

BOY’S BASKETBALL SECTIONAL PREVIEW

Bulldogs prepare for championship run

Rob Lafary
SPORTS WRITER

Class 3A Sectional 29 at Greensburg this week will be no walk in the park but a daunting field will not phase the Batesville Bulldogs who are looking for their first sectional championship since 2019.

Head coach Aaron Garrett and company stood at 16-5 on the season heading into its final regular season matchup of the year last Thursday night.

Defending sectional champion Greensburg sits on the opposite side of the bracket as does a very pesky Lawrenceburg team, leaving Batesville with a chance to flex its muscle on the bottom half of the field. Such muscle starts with the blue and white’s three-headed monster which includes the likes of seniors Sam Johnson and Jack Grunkemeyer along with junior Cade Kaiser. Kaiser currently leads the scoring efforts at 15.5 points per game and Johnson follows at 12.8 points per night, with both at nearly six rebounds per game. Grunkemeyer is adding 9.4 points and a team-high 6.3 rebounds per game.

And of course there is plenty of help to surround the trio, which will be vital to win three games in the sectional. Gus Prickel is a spark from the three-point line and is capable of double-digit scoring while a pair of sophomores in Trenten Luers and Brayden Maple provide on both ends of the floor. Expect a pair of freshmen in Carson Hartley and James Hughes to also be in the mix.

Batesville is averaging 57 points on offense while allowing right around 48 points per game on defense. Taking care of the basketball unquestionably will be the biggest key to a Bulldog run this week as turnovers have ultimately been a deciding factor against the best teams on their schedule all season long.

The Bulldogs begin their journey on Wednesday night and will look to avenge a regular season loss to South Dearborn in a 7:30 opening round game. South beat Batesville 54-51 on February 1 in Aurora.



RICH FOWLER PHOTO
Batesville’s Jack Grunkemeyer leads the team in rebounding and his inside game will be key in Class 3A Sectional 29 at Greensburg.

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JAC-CEN-DEL

Eagles aim for sectional three-peat

Rob Lafary
SPORTS WRITER

Head coach Clint Bohman has made magic happen in his four years at the helm of Jac-Cen-Del boys basketball and now the Eagles with three wins in Class A Sectional 60 at Edinburgh could make some big-time history happen.

Serving as the two-time defending sectional and regional champions in Class A, Bohman and the Eagles are looking for just their second sectional three-peat in program history. The last time such a feat happened? 1967-1969 when Jac-Cen-Del also notched a pair of regional championships and appeared in the 1969 Semi-State Championship.

This sectional field in 2024 is wide open and Jac-Cen-Del has to believe it has the personnel to make a three-peat happen. Three double figure scorers makes Coach Bohman's crew a threat should they all be clicking on the same night. Caleb White and Brady Comer are both hovering around 11 points per game and Clark Dwenger not only brings 10.4 points per game to the table but also a team-high 6.9 rebounding average. A whole flock of Eagles follow that can provide a spark at any given moment.

Landon Kohlman, Landon Asche, Brady Borgman, Carson Hughes and Luke Simon have all played a ton of varsity minutes and will be valuable in terms of depth and opening up options on the floor.

Shooting the basketball? It's a huge key for a Jac-Cen-Del team that has been out of rhythm in recent weeks, sporting a 9-13 mark heading into last Friday's game against South Ripley. The Eagles have done a much better job in terms of taking care of the rock but shooting numbers have fallen south, especially from the three-point line. Jac-Cen-Del's crew during the month of February sits at 19 percent from the perimeter while opponents are knocking treys down at a 42 percent clip.

Jac-Cen-Del faces Waldron in the opening round on Wednesday at 6 p.m. The Eagles defeated the Mohawks 63-42 in a regular season matchup played on January 13.



RICH FOWLER PHOTO

At 10.4 points and 6.9 rebounds per game, Jac-Cen-Del's Clark Dwenger will try to help muscle the Eagles to a third-straight Class A Sectional 60 championship.



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MILAN

Milan gears for title game return

Rob Lafary
SPORTS WRITER

Times have been tough for Milan boys basketball this winter but Class 2A Sectional 45 at South Ripley offers the Indians a new lease on life and the opportunity to play spoiler.

Milan was 9-15 last season entering the tournament before knocking off Switzerland County and Hauser en route to a sectional runner-up finish, falling to champion North Decatur.

Three wins in the month of February after 14-straight losses on the schedule has provided some momentum for head coach Matt Pickerill and his team and rightfully so. During this month, the black and gold are averaging nearly 60 points per game and that kind of offense will keep anyone alive in the tournament. Micah Norman has been one of the area's top scorers at 14.8 points per game and just behind is Gabe Riehle who sits at 12.2 points per night on 50 percent shooting.

Senior Ben Riehle remains a scoring threat and has shown that in recent weeks and several other pieces have the capability to produce. Nathan Voss, Justin Castletine, Ethan Pierce and Trenton and Grant Langferman all add depth to the Indian roster.

While offense has been easy to come by during stretches this year, it will be taking care of the basketball on the offensive end and clamping down on defense that will be key for the tribe. Milan has allowed nearly 67 points per game defensively, a number that will significantly have to drop in order to increase the Indians chances at making some noise in the sectional.

Milan was 3-18 last week heading into a final regular season game against Union County. The Indians face North Decatur tonight at 7:00 in the opening round of the sectional with the winner set to face Switzerland County in the 7:30 semifinal on Friday night.



RICH FOWLER PHOTO

Senior Ben Riehle prepares for his final Class 2A Sectional 45 appearance and his leadership hopes to aid Milan to its first championship in 21 years.

Pairings for the 114th annual IHSAA Boys Basketball State Tournament were drawn on Sunday evening in Indianapolis as sectional action is scheduled to begin next week.

Sectionals across the state tip-off on Tuesday night with many area schools hitting the hardwood on that same day. Local sectional pairings are as follows:

Class A Sectional 60 at Edinburgh

- Tues.- Morristown vs Southwestern (Shelby)- 7 p.m.
- Wed.- Jac-Cen-Del vs Waldron- 6 p.m.
- Wed.- South Decatur vs Edinburgh- 7:30 p.m.
- Fri.- Tuesday Winner vs Oldenburg Academy- 6 p.m.
- Fri.- G2 vs G3 Winners- 7:30 p.m.
- Sat.- Championship Game- 7:30 p.m.

Class 2A Sectional 45 at South Ripley

- Tues.- North Decatur vs Milan- 7 p.m.
- Fri.- South Ripley vs Hauser- 6 p.m.
- Fri.- Tuesday Winner vs Switzerland County- 7:30 p.m.
- Sat.- Championship Game- 7:30 p.m.

Class 3A Sectional 29 at Greensburg

- Tues.- Greensburg vs Rushville- 7 p.m.
- Wed.- Franklin County vs Connersville- 6 p.m.
- Wed.- Batesville vs South Dearborn- 7:30 p.m.
- Fri.- Tuesday Winner vs Lawrenceburg- 6 p.m.
- Fri.- G2 vs G3 Winners- 7:30 p.m.
- Sat.- Championship Game- 7:30 p.m.



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SOUTH RIPLEY

Raiders gear for title push

Rob Lafary
SPORTS WRITER

South Ripley is as healthy as they have been in weeks and that could bode awfully well for a Raider team that feels they are ready for their first Class 2A Sectional 45 title since 2017. A slew of injuries has hampered South Ripley since the Ripley County Tournament. Junior Chancie Volz remains out but the rest of the Raider roster is now intact.

It's no secret who stands at the forefront of that roster as juniors Cole Henry and Blaine Ward continue to be two of the area's top players. Henry has already surpassed 1000 career points and is averaging nearly 21 points on 53 percent shooting and 8.2 rebounds per game while Ward is not too far behind in the career points category. He is averaging almost 18 points a night with over 70 assists, a number that leads all in the Ohio River Valley Conference. The duo packs quite the punch but during tourney time it will take an extra hand or two.

Drew Volz, a freshman guard who has returned from injury, is the primetime candidate to be a difference maker. His 52 assists heading into last week makes him capable of directing South Ripley's offense from the point guard position while also providing on the defensive end. Senior Ethan Johnson remains a threat at 6-foot-4 on both ends of the floor and three underclassmen in Gavin Binion, Bryson Sipples and Mason McNew can fill minutes and produce for head coach Seve Beach.

South Ripley has all the necessary tools in order to win a championship. It's a matter of the tools working as one to accomplish a common goal. Should the Raiders do that, there's no reason why this team cannot be the favorite in Sectional 45. Raider fans will tell you a postseason crown is long overdue, but everyone in the system will have to buy in together.

The Raiders received a bye into the 6:00 semifinal on Friday night in Versailles but are up against a Hauser team that was 17-5 on the year heading into last weekend. South Ripley defeated the Jets 61-47 on December 8.



RICH FOWLER PHOTO

Many know who leads South Ripley this season but role players like sophomore Bryson Sipples will be crucial if the Raiders want to win a Class 2A Sectional 45 crown.

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OLDENBURG

Twisters receive favorable sectional draw

Rob Lafary
SPORTS WRITER

Oldenburg Academy boys basketball going into the final weekend of the regular season was just one of two teams in the Class A Sectional 60 field sporting an overall record of .500 or better. Add the best draw a team in the field could have received and the Twisters may indeed be a sectional favorite. Not only were the Twisters 11-10 after last week’s win against sectional foe South Decatur but Oldenburg received a semifinal bye and will play the winner of Morristown and Southwestern (Shelby), who have a combined seven wins this year. After an up and down start to the season, the Twisters are gelling at the right time and were 6-1 between January 27 and February 20. While perhaps it has not been Oldenburg’s best year in terms of defense, it has been an eye-opener on offense to see the program averaging 55 points per game. That number under head coach Michael Higdon is a program-best in the last four years. A slew of guys on the roster have been at the forefront of all those achievements. Connor Miles has really stuck out over the last few weeks and has emerged as Oldenburg’s go-to scorer, regularly putting up 15-20 points per game. Henry Wanstrath, Jacob Stenger, Zach Hoff and Jacob Cornelius are other names that have passed through and added to Higdon’s second year at the helm that began with the Twisters winning just seven games last year. The Twisters are 4-2 against the sectional field with their only two losses coming to Jac-Cen-Del (56-49) and Edinburgh (48-39). Oldenburg’s semifinal matchup on Friday will be played at 6 p.m.



RICH FOWLER PHOTO
Connor Miles is Oldenburg’s leading scorer and looks to amp up his offense to deliver the Twisters a first Class A Sectional 60 title since 2020.





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