

The road to Normal anything but ordinary

by Lynley Evans and Martin Oppegaard

On March 7, New Trier girls basketball finished its historic season by beating Homewood-Flossmoor in the Class 4A third-place game. The victory was a fitting end for a team that went undefeated in CSL conference play, and, with a 31-2 record, concluded the season with the best record in school history. It was their first trophy since finishing second in 2004. But the path they took to get downstate was lengthy, and was much more than an individual effort. Head coach Teri Rodgers summed it up. “One of the things that is unique about our program is we have 20 kids in our program and nine seniors. How do you keep all those kids happy is one of the questions I get. This team, no matter what, is supportive and trusting of each other. These girls take care of each other. No matter what a person’s role is, they are just as important. It really takes great senior leadership to make everybody feel important and valued. That’s what I’m most proud of.”

Reginal Finals vs. Taft

Score: 65-29 (New Trier)

The Trevians entered this regional championship against No. 10 seed Taft as a heavy favorite. The reigning back-to-back Central Suburban League South champions added a third consecutive regional triumph to their resume by cruising to a 65-29 victory, a result of their swarming full-court pressure and lockdown half-court defense.

Junior Autumn Kalis received the start and hit a big buzzer beater three to end the half. “Before every playoff game, we journal on a piece of paper and I always give myself little pep talks,” she said. “I think doing that helped me give myself more confidence and help me have a positive attitude no matter what happened during the game,”



Sectional Finals vs. Evanston

Score: 41-39 (New Trier)

When the Trevians missed three consecutive front ends of one-and-the bonus foul shots with under a minute remaining against No. 3 seed Evanston, it appeared the door was open for the Wildkits to pull off the upset after losing big to New Trier twice in conference play this season. But New Trier’s defense forced a difficult Wildkits three-point attempt out of the corner as time expired, and the Trevians held on 41-39 to win the sectional championship.

State Semifinals vs. Fremd

Score: 57-28 (Fremd)

After the Trevians began with a 4-3 lead in the first three minutes and thirty-eight seconds of the game, Fremd star and Duke commit Haley Gorecki scored two straight baskets, starting a torrid run that lead the Vikings to a 57-28 win over New Trier.

Senior Alana Bercu said, “Honestly, Friday night was tough but Saturday morning at practice we came together as a team and realized that we had another opportunity to play our best that night and end our season on a high note.”



State Finals vs. Homewood-Flossmoor (For third place)

Just one day after being held scoreless in a disappointing semifinal loss to Fremd, junior Jeannie Boehm showed her resilience with a dominant performance in New Trier’s 43-41 victory over Homewood-Flossmoor in the Class 4A third-place game. She contributed a game high 22 points, tallying 13 rebounds and five blocks in the process.

“I owed it to my teammates that no matter how many points that I scored that I was going to play really hard and leave here with a bang for my team and our seniors,” said Boehm.

The third-place game was not off to a promising start as the Vikings jumped off to an 8-2 lead. However, New Trier has had no problem overcoming early deficits all season.

“I was confident with my teammates that their strong lead would make us want to work harder,” said senior Kate Klein. “We were down during the first quarter against Geneva in our super sectional game too, but we still managed to pull ahead and show both teams [Geneva and Homewood-Flossmoor] who we really are.”

In a game where the lead changed hands nine times, New Trier was finally able to pull ahead for good late in the third quarter, clinging to a two point lead for most of the fourth, thanks to Boehm’s hot hand and a suffocating defense. Junior Kathryn Pedi scored eight points for Winnetka, while senior Rachel West added six.

Playing a big role in the Trevians’ victory was their defense. They blocked eleven shots and picked up eleven steals, and senior Jackie Welch locked down Duke-bound senior Faith Suggs to nine points.

“I wasn’t going to go out any other way,” said Welch. “We didn’t come to state to get fourth. It’s really weird having this be my last game ever in my basketball career, but I wouldn’t have wanted it with any other team. I can say that for all the seniors. This is like my family and we’re going to remember this team forever.”

Fellow senior Kate Conaghan echoed her teammate’s thoughts about their final game.

“This game was sentimental,” Conaghan said. “It’s such a long season and everyone becomes so close, it’s hard when it’s over.. But it is great going out like this.”

Reginal Semifinals vs. Mather

Score: 58- 6 (New Trier)

Coming off a CSL championship and an undefeated conference record, the Trevians, given the No. 1 seed in the region, were riding high into a matchup against No. 17 seed Mather. The Trevians overwhelmed Mather 58-6, with nearly the entire team contributing in the win.



Sectional Semifinals vs. Maine South

Score: 60-40 (New Trier)

Whether the Trevians were scoring inside the paint, hitting from beyond the arc or playing excellent defense, they played nearly flawless in every facet of the game in defeating No. 5 seed Maine South 60-40 for the third time this season. The Trevians moved to 28-1 on the season and advanced to the sectional championship.

Senior Jackie Welch contributed 10 points and helped lockdown the Hawks offense. “Defense is what I try to add to my team,” she said. “My energy on defense was really a focus during that game so it translated into my offensive game too.”

Super-Sectionals vs. Geneva

Score: 57-49 New Trier

Geneva took control of this supersectional matchup early on, but the Trevians’ All-Central Suburban League South junior point guard Haley Greer helped New Trier find the identity that had gotten them to the state quarterfinals. She finished with 18 points, three rebounds, eight assists and four steals to help New Trier punch their ticket downstate to Bloomington for the first time since 2007 in a 57-49 win over Geneva.

Greer said, “We knew Geneva was a very good team and coming into the game we all knew that we would have to play our hardest if we wanted to downstate. The atmosphere was honestly so surreal. For a lot of the girls, they knew what a super-sectional game felt like, but I have never been so nervous in my life and had no idea what to expect going into that game.”

