

# Woodlawn has the Red Hill Sectional experience

*St. Elmo gets second chance at Cardinals; Oblong, C-H get unexpected trip*

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**BRIDGEPORT** – The **Woodlawn Cardinals** are once again in familiar surroundings.

Coach Shane Witzel has brought his program to this gymnasium two other times for sectional games. Each season (2009, 2010) Woodlawn won sectional titles.

Although many thought that this team would take a step back, here the Cardinals sit.

Perched again in a sectional after winning their fifth consecutive regional championship last Friday as they shut down and ran past Sandoval at Wayne City, 58-28.

Woodlawn improved to 24-5 on the season and have a outstanding IA resume, having won two of their three regular season tournaments (Sesser-Valier Holiday Tournament, Midland Trail Conference Tournament) while finishing second in the other one at Okawville.

The quality of their schedule has improved over the past few years picking up important non-league wins, which included a victory at home over 3A Herrin.

The Cardinals did stub their collective toes a couple of times this season (Sesser-Valier, Wayne City) the latter of which was their first ever MTC loss.

Christian Hollenkamp is a 6-foot-5 senior forward who is leading the Cards in scoring with 16.3 points a game. Hollenkamp has connected on 53 percent of his overall shots and a very good 40 percent (33-of-82) from behind the 3-point arc.

Six-foot-five junior guard Gabe Owens is also a sharpshooter, nailing a team-leading 79 trey's while averaging 15.9 points a contest. He is also the leading assist man for the Cardinals, dishing out 3.6 per game.

These two players bring a lot of varsity and postseason experience to the floor this week at Red Hill.

AJ Webb is also a senior with time spent playing in big games.

This 6-foot guard is a defensive specialist while also being one of the three players on this team averaging double-figures in scoring (10.9 p.p.g.). Kris Harlow, a 6-foot junior, and 6-foot-3 sophomore Jake Robinson are also starters.

Jayson Hapeman, a 5-foot-11 sophomore, is one of the team's top reserves.

Woodlawn will play their fifth sectional contest on this floor Wednesday night against St. Elmo. The Cardinals have won the previous four games, resulting in two of their three sectional championships.

Speaking of the **St. Elmo Eagles**, Coach Greg Feezel's squad comes into this sectional after taking care of rival Altamont on Friday night to nab the school's second consecutive regional crown.

This is the school's seventh such boy's basketball award, having won titles in 1939, 1945, 1973, 1988, 1991, 1992, and the last two seasons.

St. Elmo sports a 22-7 mark with some good wins and close defeats along the way.

They dropped a pair of games to Teutopolis, one regular season and one in the semifinals of the National Trail Conference Tournament.

They have a pair of common opponents with Woodlawn, with both teams having lost to Madison while both beat South Central.

St. Elmo won their own Holiday Tournament title while also finishing fourth in the NTC Tournament. They topped both Shelbyville and Wesclin to finish fifth in the Vandalia Holiday Tournament.

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Coach Feezel's team is led by Conner Beasley, a 6-foot-4 junior forward, who has notched 13.2 points and 8.4 rebounds a game for the Eagles. Beasley also is good distributing the ball as he also handed out 2.4 assists per game.

Two other St. Elmo players are averaging double-figures in scoring with 6-foot-1 senior Blake Pruetz adding 11.7 p.p.g. with 3.8 rebounds. Ben Sperry, a 6-foot-2 senior forward, bangs inside for 10.1 points and 7.1 rebounds.

Five-foot-ten senior guard Blaine Scholes (7.6 p.p.g., 2.5 r.p.g.), 5-foot-11 senior guard Patrick Schaal (3.9 p.p.g.) along with reserve sophomore guard Lexi Maxey (4.9 p.p.g.) round out what Coach Feezel believes is a team that can make some noise at Red Hill.

The **Cowden-Herrick Hornets** and head coach Brett Boehm pulled the biggest shocker of the regionals feeding into Red Hill when they pulled the rug out from under top-seed Dieterich, 67-58.

Two nights later they took down host Stewardson-Strasburg, 53-46 to win the school's first ever regional boy's basketball title as Cowden-Herrick. The Hornets, like St. Elmo, play in both the National Trail Conference and the Egyptian Illini Conference.

C-H has some kids who can score points with 6-foot-2 junior Luke Moore leading the Hornets in points per game with 16.2. He has also come up big around the basket on the defensive end, grabbing 10.1 rebounds a contest. Five-foot-ten senior guard Jalen Hovis is also a major factor for Coach Boehm, tossing in nearly ten points a game while hauling down 4.4 boards.

Derrick Knearem, a 5-foot-10 senior, is averaging 8.5 points a night.

Six-foot senior Shane Mitchell and 6-foot-1 sophomore Brady Barnes are both chipping in 5.3 p.p.g.

Two other kids named Barnes, 6-foot-4 senior Bryce and 6-foot-1 junior Seth, are both in the four points per game area.

Cowden-Herrick (17-12) finished third in the St. Elmo Holiday Tournament and won the Ramsey side of the Ramsey/Mulberry Grove Thanksgiving Tournament before losing to Sandoval in overtime in the crossover game. They were the number four seed at the Stewardson-Strasburg Regional before knocking off top-seed Dieterich and then the host Comets, 53-46.

Speaking of unexpected runs, Oblong took advantage of their number two seed at Hutsonville-Palestine after the host Tigers were toppled by Red Hill in the semifinals. Coach Brent Harper's Panthers took care of Cisne in the semifinals and then put away the Salukis 62-52 to grab the school's first regional title in boy's hoops since 1959.

The Little Illini Conference club is led by Anthony Johnson, a 6-foot-3 junior forward who is averaging a robust 21.8 points a contest while hauling down 9.6 rebounds per outing. His 34-points in the regional title win Friday night helped get his Panthers into the sectional.

Oblong has a space eater in the paint in 6-foot-6 senior Sean Morecraft (10.3 points, 6.1 rebounds) are solid averages for the Panthers, who are 19-9 on the season. Six-foot senior Karch Knollenberg is averaging 8.6 points a night. Collin Meese is a 5-foot-11 junior guard who is netting 6.6 points per while 6-foot-2 junior Gerald Richardson adds 5.4 p.p.g.

The Panthers, finished fourth in the LIC behind Flora, Marshall and Casey-Westfield (all 2A schools) while beating 2A Mount Carmel, 75-73 in overtime back on January 6.

**ABV Projected Sectional Champion – Woodlawn.**

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