

WINCHESTER CHATTER.....ISSUE #1....Saturday January 11, 2020.....DAY 1.....ISSUE #1

Not sure if the Winchester Invitational Tournament field has ever included two unbeaten teams. West Central cruises into the tournament with a 15-0 record and the top seed in this year's tournament. Payson is seeded second, and match the Cougar 15 and 0 start. In addition three other teams have double digit wins...Calhoun, Liberty and Routt Catholic. And, it is the third straight year at least one unbeaten team is in the field of the WIT. West Central failed to win the tournament two years ago, and Triopia failed last year.

Lest we forget, last year's tournament ran into the usual weather delays. The tournament took 13 days to finish, thanks to Mother Nature. The 3rd place game was played the Wednesday after the scheduled final day, and West Central gave Triopia its first loss of the season in the title game the following night. Final standings last year, West Central 1st, Triopia 2nd, Porta/AC 3rd, and Payson 4th. Routt won the fifth place game, and Brown County the consolation title game.

Returnees from last year's all-tournament team include Cole Howard and Gabe Cox of West Central, Mason Muller of Porta/AC, Kyle Colgrove of Western, and Nathan Hendricker of Brown County.

Triopia became the 25th team to play in the WIT, and make it to the boys' state tournament later in the year. Triopia finished 4th a year ago in the Class 1A state tourney in 2019. Triopia was the 9th team to place at the state tourney, and play in the WIT. And, a tip of the hat to Carrollton, which picked up tournament win number 150 last year, to lead all schools in all time wins at the tournament.

Triopia played in game one a year ago, but as the top seeded team. The Trojans return to that first game this year, but as an underdog to West Central. Payson and Camp Point play in the same time slots as a year ago. Camp Point plays as an underdog to Routt in the 1:30 game, while Payson is the favorite in the 5th game against North Greene.

Rushville-Industry left the field for this year's tournament. Due to a bit of miscommunication, the West Central JV squad was added late. The JV team is 0 and 10 in tournament play history. Next year, Carlinville and former South County coach Dave Suits joins the field.

In last year's program, Kent Coultas listed the all-tournament teams from 1984 to 2017. That got me to thinking, how many of those selections also coached in the tournament. I have come up with six people. Feel free to correct, add names, or make any changes. But, here's what I got...Mark Cox of Winchester, Brian Dour of Beardstown, Brian Rhoades of North Greene, Eric Jones of Rushville, Jeff Abel of Bluffs, and Curtis Stout of Payson. Cox returned as head coach of Porta, Dour with Triopia, Rhoades with Camp Point, Jones this year with Rushville Industry, Abell with West Central, and Stout with Western. I do not have the all-tournament teams before 1984, but I know of at least 2 or 3 who have done the same thing, including my brother in law, Leo Anslyn.

West Central and Payson are trying to do something that only five other schools have done, win the WIT with an unblemished record. Barry-West Pike last did it in 2006. North Greene has done it twice, Bluffs once, and Winchester one. But, never, so far, for West Central and Payson.

West Central is trying to avoid losing as a number one seed for the third time. The Cougars fell to Brown County in 2012 61-48, and West Central lost to Western in the first round two years ago to Western 65-53.

Porta/AC and Greenfield-Northwestern are saying, no, not again. The two schools are meeting in the first round for the third straight year. The Bluejays beat GNW 57-45 two years ago, and 58-43 last year.

West Central comes into the tournament as the top rated Class 1A team in the state, and Payson is 6th. Calhoun received votes, but not enough to crack the top ten. North Greene was the first in 1992, and Payson was the second in 2014.

Please get the all tournament ballots in BEFORE the 3rd place game Saturday afternoon. The plaques will be distributed after the championship game. E mail me at gscott@wlds.com, or text them to me at 217-370-9058. The easiest way is to turn them in to tournament officials Denny Vortman, Grant Dewitt or to WEAI.