

1999 SEMI-STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Saturday, March 6

**Undefeated New Albany,
Indianapolis Cathedral
join three other first-time
state finals qualifiers**

Three top-ranked teams won semi-state championship games Saturday night to advance to the 24th Annual IHSAA Girls Basketball State Finals March 13 at Market Square Arena in Indianapolis. Five of the eight finals teams will be making their first state finals appearance.

Undefeated New Albany led the way with a 66-61 double-overtime thriller over Connersville in the Class 4A Southport Semi-State championship. It will be the first state finals appearance for the Bulldogs. Their opponent will be No. 6-ranked Fort Wayne Snider, who came back from a 29-15 halftime deficit and a 10-point hole in the final two minutes to stun Kokomo 53-49 at the Warsaw Semi-State. It will be Fort Wayne Snider's first state finals trip since the Panthers won the state title in 1988.

New Albany senior guard Kennitra Johnson scored a career-high 47 points to lead the 25-0 Bulldogs past Connersville. It also was the highest scoring output by any girl in the 1999 state tournament. Johnson, a University of Connecticut recruit, hit five three-pointers and scored 13 points in the overtimes. Johnson's total was the most in an IHSAA tournament game since Feb. 1, 1995 when Haley Harris of Oakland City Wood Memorial scored 46 against North Posey in the opening round of the Gibson Southern Sectional.

Connersville senior guard April McDivitt closed her career with five three-pointers and 25 points. McDivitt has signed a basketball letter of intent with Tennessee.

Connersville led 17-11 after one quarter and 27-26 at halftime. New Albany held a 36-33 edge after three quarters and the game was tied at 48-48 as regulation ended. The first overtime concluded with the teams tied at 57.

Indianapolis Cathedral, top-ranked in Class 3A, also earned its first state finals appearance by downing Madison 77-63 at the Jasper Semi-State. Senior center Jennifer Callier, headed for Michigan State, paced the effort with 33 points and 14 rebounds. The Irish will meet No. 6-ranked NorthWood, which will be in the state finals for the second time in three years after topping Westfield 56-47. NorthWood reached the 1997 state finals in the final single-class tournament. The Panthers fell to Crown Point 58-42 in the semifinals.

In Class 2A, No. 1-ranked Fort Wayne Luers advanced to its first state finals by outlasting Eastern (Greentown) 46-44 to win the Maconaquah Semi-State. The Knights will meet another Austin, which won its second semi-state title and first since 1985. The Eagles earned their visit with a 53-49 triumph over Tri-West Hendricks at the Paoli Semi-State.

Clinton Prairie, which has captured the IHSAA Class A Volleyball state title the past two years, will be going to Market Square Arena in another sport after taking an 80-44 championship game decision from Kouts at the Triton Semi-State. It will be the first basketball state finals appearance for the No. 2-ranked Gophers, who are coached by Connie Garrett. She also is the school's volleyball coach. Clinton Prairie's opponent will be first-time state finalist New Washington, a 54-36 victor over Washington Catholic at the Loogootee Semi-State. New Washington was ranked sixth in the final 1999 Class A poll.

Senior Kourtney Mennen of Clinton Prairie, a standout on the school's volleyball championship squads and an Indiana State basketball recruit, scored 30 points in the 63-54 morning victory over Park Tudor and came back with 27 in the championship game with five seven three-pointers. The 58-point day moved Mennen's career total to 2,135 points. She passed 1985 Miss Basketball Jodie Whitaker of Austin (2,095 points) and into ninth place on the state's career list. Lisa Shepherd of Richmond, the 1997 Miss Basketball now playing at Penn State, holds eighth place with 2,140 points. The all-time leader is Stephanie White of Seeger. The 1995 Miss Basketball, now a senior All-American at Purdue, scored 2,869 points. Mennen also ranks ninth on the state's single-season scoring list with 727 points.

STATE FINALS PAIRINGS

Saturday, March 13

Market Square Arena, Indianapolis

Session I

Class A: 11 a.m. -- Clinton Prairie (24-2) vs. New Washington (22-4).

Class 2A: 1 p.m. (approximate) -- Fort Wayne Luers (26-1) vs. Austin (19-7).

Session II

Class 3A: 6:30 p.m. -- NorthWood (23-3) vs. Indianapolis Cathedral (27-0).

Class 4A: 8:30 p.m. (approximate) -- Fort Wayne Snider (26-1) vs. New Albany (25-0).

Ticket Information

One-session ticket (two games): \$8.

Two-session (four games): \$15.

Tickets will go on sale at each participating school on Tuesday. Contact participating schools for ticket distribution hours. Tickets also will be on sale beginning Monday at Market Square Arena.