

2012 State Tournament Preview



By Kurt Stubbs, JHuddle.com

The 90th 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:

*Three teams return to this year's state tournament from a season ago, including 2011 Division IV State Champion Berlin Hiland, Columbus Africentric, and Portsmouth. Africentric was a Division III participant a year ago, and returns this season as a Division IV contender.

*There will be a new champion in three of the four divisions, with Berlin Hiland returning as the only champion from a year ago.

*Five teams are making their first state tournament appearance (Pickerington Central, St. Clairsville, Elida, Mentor Lake Catholic, and Arlington). Ironically, both St. Clairsville and Arlington are nicknamed the Red Devils.

*Three of the four state semifinalists in Division II are newcomers (St. Clairsville, Elida, and Mentor Lake Catholic).

*St. Clairsville will try and become the first East District team to win a Division II state title. Portsmouth will try to do the same for the Southeast in Division III.

*Six Division I commits will take part in this year's tournament, including Myles Hamilton of Lakewood St. Edward (Kennesaw State), Caris Levert of Pickerington Central (Ohio University), Gary Akbar of Dayton Dunbar (Cleveland State), Deontae Hawkins of Dayton Dunbar (Wichita State), Andre Yates of Dayton Dunbar (Creighton), and Reggie McAdams of Elida (Akron). Three kids are committed to go Division 2 in Seger Bonifant of Berlin Hiland (West Liberty University), Dylan Kaufman of Berlin Hiland (Findlay), and Chad Nelson of Pickerington Central (Ohio Dominican). Storm Norton of Toledo Whitmer (Toledo), Leroy Alexander of Toledo Whitmer (Nebraska), Chris Wormley of Toledo Whitmer (Michigan), Taco Charlton of Pickerington Central (Michigan) are all committed to play D1 football.

*Dayton Dunbar is looking to tie the Columbus East for third all-time by winning its fifth state title. It would trail only Middletown (7) and Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary (6).

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

*Elida and Ottawa-Glandorf both come from the Western Buckeye League.

*Elida's Reggie McAdams made the 2010 state track meet in the high jump, finishing fifth, along with quarterbacking the Bulldogs to the state semis in football this past fall.

*The following Associated Press Top 10 teams remain: Pickerington Central (No. 4), Toledo Whitmer (No. 5), Dayton Dunbar (No. 1), Mentor Lake Catholic (No. 10), Cincinnati Summit CD (No. 3), Portsmouth (No. 6), Bedford Chanel (No. 7), Jackson Center (No. 1), Berlin Hiland (No. 2), and Columbus Africentric (No. 9). Eleven of the 52 poll champions have won state titles in this century.

*Jerry Francis, who is the head coach of Pickerington Central, played in the 1984 and '85 state tournaments for Columbus Wehrle under head coach Chuck Kemper. Ironically, Kemper later became principal at Pickerington Central High School. Francis played for Ohio State from 1985-1989, scoring 1,486 career points.

*Cincinnati Summit Country Day head coach Michael Bradley played his college ball at the University of Kentucky and Villanova before entering the NBA Draft in 2001. Bradley was selected 17th overall by the Toronto Raptors and played from 2001-2006 with five NBA teams before playing overseas from 2006-2010.

*Deontae Hawkins of Dayton Dunbar was on the cover of last year's state tournament program.

*Hugh McMahan (Bedford Chanel) and Tyson McGlaughlin (Ottawa-Glandorf) are both in their first year at their respective schools.

*Brothers Joey and Tony Vuyancih will both be playing at the state tournament, but for two different teams. Joey, a senior, with Mentor Lake Catholic and Tony, a sophomore, at Lakewood St. Edward.

*Berlin Hiland will meet Arlington in a Division IV regional semifinal, while the Arlington girls knocked off Berlin Hiland in last weekend's girls Div. IV state championship game.

*There are two unbeaten units coming into this year's tournament (Dunbar and Jackson Center). This is the first time both (JC and Dunbar) come into the final four without a loss and Dunbar's first unbeaten regular season in school history. Gahanna Lincoln and Port Clinton, both in 2010, were the last undefeated teams to reach the final four. New Knoxville (2008), Georgetown (2007), and Akron SVSM (2000) are the only teams to finish the year undefeated this century. SVSM didn't lose a game on the court in 2003, but was forced to forfeit one of its regular season contests. 1995 was the last time two teams won the state title and finished the year unbeaten (Zanesville and Findlay Liberty-Benton).

Division I

Toledo Whitmer (23-2) is making its fourth state tournament appearance and first since 2008. The Panthers are yet to win a state tournament contest. In 2008, under head coach Bruce, Whitmer lost to the eventual state champion, Newark. Whitmer is currently riding a 12-game winning streak since losing 2-of-4 in mid-January to Toledo St. John's and Toledo Central Catholic and has won 42 of its last 46 games. The Panthers have done it all year with arguably the best defense in Ohio, giving up just 33 points per game in tournament play and 45.2 for the year. 6-7 junior Nigel Hayes (13.7 ppg./9.2 rpg.), who is one of the state's top 2013 prospects, scored 17 points and grabbed eight rebounds in a 51-39 regional final victory over upstart Medina. Whitmer has three Division I football commits in its rotation in 6-6 Chris Wormley (Michigan), 6-8 Storm Norton (Toledo), and 6-2 Leroy Alexander (Nebraska). Alexander, a Holland Springfield transfer, nets 12.7 points and Toledo St. John's transfer Ricardo Smith has been good for 8.9 ppg.

Lakewood St. Edward (18-7) is entering its seventh state tournament, all since 1996, and sixth under head coach Eric Flannery. The Eagles won the 1998 title and finished runner-up in 2008 despite losing star Delvon Roe to an injury. St. Ed's plays one of if not the toughest schedules in Ohio, which is evident by its losses to Toledo St. John's, Cleveland Heights, Columbus Northland, Shaker Heights, and three out-of-state

opponents including nationally-ranked Huntington Prep (WV). The Eagles are rolling now led by 6-2 senior Myles Hamilton (Kennesaw State). Hamilton (16.2 ppg.) scored 25 points in a regional semifinal win over Mentor and added 21 points, seven rebounds, six assists, and four steals in a 66-44 regional finals win over Warren Harding. Hamilton and Whitmer's Leroy Alexander were backcourt mates on the AAU scene for All-Ohio Red's national championship team. 6-3 senior Mark Murray (11.1 ppg.) has been rock solid as well along with senior Mike Newton (6.8 ppg.) at point guard, sophomore Marsalis Hamilton (6.8 ppg.), senior Mike Mason, and sixth man Tim Stainbrook (6.0 ppg.)

Pickerington Central (24-2) is one of the six newcomers to the state tournament. The Tigers arrive to the final four thanks to a nine-game winning streak following a stretch of two losses in three games in late January/early February to Cleveland St. Ignatius and Newark. The Purple and White have accomplished a rare feat by playing for the Division I state football finals in December and now making a trip to the final four. Central has rode the play of Ohio University signee Caris Levert (22 ppg.). The emerging senior didn't score his first basket of the regional final until 6:14 showing on the third quarter clock, but managed to finish with 14 points in helping the Tigers to a 60-51 triumph of Canton McKinley. Levert is averaging 18.8 points per game in the tournament. 6-4 sophomore Jae'sean Tate (12.0 ppg./8.0 rpg.), who is the son of former Ohio State Buckeye and Cincinnati Bearcat Jermaine Tate, had 15 points and 14 rebounds. 6-6 junior Taco Charlton, a Michigan football commit, added 10 points and 12 boards. Sophomore sharp-shooter Conner Kern (12.0 ppg.) netted 10 points. Senior point guard Chad Nelson (Ohio Dominican) and sophomore guard Javon Bess have stepped up as well for the Tigers.

Fairfield (21-5) has had a storybook season under head coach Tim Austing. The Indians seniors have watched their record grow each year of high school from 5-16 to 9-12 to 12-11 to 21-5. They are laced with seniors as six of their top seven players. The top seven all play between 19 and 26 minutes per game. Fairfield got to the state tournament with wins over Cincinnati Withrow (64-55) and Greater Miami Conference foe Middletown (62-59, OT) in regional play. One of the biggest keys has been the bench play, thanks to senior Jeff Woods who scored a combined 39 points in the two wins. 6-7 senior Brandon Murphy recorded 14 points and eight rebounds in the win over Middletown and Kyle Smith added a total of 30 points in the two regional encounters. Sophomore Tim Fleming is the only non-senior in the rotation. The point guard averages 3.7 assists per contest. Woods and senior Keon Benjamin each averaged 9.9 points a game coming off the bench. Murphy leads the Indians at 10.9 points and 7.4 rebounds. Fairfield is allowing just 47.4 points a game. The last Greater Miami Conference team to win a state championship was Hamilton in 2004.

Division II

Dayton Dunbar (26-0) is one of two unbeaten teams remaining in the state and will be making its eighth state tournament appearance and fifth since 2005. Coach Peter Pullen's Wolverines have been the staple of top teams in the state of Ohio over the past eight seasons winning three state championships in that time frame. The Blue and White have rarely been tested this year including their 81-59 throttling of Cincinnati Taft in last weekend's regional championship contest in a what many thought would be the game of the year. The Wolverines placed six participants in double figures in the win, led by freshman point guard AJ Harris and his 15 points. Cleveland State commit Gary Akbar tallied 12 as did key bench performer Tayvonne Hunt. 6-7 junior Damarion Geter and Creighton signee Andre Yates each posted 11 markers and 6-7 Wichita State commit Deontae "Teddy" Hawkins delivered 10. Harris is regarded as one of the Top 50 players in his class by numerous publications and averaging 8.2 points and 8.1 assists. Akbar leads the team in both points (16.7 ppg.) and rebounds (11.9 rpg.). Hawkins has been solid as well with 16.7 points and 7.8 boards. Yates, who has taken his game to another level during the tourney, is getting 14.5 a night. Dunbar has played 26 games thus far and only five of those have been under 10 points in margin of victory. Dunbar is averaging a tournament best 79.2 points per game including 13 games of 80 points or more.

Mentor Lake Catholic (23-2) is making its first state tournament showing following a 65-63 win over last season's Division II champion, Akron SVSM. Lake Catholic has just two setbacks on the year including SVSM and DI contender Lakewood St. Edward back in early December. The Cougars are currently riding a 16-game winning streak, led by their DII Northeast Lakes District Player of the Year Joey Vuyancih and his 18.7 points, 7.6 assists, and 5.6 rebounds a night. Vuyancih is the school's all-time leading scorer. In typical Lake Catholic fashion, the win over Akron SVSM was in large part due to its unbelievable balance. Vuyancih led the way with 15 points, but 6-4 senior Danny Schweikert (9.7 ppg./6.9 rpg.) added 14, and junior Mark Baniewicz (11.8 ppg./8.7 rpg.) and senior Mike Whalen (8.7 ppg.) each tallied 12 points. Sophomore Zavier Powers (7.0 ppg.) and sixth man Paul Wojfila (5.1 ppg.) provide even more balance. The Cougars are averaging just under 74 points per night en route to earning the most wins (23) in school history.

Elida (23-3) is one of three Division II teams entering its first state tournament. After four trips to regional play, the Bulldogs will finally head to Columbus. Elida has just three losses on the year to Div. I power Toledo Central Catholic, conference rival Van Wert, and DIII regional finalist Lima Central Catholic. Elida is led by the dynamic 6-6 guard Reggie McAdams (Akron). McAdams is averaging 21.2 points a game, eight boards, and nearly four assists. McAdams, who quarterbacked the state semifinalist football team, has been lights out in this year's tournament including 21 points in a 77-72 overtime triumph of Cleveland Benedictine in the regional semis and 25 points, eight boards, and four swats in a 63-53 win over Sandusky Perkins in the regional title contest. McAdams is the school's all-time leading scorer, shot blocker, and free-throw and three-point maker. Sophomore Dakota Mathias (12.7 ppg.) has been equally as good, netting 20 against Benedictine and 24 versus Perkins. Mathias' brothers (Dustin and Bo) were both 1,000-point scorers. 6-4 senior Cory Royster has been a hard-worker for the Bulldogs in the paint, averaging 11.9 points and 9.5 rebounds a night. 6-2 junior Aric Thompson (8.1 ppg.) is another reliable option. Thompson's brother, Aaron, was a three-time D3 All-American. Junior Ebin Stratton and sixth man Mike McDonald have provided top support. Elida can certainly score, but its calling card has been its defense



which is giving up just 45.3 points per outing. The Bulldogs have held three of their six tournament opponents under 40 points.

St. Clairsville (23-2) is also entering uncharted waters by making its first state tournament thanks to a 22-game winning streak following a 1-2 start and a 63-59 victory over East District opponent New Philadelphia. Junior Danny Monteroso, who became the school's all-time leading scorer in the win over New Philadelphia, has been on a tournament terror adding to his already stellar regular season. Monteroso is averaging a tournament best 26.2 points per game including 29 in the triumph of New Philly and a team-leading 8.5 rebounds. The Division II East District Player of the Year has enjoyed games of 22, 40, 29, 23, and 29 along the tournament trail. Coach Kim Clifford, who is in his 21st year at St. Clairsville, has other weapons at his dispense as well. Junior Riley Carlton is netting 14.2 ppg. And junior Jerrid Marhefka and Adam Jeffries are both meshing a little over nine points a night. Junior Dylan Campbell has been a big spark off the bench with his ability to knock down shots including four three-pointers in a 59-52 regional semis victory over Chillicothe. Sophomore Joel Giffin, though undersized, has played solid minutes for the Red Devils snaring nearly five boards a game. St. Clairsville's two losses on the year came to DIII regional finalist Ironton and conference rival Indian Creek. St. Clairsville had never won an Ohio Valley Athletic Conference title, district title, or regional title, and now those feats have all been crossed off the list. St. Clairsville doesn't have a senior on the roster.

Division III

Bedford St. Peter Chanel (23-3) will enter its seventh state tournament after a 44-33 win over previously red-hot Burton Berkshire. The Firebirds gave up just 35 points per game in regional wins over Berkshire and New Middletown Springfield. Chanel's seniors Damon Jones (15.1 ppg.), Kyree Brewer (9.0 ppg./9.0 rpg.), and Tommie Williams (8.5 ppg.) were all members of the Firebirds 2010 state semifinalist outfit, which was blitzed by eventual champion Dayton Jefferson. All three will have a chance for redemption in 2012. Sophomore Ishmael Hargrove, who is 6-4, (7.8 ppg./7.7 rpg.) and junior Dan Bailey along with sixth man junior Montell Goodwin (8.5 ppg.) should be nice support for the aforementioned seniors. Williams scored 13 points including an eight-of-eight showing at the charity stripe in the fourth quarter in the win over Berkshire. Jones added 11 and Goodwin tallied 10 off the bench. Brewer scored eight points as a sophomore in the loss to Jefferson. Chanel lost just three games on the year including DII state semifinalist Mentor Lake Catholic, twice-beaten DI Cleveland JFK, and DIV district finalist Cleveland VASJ. The Firebirds won their only state championship when they were in DIII back in 1999.

Cincinnati Summit Country Day (24-1) will be embarking on its third state tournament, but first since back-to-back showings in 1979 and '80. Summit defeated Versailles (61-46) and Cincinnati Roger Bacon (54-44) in regional play to advance. Junior guard Kevin Johnson, who is ranked as one of the top guards in Ohio, led the Silver Knights with 19 points and senior three-point ace Tommy Kreyenhagen added 17 in the regional championship victory over Bacon. Sophomore point guard Antonio Woods, who is one of the best guards in his class, netted 10 in the win. Summit was 14-of-16 at the free-throw line in the final four minutes to seal the win. Johnson scored 21 in the semis win over Versailles. Senior Holden Hertzell has been the team's second leading scorer much of the year and second-leading rebounder. Sophomore Mike Barwick and senior Jake Rawlings give the Silver Knights added punch. Coach Michael Bradley has led the Silver Knights to the final four in just his second year at the helm. Summit played for the regional title a year ago against eventual state champion Cincinnati Taft, but came up short 49-45. Ironically, Summit's lone loss this year came in a game against Taft in early February. The Silver Knights have got the job done on defense all year, allowing only 34.7 points per game, which is a tournament best. Ten times this year Summit has held its opponent to 30 points or fewer.

Portsmouth (23-2) is making its 14th state tournament appearance, which is second only to Canton McKinley. The Trojans made the state tournament a year ago before losing to Cleveland Central Catholic in the semis. Portsmouth has won four state championships with its last coming in 1988. The Trojans enter the state tournament following a 50-40 win over Ironton where they held the high-scoring Tigers to just five points in the first half and leading scorers Zac Carter and Trey Fletcher to just 26 points combine. Portsmouth got 30 points from senior Dion McKinley (19.5 ppg./10.0 rpg.) in its 53-45 regional semis triumph of Chesapeake. The Trojans, who currently hold a 20-game winning streak, are getting 15 points per game from senior Wayne Evans and 10 from Zaide Whitely. Evans scored 15 points in the loss to Cleveland CC in last year's semifinal, but was just 6-of-15 from the floor. Whitely had nine in that contest. Portsmouth's two losses came to DII Vincent Warren and Ironton.

Ottawa-Glandorf (19-6) has earned its sixth trip to Columbus thanks to a hard-fought 44-38 win over Lima Central Catholic, avenging a regular season setback to the Thunderbirds. Ottawa-Glandorf has an interesting pattern of making a trip to the state tournament every four years for the past eight years winning state championships in 2004 and 2008, and now returning to Columbus in 2012 for a shot at another title. More so, O-G has done so under three different head coaches. The Titans, under first-year boss Tyson McGlaughlin, come into Thursday's contest with an average margin of victory of just under eight points per game. O-G is led by juniors Michael Rosebrock (11.0 ppg./8.0 rpg.) and T.J. Metzger (11.4 ppg.). 6-6 freshman Noah Bramlage has been solid as well netting 6.2 points and 5.3 rebounds. Bramlage is one of the top freshmen in Ohio. Junior Caleb Siefker and Matt Kaufman round out an all underclassmen starting lineup. 6-6 senior Logan Koch (6.3 ppg.) is a very good sixth man and junior Jacob Leopold and senior John Lammer provide quality depth. O-G's defeats came at the hands of Lima CC, Columbus Grove, DII power Defiance, DII state semifinalist Elida, DII Bowling Green, and DI Perrysburg. The Titans were unable to win more than four games in a row this season before their current six-game winning streak.

Division IV

Jackson Center (26-0) will make its third showing in Columbus, but its first since winning it all in 1985. The Tigers are one of only two unbeaten squads left in the state. JC got the state tournament in dominating fashion by handling Div. IV power Dayton Jefferson, 50-37. The Tigers jumped out to a 19-6 lead at halftime and never looked back, led by Andy Hoying's 26 points, who was recently named the Southwest District Div. IV Player of the Year. The 6-5 Hoying (16.0 ppg./7.5 rpg.) is one of two seniors in the starting lineup for JC, 6-0 guard Troy Opperman (6.5 ppg.) being the other. Juniors Alex Meyer (13.6 ppg./5.1 rpg.), Trey Elchert (7.8 ppg./3.5 rpg.), and 6-5 Eric Ryder (5.8 ppg./5.5 rpg.) round out a very formidable starting lineup for head coach Scott Elchert. Freshman Gavin Wildermuth (4.5 ppg.) adds a nice lift off the bench along with junior Levi Winner. The Shelby County Athletic League participant is giving up just a shade over 40 points per game. JC has won all types of game along the way outlasting the opponent eight times in games under 10 points. Tri-Village nearly took out JC in the district championship in an overtime contest and the Tigers had to outlast St. Henry in the regional semis. The closest games on the year for the Tigers, in terms of margin of victory, were a pair of four-point victories against Fort Loramie and Anna in early January.

Columbus Africentric (22-3) is making its third state tournament trip and second-straight. The Nubians were ousted by eventual Div. III champion Cincinnati Taft. Africentric returns in hopes of duplicating its girls state championship from a week ago. The Nubians are outscoring their opponents 78.7 to 34.3 in six tournament games following a rugged schedule in the Columbus City League. Africentric defeated Beaver Eastern 78-43 to make the Final Four, which marked the most points any team has scored on them during this tournament run. The Columbus-based school was able to get 14 points from junior Kenny Robinson (11.0 ppg./5.4 rpg.), 12 from leading scorer senior Fuquan Tucker (14.2 ppg./7.5 rpg.), and 10 off the bench by senior Delquan Black. Though the regional final wasn't much of a contest, the regional semifinal against Newark Catholic was a chess match for nearly three and a half quarters before the Nubians pulled away. Senior Hossi Smith, who is 6-5, (9.0 ppg./10.3 rpg.) came up huge against the Green Wave, scoring 18 points mostly when the game was back-and-forth. Junior point guard Trevon Saunders (6.0 ppg./3.5 rpg.) and senior Justin Miller (5.5 ppg.) are also capable scorers in the starting lineup. Coach Michael Bates can go nearly 15-deep including juniors guard Kejuan Skinner-Byrd, guard CyQuil Tucker, guard Newshawn Walls, the senior Black, and talented freshman Jaquan Harrison. Africentric's three defeats came to DIII power Bloom-Carroll and two defeats to DI power Columbus Walnut Ridge, which happens to be coached by Bates' brother, Jason. The three setbacks were by a combined 14 points.

Berlin Hiland (24-1) is making its ninth trip to Columbus in hopes of becoming just the second team in OHSAA history to repeat in Division IV since the four-division inception in 1988. The Hawks would join Columbus Wehrle (1988-1990) if they were able to accomplish the feat. Hiland reached the state tournament in dramatic fashion thanks to 6-7 senior Seger Bonifant (15.6 ppg.). Bonifant drilled a triple with just 0.4 seconds to go in Hiland's regional final contest against Richmond Heights to give the Hawks a 41-40 triumph. The lead in the contest was never more than four points for either team. Bonifant (West Liberty) finished with 22 points and now has 1,429 career-points, which includes two seasons at Strasburg-Franklin. Senior Dylan Kaufman (17.6 ppg./6.0 rpg./3.2 rpg.) was held in check for the most part, but still managed to finish with 12 points. Kaufman (Findlay), who is the reigning East District Div. IV Player of the Year, is the school's all-time leading scorer with 1,698 career-points. Kaufman was coming off a 27-point performance against Mogadore in the regional semis. 6-7 senior Neil Gingerich (10.0 ppg./6.2 rpg.) has come on strong following a terrific state tournament a year ago. Senior guard Jason Miller (7.0 ppg./4.8 rpg.) is a solid floor general and classmate Chase Gerber is reliable as well. In last year's state tournament Bonifant scored a combined 44 points in the two wins and Kaufman added 28. The Hawks can definitely score, but lost in everything else is the fact that they only give up 40.1 points a game. Hiland's lone setback on the year came in the regular season finale to Div. I Canton GlenOak. The Hawks have won four consecutive Inter-Valley Conference titles and will look to win the school's third boys' basketball state championship.

Arlington (23-3) is participating in its first boy's basketball state tournament, which comes on the heels of the school's girls basketball state championship last week in its first trip to the state tournament. Arlington advanced by knocking off two teams (Toledo Maumee Valley Country Day and Edgerton) in regional play with a combine mark of 46-3. Arlington's 56-33 throttling of previously unbeaten Edgerton was shocking to most around the state. Sophomore Andrew Hunter (8.6 ppg./3.6 rpg.) paced the Red Devils with 14 points in the win over Edgerton followed by 13 from 6-4 senior Thayne Recker (17.2 ppg./9.1 rpg.) and senior guard Wes Corbin (8.1 ppg./3.2 rpg.) tallying 12. Recker, whose three sisters helped the girls team win a state title last week (yes, they are quadruplets!) is the reigning Blanchard Valley Conference Player of the Year and led Arlington with 19 points and 15 boards in the semifinal victory against Toledo MVCD. 6-1 senior Jake Leonard is the team's second leading scorer at 11.3 points per encounter and senior guard Adam Inniger can also provide some scoring punch. The only tournament game under 10 points was a 51-44 district championship win against Columbus Grove. Arlington is giving up only 40.4 points a game. The Red Devils have won 10 straight contests and their three losses are by a combined eight points, including a 66-61 overtime defeat to Columbus Grove, a two-point setback to Ada, and a one-point loss at Vanlue. All three defeats were on the road.