

2022 OHSAA Boys Basketball State Tournament Preview

DIVISION I

By Eric Frantz, MaxPreps

Centerville (28-0)

The defending state champions enter the state tournament riding a 44-game win streak. The Elks last loss was 74-66 to Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary on Jan. 30, 2020. This season Centerville, which is ranked No. 4 nationally by MaxPreps, has competed against and beat a slate of notable opponents, including SoCal Academy (CA), Huntington Prep (WV), Vertical Academy (NC), Spire Academy (OH), Blue Ridge School (VA), Flyght Academy Prep (OH), Moeller and St. Vincent-St. Mary. Junior point guard Gabe Cupps, an Indiana commit and the Greater Western Ohio Conference POY, is a four-star prospect, the fourth ranked 2024 recruit in Ohio and a Top 100 prospect nationally. Senior small forward Tom House, a Florida State recruit, is a three-star prospect and a Top 10 Ohio prospect. House hit a game-winning shot at the buzzer as Centerville survived rival Kettering Fairmont 44-42 in the regional semifinals. Senior small forward Rich Rolf, a former Drexel commit that is currently undecided, completes a talented trifecta for the Elks. All three were first team All-Southwest District and Cupps was the POY. Head coach Gabe Cupps, the SW District COY, also led St. Paris Graham to the 2008 D-II state semifinals. Centerville's 28 wins is a school record. The Elks finished No. 1 in the final AP Poll.

Pickerington Central (24-2)

The Tigers return to the state tournament after beating Gahanna Lincoln 59-42 in a highly-anticipated regional final at Ohio Dominican that sold out in less than 20 minutes. PC won the 2012 D-I state title (it's the 10th anniversary of that) and was a semifinalist in 2017 and 2018. Junior small forward Devin Royal is a three-star prospect that holds 17 offers, including Ohio State, Dayton, Illinois, Butler and Virginia Tech. Senior Sonny Styles is a five-star football recruit (defensive back) that has signed with Ohio State. The Tigers had a season-best 17-game win streak snapped at Reynoldsburg (63-60) in the regular season finale. PC was without Styles and junior Rasheem Biles in that contest. Biles, who doubles as a three-star football prospect with 10 offers, returned for the regional final after missing seven games with a broken bone in his pelvis. PC has just two seniors (Josh Harlan and Styles) in its nine-man rotation. The Tigers finished No. 5 in the final AP Poll.

St. Edward (21-5)

The Eagles are making their 12th trip to the state tournament, a span that covers four straight decades. St. Edward won state championships in 1998 and 2014 and was runner-up in 2008. Senior point guard Michael Bova (19.4) was first team All-Northeast Lakes District and has committed to Bellarmine. Senior guards Jair Knight and Myles Reynolds complete a stellar backcourt. Head coach Eric Flannery has won 11 regional titles and captured his 500th career win in the district final. The Eagles were unranked in the final AP Poll.

St. Ignatius (17-11)

The Wildcats beat Lima Senior (74-58) in the regional final for the second straight year to reach Dayton. St. Ignatius, which outscored the Spartans 33-13 in bench points, lost 51-42 to Westerville Central in last year's semifinals. The Wildcats average 63.4 points per game and allow 51.9. St. Ignatius also reached the state tournament in 2001 (champions), 1998 (runners-up), 1953, 1952 and 1923. Senior point guard Jonathan Effertz (13.6 points) is the only Wildcats player averaging double-digits. He was third team All-Northeast Inland District. Sophomore guard Carter Jackson (9.5 points, 5.3 rebounds) and 6-10 senior forward CJ Yarin (8.3 points, 7.7 rebounds) contribute heavily off the bench. The Wildcats were unranked in the final AP Poll.

DIVISION II

By Eric Frantz, MaxPreps

Alter (25-2)

The Knights return to the state tournament for the first time since 2013 and for the 10th time overall. Alter owns three state titles (1978, 1999 and 2001). The Knights beat a talented Cincinnati Woodward team 62-49 in the regional final and held highly-touted three-star senior guard Paul McMillan to a season low seven points. McMillan had passed LeBron James for sixth all-time on the OHSAA scoring list in the regional semifinals. Alter has won 18-straight since losing 69-58 to Providence Day (NC) on Dec. 30. The Knights also lost to D-I regional semifinalist Kettering Fairmont (55-45) on Dec. 14. Senior guard Jacob Conner (16.5 points) has 10 double-doubles (points and rebounds) this season and four straight in the tournament. The 6-foot-9 Marshall commit is first team All-Southwest District and the Greater Catholic League Co-Ed all-time leader in blocked shots. Senior point guard Ryan Chew (13.7 points and 5.5 assists) is second team All-Southwest District. Juniors Anthony Ruffalo (16.1 points) and A.J. Leen (10.6 points) give Alter four double-digit scorers. The Knights were ranked No. 2 in the final AP Poll. Alter is trying to become the fourth school in state history to win both the boys and girls basketball state titles in the same season. The Knights won the D-II girls state championship last Saturday.

Gilmour Academy (22-5)

The Lancers beat St. Marys Memorial 62-35 in the regional final to reach the program's second state tournament and first since a runner-up finish in 1992 (D-IV). This is the 30th anniversary of that feat. Gilmour lost in the regional final to St. Vincent-St. Mary last season. The Lancers are averaging 64.4 points per game and allowing 50.4. Senior forward Ryan Mueller (16.2 points, 10.4 rebounds) is a first team All-Northeast Lakes District selection and has set the school record for rebounds in a season (265). He's posted 14 double-doubles. Junior Brandon Rose (13.9 points) had a career-high 29 points (4-for-4 from 3) in the regional final and is averaging 24 points per game in the tournament. He is a second team All-Northeast Lakes District selection. Junior guard Adisa Molton II (10.4 points, 5.5 assists) earned third team all-district honors. Head coach Dan DeCrane won his 100th game on Jan. 28 against Chagrin Falls. The Lancers were unranked in the final AP Poll after climbing as high as No. 11 on Feb. 7.

St. Vincent-St. Mary (23-4)

The defending state champions are ranked No. 2 team in Ohio (behind Centerville) regardless of division by MaxPreps. The Irish's four losses have come to Centerville, Oak Hill Academy (VA), Sierra Canyon (CA) and Pickerington North. They are averaging 70.2 points and allowing 52.4. SVSM has won six regional titles in seven years with 2020, when the tournament was cancelled due to COVID, being the lone hole. This is the Irish's 18th trip to state and 15th since 2000. They own nine state titles. SVSM has won its five tournament games by margins of 39, 42, 40, 39 and 40 points, respectively. Senior guard and Illinois recruit Sincere Harris (20.3 points) is the state's top senior prospect. He dropped a season-high 37 points in the Irish's district final win over Medina Buckeye. Harris has been the team's leading scorer 15 times this season. Senior guard Ramar Pryor (15.5 points) is headed to Cleveland State. Junior Lance Harris averages 13.3 points. The Irish were ranked No. 1 in the final AP Poll.

Waverly (23-4)

The Tigers survived Heath 46-45 in overtime in the regional final to reach the state tournament for the second time and first since 1970. It was Waverly's first trip to the regional since 2012. Senior guard Trey Robertson (25 points, 7 rebounds, 6 assists) is a two-time Southeast District POY. Senior forward Will Futhey (15.5 points, 9 rebounds) was named second team All-Southeast District and senior guard Mark Stulley third team. Head coach Travis Robertson (15 years at the school) is the Southeast District COY. The Tigers were ranked No. 8 in the final AP Poll.

Division III

By Kurt Stubbs, Ohio HS Hoops

Columbus Africentric (23-5) returns to the Final 4 for the first time since finishing runner-up in 2018. This will be head coach Michael Bates' fourth trip to the state tournament since 2011. The Nubians are crossing items off their list starting with winning their first Columbus City League Championship since 2005 thanks to erasing a 17-point second half deficit behind 22 points from junior Dailyn Swain and 18 points from Toledo football commitment Dan Wagner. Africentric rides a 10-game winning streak into Dayton following a late January loss to Pickerington Central. Swain, a consensus Top 100 National recruit, has been spectacular in the tournament. The 6-foot-8 junior totaled 24 points and 11 rebounds in a battle of No. 1 vs. No. 2 in the Central District knocking off the 2-seed Columbus Bishop Ready (56-53). Swain continued with 16 points and 10 boards in a wire-to-wire regional win over Fairland. The talented junior saved his best for the regional final totaling 30 points in a state-clinching triumph of Garaway. The Nubians will try to become the first Columbus City League team to cut down the nets since Columbus Northland in 2009.

Ottawa-Glandorf (24-2) is making a return to Dayton following last year's hard-fought state semifinal loss to Lutheran East, the eventual state champion. Head coach Tyson McGlaughlin is looking for his second title, while the Titans are hoping to secure their fourth overall in nine trips. The Titans returned to the top of the vaunted Western Buckeye League after a two-year reign from Lima Shawnee. O-G's two setbacks both came to Division I teams in Findlay and Lima Senior. The Titans, who are winners of 15 consecutive games, beat a 22-win Haviland Wayne Trace squad in the district final. Super sophomore Colin White led O-G with 19 points and 6 boards in the win, while Carter Schimmoeller added 12 points on four three-pointers along with holding talented sophomore Brooks Laukhuf to just 12 points. Junior Theo Maag chipped in 11 points. The Putnam County school's toughest tournament test to date came against a physical Eastwood team the Titans beat in the regular season. This time around O-G would be pushed to the limit before the WBL POY (White) cashed in some clutch free-throws down the stretch en route to 19 points and 11 rebounds. Caleb Kuhlman was also clutch in the 61-56 triumph, cashing in 13 points with 11 coming in the final half and Eli Schmenk nailed four bonus goals. The Titans had one more large test in the form of undefeated Colonel Crawford. O-G got 11 points off the bench from sophomore Caden Erford in the final four minutes of the 1st half allowing McGlaughlin's team to take a commanding 28-13 lead into half inside the Stroh Center. Colonel Crawford, a team that erased a 16-point fourth quarter deficit in its district final, found itself down by just three points with 5:35 to play in the game. White would then take over scoring 11-consecutive points after being held scoreless in the 3rd. He finished with 22 points on 8-of-14 shooting adding eight rebounds and four assists.

Lutheran East (16-9) will be playing in its fifth straight OHSAA Final Four after beating upstart Youngstown Mooney in the Region 9 Championship. "The Lue" was able to win its second title since 2017 fending off an excellent Worthington Christian team in last March's D3 title game. The Falcons return just 2 points off last year's team that scored 119 total points in their two state tournament games, so this is mainly a new cast of characters with the exception of Jordan Cannon. Coach Sam Liggins was able to reload with the likes of seniors Jamail Spivey Jr (Cornerstone Christian transfer) and Trayshon Tucker, juniors Cody Head (Shaker Heights transfer), Nelson Johnson (University School transfer) and Devin Belle (Orange transfer), and sophomores Kaleb Burge, Chauncey Brashers, and Jesse McCullough, one of the state's top prospects in the Class of 2024. Lutheran East used a 15-0 run in the 2nd half against Youngstown Mooney helping the Falcons advance to another Final 4. LE's defense held the Cardinals scoreless for more than five minutes in the 4th quarter. Spivey and Burge paced the winners with 11 points apiece. Before the Falcons dispatched Mooney, the Cleveland Heights-based

school knocked off top-seeded Norwayne behind 23 points from Belle and 17 by Head. “The Lue” and Norwayne were tied at half, but the Falcons were able to outscore the Bobcats 33-20 in the 2nd half ending their 16-game winning streak in the process. Head (16) and Belle (14) combined for 30 points in a district final triumph of Smithville. Despite the recent results, the season hasn’t been without its challenges. Lutheran East lost 7-of-9 games from January 19th to February 11th including 5-straight at one point, but a win over a good Cleveland Rhodes team to end the regular season jumpstarted this run.

Cincinnati Taft (17-8) the Senators join Ottawa-Glandorf and Lutheran East as returnees from last year’s Division III Final 4. Following a loss to DII regional finalist Woodward, the Senators found themselves at (9-8) with just two games remaining in the regular season. Taft beat Withrow and Hughes to close out the regular season, which started its current streak of 8-straight victories. Coach Demarco Bradley Sr. and his team haven’t played a tournament game closer than 14 points. Senior Mehki Elmore, who missed the second half of last season, poured in 18 points in Taft’s regional final win over flaming-hot Georgetown, a team that knocked off top-seeded Versailles. DIII POY candidate Rayvon Griffith paced the Senators in scoring with a game-high 22 points and senior Brandon Cromer added 18. Griffith (15) and Elmore (13) combined for 28 points in a regional semifinal win over Mariemont, while freshman Kieran Granville-Britten tallied seven points and nine rebounds and junior Hudson Norton added eight points off the bench. Taft’s closest game of the tournament came in its district final triumph of Indian Lake, a team the Senators faced in the same game in 2021. The Cincinnati Metro Athletic Conference member fell behind by 10 points in the 1st period, but roared back behind Griffith’s 22 points and 6 rebounds and junior Eian Elmer’s 12 points and 12 boards. Taft, who coined this the “revenge tour,” following last year’s heart-breaking loss to Worthington Christian at the buzzer will finally get its long-awaited opportunity to play Lutheran East.

Division IV

By Kurt Stubbs, Ohio HS Hoops

Richmond Heights (23-4) returns to the state tournament for the 3rd time in as many years. The Spartans, a team riding an 18-game winning streak, fell in the semifinals in both previous appearances, losing to the eventual state champion in 2019 (Convoy Crestview) and 2021 (Botkins). The Chagrin Valley Conference member reached the Elite 8 in 2020, but was unable to play its game against Lucas due to the tournament shutting down. The Spartans return two key contributors from last year’s state semifinalist team in West Virginia University signee Josiah Harris and classmate Jaiden Cox-Holloway. Richmond Heights got 16 points and 12 rebounds from Harris in last season’s defeat to Botkins, but the Spartans were just 14-of-46 from the field. Along with the two returnees, Coach Quentin Rogers inherited two transfers from Cleveland Benedictine in London Maiden and Detric Hearst, who have paid huge dividends to the Spartans overall success. Richmond Heights also sports two of the top freshmen in the state with Dorian Jones and DeErick Barber. The Spartans arrive in Dayton with coveted regular victories over Division I regional participant Cleveland Heights and state semifinalist Lakewood St. Edward without Harris in the lineup. The lone setbacks came to Division I’s Fairfield, Uniontown Green, and Brush along with Division II favorite Akron SVSM. In the tournament, the Cuyahoga County school has won all five tournament games by at least 20 points including a 20-point win over a 1-loss Cornerstone Christian team and a Margarett outfit that had won 15-straight games. The Spartans placed four in double figures in the win over Margarett led by Harris with 19 points and Cox-Holloway (12), Maiden (11), and Jones (11) adding a combined 34. In the regional final, a win over Louisville St. Thomas Aquinas, Rogers’ team yet again placed four players in double figures. This time it was Cox-Holloway pacing the winners with 17 points followed by Maiden (12), Barber (11), and Harris (10).

Berlin Hiland (23-4) returns to the Final 4 for the third time since 2018 under head coach Mark Schlabach. The Hawks have dominated the Athens Regional since arriving in 2018 losing just one game, which happened to be in last season's regional final against Glenwood New Boston (44-39). The Holmes County school was set to play in the Elite 8 in 2020, but the season was canceled before the Hawks got a chance to play Grandview Heights. Schlabach, who owns two state championships, will be taking his eighth team to the state tournament including two trips with Loudonville in 2004 and 2005. The Hawks appear to be a team of destiny winning three overtime games along the tourney trail. Hiland trailed Tuscarawas Central Catholic (49-42) with three minutes to play in its sectional final, but found a way to force overtime and advance. The Hawks found themselves in a very similar situation in the next game trailing Monroe Central 15-2 to start the game, but clawed their way back and found a way in OT yet again. After defeating rival Malvern in the district final, Hiland was again forced to play extra basketball. Hiland sophomore Sammy Detweiler hit a game-knotting triple in regulation to send its game with Newark Catholic into OT. Then, Dylan Weaver had to hit a three-pointer to force a second OT where the senior would drill another bonus goal to propel Hiland into the regional final (63-62). The Hawks were challenged by Latham Western in the following game, but didn't need OT thanks in large part to senior Chris Shetler's 17 points, 8 rebounds, and 5 assists.

Tri-Village (25-3) returns to the Final 4 for the first time since capturing the 2015 state championship with a spotless (30-0) mark. Head coach Josh Sagester returned to the Tri-Village bench prior to the 2020-2021 season and the Patriots are (51-4) since with a district crown in 2021 and now another regional title. Prior to stepping down, Sagester and the Patriots had a 4-year run of (102-7) from 2011-2015 culminating with a state gold. This team, top-to-bottom, may have more talent than the undefeated team, but does it have that same cohesion is the question that will be answered this weekend. The Western Ohio Athletic Conference member enters Dayton with 15-straight wins dating back to its last loss, a double overtime thriller with Botkins at the Flyin' to the Hoop. The Patriots additional setbacks came in their opener to Division I Mason and a buzzer-beater to Proctorville Fairland in which Tri-Village made a nearly 200-mile drive to participate in the Ironton Classic. In the 15-game span, the Patriots closest game was a 17-point win over Hamilton Badin prior to their revenge win over the defending state champion Botkins in the regional final. Senior Layne Sarver was outstanding in Tri-Village's regional semifinal victory over East Knox totaling 32 points on 13-of-22 shooting. Classmate Josh Scantland added 13 points and 11 rebounds. Sarver, an All-Ohio quarterback and state high jump champion, was sensational when it mattered most, tallying 20 points in the win over Botkins, while junior Justin Finkbine contributed 10. Tri-Village was outstanding on defense holding the Trojans to roughly 16 percent shooting in the 1st half and 27.7 percent for the game. Coach Sagester's team has been outstanding on the defensive end all year giving up just under 40 points per game in 28 contests, while permitting just 31.5 points per game in six tourney contests.

Antwerp (26-1) will make its first state tournament appearance in school history when it arrives in Dayton this weekend. The Archers arrive in the 937 with just a single loss, which came on the road to rival Wayne Trace (54-50). The Archers, under head coach Doug Billman, have climbed the ladder of success through great perseverance. Antwerp lost in back-to-back regional semifinal games falling to Columbus Grove in 2020 and a red-hot New Bremen team in overtime a year ago. In all, the Green Meadows Conference member is (74-4) over the past three seasons. A big reason for the Archers success is senior Jagger Landers, the University of Findlay signee. Coach Billman needed his catalyst to be just that against previously unbeaten Tiffin Calvert in the Region 14 Final and the 6-foot-7 POY candidate was just that, scoring 22 points and grabbing 17 rebounds which was five more than Calvert's team total. Sophomore Landon Brewer added 12 points and 6 rebounds. In its regional semifinal tilt, Antwerp faced a team in Marion Local riding a 10-game winning streak and owners of 22 wins. The

Archers' defense held the Flyers to just 23 points including only a deuce in the final frame. Landers was held to just five points but grabbed 10 rebounds, while Brewer paced the winners with 14 points and pulled down eight strays. Landers totaled 23 points, six rebounds, and three blocks in Antwerp's third-straight district championship game. Bowling Green baseball commitment Luke Krouse added 16 points in the district final win over Ayersville. In all, the Paulding County school has given up north of 40 points just four times all year. In five tournament games, the Archers' stingy defense is allowing just 27.6 points per game.