate win over North Scott that Montague will play in the state tournament.

The eighth-ranked Jefferson J-Hawks will need all they can muster against third-ranked Hoover, which has good size and a balanced attack. Kelly Madison leads Hoover at 12.0 points per game.

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The other first-round games on Wednesday match No.4 Iowa City West (19-4) against No.9 Waukee (19-5) at 3:30 p.m., and No.2 Ankeny (20-3) against No.6 Sioux City East (19-4) at 6:35 p.m.

The semifinals are Friday at 1:30 and 3:15. The consolation game for third place is set for Saturday at 1:45 p.m., with the championship game Saturday night at 8:05.