

Indiana High School Athletic Association

9150 North Meridian Street, Box 40650, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240-0650

Phone: 317-846-6601 | Fax: 317-575-4244 | Website: www.ihsaa.org

Blake Ress, Commissioner

March 25, 2006

LAWRENCE NORTH JOINS ELITE GROUP WITH VICTORY

A sellout crowd of 18,345 at Conseco Fieldhouse witnessed Indiana high school basketball history tonight as Lawrence North became only the third team to ever win three consecutive state titles in boys basketball defeating Muncie Central, 80-56. The game was a rematch of last year's final contest, the first time that has occurred since 1928 (the Class 2A game was also a rematch).

The top-ranked Wildcats raced to an early lead and never looked back. Senior Mike Conley scored 11 points in the opening quarter as Lawrence North built the lead to 17 and finished the night with 21 points and 6 rebounds. Fellow senior Greg Oden led all scorers with 26 points on 11 of 17 shooting from the field and pulled down 11 rebounds. Oden was the recipient of the Naismith Award earlier in the week, which is given to the top high school player in the country. The duo has won 103 games in their Lawrence North careers. Juniors Damian Windham and Qadr Owen added 10 points each. Lawrence North out-rebounded the Bearcats 40-25.

With the victory, Lawrence North won its 45th straight game tying Indianapolis Crispus Attucks' state record streak spanning the 1954-55 and 1955-56 seasons. The Wildcats' last loss came in January of 2005. They now join Franklin (1920-22) and Marion (1985-87) as the only teams to win three consecutive state championships. The team also became the 10th team in state history to finish undefeated (29-0).

Muncie Central was making its record 15th appearance in the title game finishing as a runner-up for the seventh time. The Bearcats, coached by Matt Fine, finished the season at 20-6. Fine has only been at the helm for two varsity seasons, both of which culminated with appearances in the title game. The Bearcats, who graduated all five starters from last year's runner-up squad, were led by juniors Ben Botts and Tom Freeman with 22 points and 12 points, respectively. Senior Terry Jenkins added 11.

With his fourth state title, Lawrence North coach Jack Keefer joins Bill Green (6), Marion Crawley (4), Glenn Curtis (4) and Everett Case (4) as the only coaches to win four or more state titles. Keefer has been the coach at Lawrence North for 30 years, the only coach in the school's history.

Class 4A championship game records were set by Lawrence North for points scored in a game (80), in a half (50) and a quarter (26 in the 2nd). The Wildcats are also the top ranked team in the country according to the *USA Today*.

LAWRENCE NORTH'S GREG ODEN WINS TRESTER AWARD

Lawrence North senior center Greg Oden is the 2005-06 Boys Basketball Class 4A recipient of the Arthur L. Trestler Mental Attitude Award as selected by members of the IHSAA Board of Directors.

Oden is the 2006 Naismith Award winner as the best high school player in the nation after leading coach Jack Keefer's team to its third consecutive state championship and 45 straight wins. The two-time National Player of the Year helped the Wildcats to a perfect 29-0 season and they should become the first team from the state to be ranked first nationally.

In the classroom, Oden has a 3.62 cumulative grade point average.

"Greg is simply the best student leader we have in our building," said Lawrence North principal Lynn L. Lupold. "The commitment to excellence that Greg demonstrates on the court is mirrored in the classroom. Greg is consistently an ambassador for our school, our state, and our country."

The recipient, nominated by his principals and coaches, must excel in mental attitude, scholarship, leadership, and athletic ability in boys basketball.

The award is named in honor of Trester, the IHSAA's first commissioner who served from 1929-44.

Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance, IHSAA corporate partner, presented a \$1,000 check to Lawrence North High School in the name of Greg Oden.

Oden, the son of Zoe Oden, plans to attend Ohio State University next fall.

VSN MEANS ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY

Visit our friends at Visual Sports Network, the IHSAA's official photographer for all state championship events and one of the leading action photographers in the Midwest. VSN, which was on site on Saturday, has captured hundreds of images from this year's State Finals and will have them ready for viewing and purchase beginning Monday.

CHAMPIONSHIP MERCHANDISE STILL AVAILABLE

For t-shirts and other merchandise commemorating this year's tournament or for any of our events, visit our friends at Morris, Inc.

STATE FINALS PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Couldn't be there for the state finals? You can still purchase a copy of the official souvenir program while supplies last! Programs are \$3.00 if you purchase in person at the IHSAA Office (9150 N. Meridian Street in Indianapolis) or \$5.00 by mail (postage included). To order, have your Visa or MasterCard ready and call us at 317-846-6601 during business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. EST).

POST-GAME QUOTES

Jack Keefer, Lawrence North Coach

"I really just thought we would kind of stumble somewhere along the way. It is unbelievable that these kids can come out here and play a game that well. The last three times we have won the state these kids have played a first half that has been unbelievable. I think these guys have tremendous inner strength. It starts with Mike Conley and goes through Greg (Oden) and goes into each one around them."

"You saw the patience of our kids tonight. They had jump shot after jump shot but refused to shoot it knowing that we were going to work it into Greg who is shooting 80% from the field. That is unselfishness passing the ball around the way we did."

“To me this is a great defensive team. I wanted them to play good defense so bad to show the fans what kind of defense team we really are. Our offense probably outshined our defense tonight, but I think our offense really came from our defensive intensity.”

“I can’t say we have played a bad game this year. I think every game we have played we have had moments where we didn’t compete, but as a group this team has competed every night out for 29 in a row.”

(On the three-peat of state championships)

“They have kept the target pretty simple. They have done a great job. For these guys to be remembered up there with Oscar and all the other three-peat teams—I don’t think that was our target. Our target was to win the state championship. We are just so overwhelmed that we will ultimately be remembered with the other great three-peat teams.”

“It has been a great run! We have good kids, good students and we are just very proud of them.”

Mike Conley, Lawrence North

“This year’s team was a defensive team and we had to pick up the scoring throughout the season. Everyone has their roles. We work to get the ball to Greg and let him get his points, which in turn helps us get our points.”

Greg Oden, Lawrence North

“It has been a great journey with all the seniors. We just had a lot of fun this year. I really think it is going to take some time before we get put in the ‘great’ category. Right now, we are just going to enjoy a state championship. Mike Conley said before the game that this was going to be our best game of the season. He put us on his back and we played a great first half.”

Matt Fine, Muncie Central Coach

“You’ve got to give Lawrence North credit. They did what champions do tonight. They came out ready to play and on a mission. I don’t think if we played our best game of the century, we could’ve beaten them tonight.”

“They hit a great percentage of their shots and were tenacious on the boards in getting loose balls. All the credit in the world goes to Lawrence North.”

“Our players never gave up. That’s the type of kids that we have here. I am proud of them. You’re disappointed in a loss, but I told our kids when we were on the bench that they have a lot to be proud of.”

“We have a lot of players who have been a lot of adversity to get back here. We have improved so much from the beginning to the end of the season.”

“It was really a dream to get back here to the state finals this year. It was because our players worked hard during the off season.”