

Winchester Invitational Tournament Chatter-Day 1-January 7, 2017-WIT-Day 1

We are seeing a rarity here today. Liberty has gone from the top ranked team a year ago, and the defending champion, to the team rated at the bottom, 16th this year. I'm not sure that's ever happened before. At the other end of the extreme, Pleasant Hill went from the 12th team last year to number 4 this year, and Triopia jumped from 14 last year to number 5 this year.

Payson has an interesting challenge this year. Payson hasn't lost a first round game since joining the tournament in 2008. Payson was rated 12th in 2008, but upset number 4 West Central in the first round. Payson is rated 9th this year, and opens the tournament against top rated Porta/AC at 9 this morning.

The Porta-Payson game this year is a re-match of the semi-final game last year won by Payson 56-41. The North Greene-Camp Point game this year is a re-match of the consolation 2nd round game last year won by North Greene 47-26. No other first round games are re-matches of any game last year.

Carrollton is on a roll that West Central will be challenged to stop. Carrollton has not lost first round games in consecutive years since the 1974 and 75 tournaments. The Hawks were upset by number 12 Pleasant Hill a year ago 53-43. Carrollton was favored to meet West Central in the second round a year ago. And, Carrollton has beaten West Central in all four match ups between the two teams in the tournament including the 2099 title game and the 2010 semi-finals.

Routt and Liberty last played in the 2012 title game won by the Rockets 47-37. Liberty has not lost in the first round since 2009 when the Eagles lost to eventual runner up West Central. Liberty is the returning champion. Payson finished 2nd, Porta/AC 3rd, and West Central 4th. Carrollton won the consolation title, and Brown County the 5th place game.

That Brown County/Greenfield/NW game a year ago produced just 52 points for 5th place. Brown County won 33-19. That was the lowest point total for any tournament game since Winchester and Pittsfield combined for 35 points in the 1945 title game won by the Wildcats 18-17.

Western has lost five in a row at Winchester dating back to the consolation semi-finals in 2014. Triopia has lost eight in a row, dating back to the fifth place bracket in 2013. And, Pleasant Hill has not won first round games in consecutive years since 1999 and 2000.

Porta, or Porta/AC is trying to accomplish a feat the Bluejays have done twice previously. That is, win the tournament as the top rated seed. Porta did it in 2008, after finishing second the previous year as the 3rd rated team. And, Porta/AC won the title two years ago as the top seeded team. By the way, Porta/AC has lost just two games in the tournament. If you combined Porta/AC and Porta's records, the overall record is 34-18

We've noticed a slight uptick in scoring in games in the area. We hope this continues in the WIT. The last time a team scored 80 or more in a tourney game occurred in 2014, when Calhoun hit 82 in a win over Routt. Waverly hit 83 in a win over ISD in 2011. Crank up the offenses!

Max Muller of Porta/AC, and Jacob Hurrelbrink of West Central are the only two returning players from last year's Winchester Invitational Tournament all tourney team.

One More Liberty note. Last year marked the 9th time that a team playing in the Winchester Invitational Tournament placed at the state tournament. Liberty finished third last year in the Class 1A tournament. Liberty also had a fourth place finish at state in 2005. Other teams that have placed at the state tournament AND played at Winchester include West Central, Carrollton, Porta/AC, Athens, Griggsville and Athens. No team has ever won the state title after playing in the WIT.

Porta AC hopes a trend continues this tournament. The top seeds have won the last two tournament titles. Porta/AC won it in 2015, and Liberty claimed it last year.

Three wins in the tournament this year, and West Central head coach Jeff Abell would tie former Beardstown head coach Bob Hembrough for the 2nd most wins in the tournament. Abell has 40 wins. Hembrough had 43. Jeff Krumwiede leads all coaches with 61 wins, and 6 titles. That ties Hembrough, and former Winchester head coach Max Greer for most tourney titles.

Handing out all tourney ballots today. Keep a hold of them coaches, and get them back to WEAI, Abell or Denny Vortman by the third place game next Saturday. If you forget, you can text me your picks.