

# 2012 State Tournament Preview



The 37th annual OHSAA Girls Basketball State Tournaments return to Value City Arena at the Jerome Schottenstein Center for the twelfth consecutive year this Thursday afternoon. The divisional rotation schedule for this year is small schools to big schools, IV, III, II and I, with the state championship games tipping off Saturday at 10:45 a.m. 2:00 p.m., 5:15 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., respectively. All four title games will be televised live by SportsTime Ohio. Of the 16 teams representing the four divisions, three are returning state champions, 10 were ranked in the final Associated Press poll, three are undefeated, four are returning to the final four after appearances last season and three are making their school's first appearance.

Beginning with Division IV, No. 2 **Arlington** (25-1) is the only ranked team in the field and had to defeat No. 5 New Riegel and undefeated No. 1 Ottoville in regional play to gain its school's first state tournament appearance. Arlington's only blemish on the season came at the hands of Division III state semifinalist No. 7 Findlay Liberty-Benton. The Red Devils are led by the school's all-time leading scorer, senior Amelia Recker, who averages 19.1 ppg and 7.6 rpg, and her sister, Aliva Recker (10.7 ppg). The duo makes up two of three quadruplets on the team. Their other sister, Anessa Recker, is a reserve off the bench and their brother, Thayne, is a top player for the Arlington boys team. The Lady Spartans from **Mansfield St. Peter's** (21-4) will face the Red Devils in their school's twelfth state tournament appearance but first since 2005. Head Coach Bill Tomsich will rely on junior Randa Payne (23.0 ppg) and senior Shabree Rawls (16.0 ppg) to lead the Lady Spartans' offensive charge.

The other side of the bracket matches first time state qualifier **New Madison Tri-Village** (25-1) against **Berlin Hiland** (18-8), which is making its school's twelfth state tournament appearance after three consecutive trips in '10, '09 and '08.

Tri-Village, which is led by senior Kayla Linkous (25.7 ppg; 11.6 rpg), will rely on its potent offensive attack that puts up 68.5 ppg, the third-highest scoring output of teams in the tournament and highest in Division IV. Twenty-one year veteran head coach Dave Schlabach's squad will counter with a defense that is holding teams to 34.7 ppg, the second-lowest in the tournament field. He'll look toward senior McKenzie Miller, who averages 13.1 ppg, to help his squad on the offensive end.

The Division III final four features all four teams with more than 20 wins, including two undefeated teams, and matchups that include No. 3 versus No. 10 and the No. 1 defending state champion versus No. 7.

**Smithville** (26-0), which also made the final four in 2010, comes into the tournament allowing the fewest points per game (31.0) and is led by senior Tara Schaffer (17.0 ppg) and junior Kylie Frizell (12.8 ppg). Sixteen year veteran head coach Mike Miller will rely on that combination to counter the **Columbus Africentric Early College** (21-4) offensive that puts up a tournament-best 76.0 ppg. The Nubians' trio of Kiyanna Black (SR; 15.7 ppg), Marley Hill (JR; 12.9 ppg) and Darianne Seward (SO; 11.2 ppg) will be looking to help bring back the school's third state title, with the previous two coming in '09 and '07.

**Findlay Liberty-Benton** (23-2), which is back in the state tournament for the third time in four years, will look to win its school's second state title behind the play of senior Cait Craft (21.7 ppg) and Rachel Myers (18.8 ppg). The Eagles' tournament resume includes two solid regional wins over then-undefeated No. 2 Archbold in the semis and Centerburg in the regional finals. Defending state champion **Anna** (26-0) will counter the Eagles attack with the father-daughter duo of head coach Jack Billing and junior Natalie Billing (17.1 ppg; 11.3 rpg). On the season, the Rockets have defeated teams by an average of 34.4 ppg, including a 40.7 point margin during their tournament run. A win this year would be the school's third state title.

The Division II final four features two intriguing battles with **Millersburg West Holmes** (23-3) taking on No. 6 **Lima Bath** (23-2) and defending state champion No. 7 **Shaker Heights Hathaway Brown** (20-5) facing **Bellbrook** (22-4).

Led by sixth-year head coach Lisa Patterson, West Holmes is back in

the state tournament for the sixth time in school history but the first since 1995. Many avid basketball fans remember the Knights for their storied back-to-back-to-back (1984-1986) undefeated state title runs under recent Hall-of-Famer Coach Jack Van Reeth. This current version of the Knights features two juniors and three sophomores in the starting line-up, including their leading scorer sophomore Laina Snyder (15.4 ppg; 10.8 rpg). No. 7 Lima Bath, whose only two regular season losses came to No. 4 Dayton Carroll and Div. IV No. 1 Ottoville, will rely on the experience of 14-year veteran head coach Greg Mauk and its junior center Emily Ruhe, who averages 14.0 ppg.

Three-time defending state champion Shaker Heights Hathaway Brown will look to make it four in a row when they take on unranked Bellbrook in the second semifinal game. Hathaway Brown has made the state tournament for six consecutive years and has made it to the championship game every year, with runner-up finishes in '07 and '08. They are led by head coach Paul Barlow and the junior duo of Vanessa Smith (16.6 ppg) and Nia Marshall (12.6 ppg). Though only making its second state tournament appearance in school history, and first since 1976, the Golden Eagles of Bellbrook are certainly battle-tested heading into the final four after having had to defeat the No. 5 and No. 4 teams in the state to get here. The Golden Eagles will look to break the Blazers' streak behind the play of junior Erin Dorn (12.0 ppg) and senior Leisha Crawford (11.0 ppg).

The Division I final four features four teams which have combined for eight state tournament appearances in the last three years.

No. 3 **Kettering Fairmont** (22-2), which was the 2011 state runner-up, enters the tournament after solid regional wins over No. 9 Cincinnati Sycamore and Mason. It's the Firebirds' third consecutive trip to the state tournament. Their opponent will be first time state qualifier **Toledo Notre Dame Academy** (22-4). The Eagles, coached by Travis Galloway, are led by the senior trio of Michele Holmes (12.3 ppg), Cat Wells (11.7 ppg) and Demy Whitaker (10.2 ppg).

The last semifinal matchup of the tournament has the most intrigue in terms of rankings as undefeated No. 1. **Reynoldsburg** (26-0) faces off against the No. 2 defending state champion **Twinsburg** (23-3). Reynoldsburg returns to the state tournament for the second time after a one year hiatus when they were knocked out in the regional finals in 2011. Ten-year head coach Jack Purtell will depend on his team's 34.7 ppg defensive average, the best in Division I, and a starting five that features three double digit scorers (So. Alyssa Rice, 12.3 ppg; Sr. Aliyah Zantt, 11.4 ppg; Jr. Destini Cooper, 10.2 ppg) to knock off the Tigers. The defending state champion Tigers are led by their senior All-Ohioan Malina Howard, who averages 19.0 ppg. She'll also receive plenty of help from junior Ashley Morrisette (15.0 ppg) and senior Leah Fechko (12.0 ppg).

Girls State Champions (past 5 years)

Year	Div. I	Div. II	Div. III	Div. IV
2011	Twinsburg	Shaker Heights Hathaway Brown	Anna	Canal Winchester Harvest Prep
2010	Canton McKinley	Shaker Heights Hathaway Brown	Findlay Liberty-Benton	Canal Winchester Harvest Prep
2009	Cinci. Mt. Notre Dame	Shaker Heights Hathaway Brown	South Euclid Regina	Cols. Africentric
2008	Cinci. Mt. Notre Dame	Kettering Arch-bishop Alter	Versailles	Berlin Hiland
2007	Cinci. Mt. Notre Dame	Warsaw River View	Cleve. Central Catholic	Cols. Africentric