

Cards look for third-straight title flight

Goreville, Waltonville, Chester have best shot; Sparta, JC, NA, Z-R are sleepers

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The **Woodlawn Cardinals** have dominated this event in the last two seasons and Coach Shane Witzel's club is the top-seed once again as they try to defend their crown.

With a very tough schedule and some new faces in the crowded talent pool rising up to take their place on the floor, the Cardinals are learning to fly against a tough group of teams so far in 2012-13.

Woodlawn lost an overtime decision to unbeaten Okawville in the final of the Rockets' tournament back on November 30 and also dropped a 41-25 decision to Breese Mater Dei at the Saluki Shootout on December 7. The Cardinals (5-2) have wins over New Athens, Waltonville, Marissa-Coulterville, Valmeyer and Webber Township and are averaging 61.6 points a game while surrendering just 41 a night.

Gabe Owens, a 6-foot-5 senior guard, is the squad's leader with 13.9 points a game. Owens recently committed to Washington University in St. Louis to play college basketball.

Six-foot-one senior Kris Harlow is second on the list, netting 9.6 points a game while grabbing 4.1 rebounds an outing. Jake Robinson, a 6-foot-3 junior, is third on the list with 8.1 points per night. The Cardinals also had a pair of players; 5-foot-7 senior Ty Coleman and 6-foot-2 senior Logan Isaac averaging 5.4 points apiece. Isaac is grabbing a team leading 4.8 rebounds a game.

The second seed in this tournament is looking for round three against the defending champs.

Goreville is coming into the event with a 5-2 mark as well, with the title of their own tournament and BDC West victory over Elverado.

Coach Todd Tripp's club lost to Gallatin County at the Saluki Shootout and at 2A Carterville.

The Blackcats have 5-foot-10 senior guard Blake Gray leading the scoring with 11.6 points a game while Alex Andros, a 6-foot-4 senior, averages 11.3 p.p.g. and four rebounds a game. Six-foot-two senior Dayton Tripp (11.0 p.p.g.) and 6-foot-3 junior forward Zeke Snell (10.9 p.p.g., 4.4 r.p.g.) gives Coach Tripp four players averaging double-figures as the Cats have averaged 67 points a game this season.

Goreville has wins over Anna-Jonesboro, Egyptian, Johnston City and Benton; all while winning its own tourney title. Woodlawn has drilled Goreville the last two S-VHT title games, including a 62-40 shellacking last December.

Waltonville is the three-seed on the strength of an 8-2 mark with just losses to Woodlawn and 2A Carlyle. Coach Brian Gamber has had a good start for his first head coaching position as his Spartans won the Christopher Thanksgiving Tournament back in November with wins over the host Bearcats, Cobden and Egyptian. They also have notable wins over North Clay, Hamilton County and Crab Orchard.

Waltonville has a pair of double-figure scorers in 6-foot-6 senior Jordan Hale and 6-foot-3 Trey Witges.

Chester has one of the more impressive wins in the field, with a victory over Trico as part of a resume of six wins. Coach Brad Norman's club sports victories over Red Bud, Sesser-Valier, Elverado, Zeigler-Royalton and Shawnee and have split two games with Trico and Sparta. A loss to Steeleville at the Trico Tournament is one of just three losses.

Chris Schwartz, a 6-foot-2 guard, is popping home 11.4 points a game for the Yellow Jackets. Link Cushman, a 6-foot senior guard, is second on the scoring parade with 11.1. Six-foot-two junior Jake Lochhead is adding 10.0 p.p.g. Kyle Landon is a 6-foot-6 forward who adds 7.9 p.p.g.

Sparta (7-3) is led by Aaron Rushing, a 6-foot-7 senior center who is netting 13.3 points a game while hauling in a gargantuan 17 rebounds a game. Phil Lockhart is a 6-foot senior guard who is topping Sparta with 14.8 points while grabbing 9.7 rebounds each night. Five-foot-eight senior Brendon Wilson is

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averaging 7.4 points a game for Coach Jeff Bowlby.

Christopher head coach Eric Stallman has a good chance at getting to the final day as his sixth-seeded Bearcats open the tournament in the 9 am game against Vienna.

Eric Young, a 6-foot-2 junior, is the top scorer (12.8 p.p.g.) for Christopher who is 7-3 on the season with just losses to Trico, Waltonville and Sesser-Valier. Tyler Atchison (12.3 p.p.g.) and Kevin Mercks (10.0 p.p.g.) give Christopher a chance at the final four.

Johnston City (4-5) are playing pretty well so far in 2012-13, having gotten wins over Benton and Anna-Jonesboro at the Goreville Tournament to go with victories over Sesser-Valier and Eldorado.

Coach Wade Thomas is being paced by 6-foot-3 senior forward Austin McPheron (14.2 p.p.g., 6.0 r.p.g.) while Jake Davison adds 8.2 points a game. Hunter Zeigler and Levi Tanner are adding around seven points a game.

New Athens (6-3) are in first place of the Cahokia Conference Kaskaskia Division and have a win over highly-touted Lebanon, 51-46, back on December 14. Coach Marc Dewort has Tyler Meyer, a 6-foot-4 junior forward, who is a 14.4 p.p.g. scorer for the eighth seed. Blake Ragland is a close second in scoring, 14 p.p.g., for New Athens. Ryan Reuss, Luc Marlow and Jeremy Hepp have all played key roles in the Yellow Jackets' fast start this season.

NA also played Woodlawn, losing just 54-47 at the Okawville Tournament.

If you are looking for a team on a good roll heading into this event, **Zeigler-Royalton** is playing well for Coach Matt Morgan. They finished in third place in the Wayne City Holiday Tournament while also winning the consolation title at Christopher.

The Tornadoes (9-3) have a win over Trico in BDC play and are led by Nick McPhail (12 p.p.g., 4.1 a.p.g.) and Brandon Jones (11.8 p.p.g., 6.7 r.p.g.) for a team that lacks size but is strong on quickness. Brandon Stubblefield is a 5-foot-11 junior (9.3 p.p.g.) who is part of the team that has some good wins this season and the three losses are to teams that are a combined 27-7 in 2012-13.

Marissa-Coulterville (1-8) have just a win over Valmeyer so far this season as the Meteors are struggling to find wins. Austin Place, a 6-foot-2 senior, leads M-C with 11.5 p.p.g. while Brandon Conaway is adding eight points per game.

The **Sesser-Valier Red Devils** (4-2) have a couple of good wins over West Frankfort and Christopher. Coach Chip Basso's club will be a stern test for New Athens in the final opening round contest. The Red Devils have 6-foot-7 senior center Justin Kulich and Cody Lingle, a 5-foot-10 senior guard, leading the way for a team that is learning the ropes in a baptism by varsity fire.

Vienna and head coach Cory Waters have been in with some good teams (2-9) with just wins over Carrier Mills and Cobden. Dylan Graves and Blake Crain are both 5-foot-9 junior guards while Quinnton Bent, a 5-foot-10 sophomore, is also a starter for the Eagles.

Century (7-3) is another of the sleeper teams, topped by 6-foot senior Cordon Hight and 5-foot-10 sophomore Caden Hight. The Centurions losses have been to Meridian, Massac County and Egyptian. Coach Travis Foster's squad has good wins over Eldorado, Carrier Mills and Vienna.

Cobden has wins over Wayne City, Pope County and Shawnee for Coach Rhett Barke with JC Chapman, a 5-foot-11 senior, as the top scoring threat for the Appleknockers.

Elverado (1-9) has just a win over Joppa at the Crab Orchard Thanksgiving Tournament on the plus side. Coach Mark Riley has a bright spot, 6-foot-4 senior Joe Sorensen.

Jack Bullock is the editor/web publisher of **A Baseline View.com**. Southern Illinois' Only Boy's High School Basketball Web Publication providing Previews, Rankings, Schedules, Scores, Standings and Tournament Information for over 100-teams.