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SPORTS

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SECTION **B**

10th ANNIVERSARY OF CENTER GROVE'S GIRLS BASKETBALL STATE TITLE



From left, the scene at Market Square Arena in Indianapolis during the 1996 IHSAA girls basketball state finals; Center Grove coach Joe Lentz encourages Emily Butler during the championship game; the MSA scoreboard says it all.

FILE PHOTOS

That championship season

Members of Center Grove High School's 1996 girls basketball state championship team were honored during the Trojans' home game against Rushville on Jan. 7.

Pictured are, front row from left, Adrienne (Allen) Diaz, Emily Butler, Venus (Harmeyer) Thorne, Lindsay Poe, and Jenny Martin; and back row from left, Lisa Eckart, April (Barnhorst) Robinson, Margo (Atkerson) Seastrom, Kristina Mills, Liz Stansberry, Natalie Johnson-Wise, Jenny (Peters) Williams (who was a JV player that season) and assistant coach Deb McClurg.



STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/sroberson@thejournalnet.com

ROAD TO THE TITLE

Postseason results for the 1995-96 Center Grove High School girls basketball team:

INDIAN CREEK SECTIONAL

First round
Center Grove 99, Edinburgh 13
Semifinal
Center Grove 74, Franklin 33
Championship
Center Grove 71, Greenwood 41

GREENFIELD-CENTRAL REGIONAL

Semifinal
Center Grove 82, Rushville 65
Championship
Center Grove 60, Connersville 52

SOUTHPORT SEMI-STATE

Semifinal
Center Grove 87, Ben Davis 65
Championship
Center Grove 68, Noblesville 53

FINAL FOUR

At Market Square Arena
Semifinal
Center Grove 72, Kokomo 47
Championship
Center Grove 55, Valparaiso 44

Ten years ago, Center Grove girls dominated single-class tourney

STORY BY RICK MORWICK

The initial objective was ambitious but not outrageous. But as the win total climbed, so did the expectations.

Instead of gunning for an unprecedented regional title, the 1995-96 Center Grove High School girls basketball team decided to shoot for the top.

By season's end, the Trojans not only exceeded expectations, but they did so beyond their wildest imagination.

Center Grove not only won the IHSAA state championship; it also staked a claim for being one of the best girls teams in state history.

Tournament games weren't close. Three players would become Indiana All-Stars. Five would earn Division I scholarships. And all were good enough to start on nearly any other team in the state.

Yet a decade ago, the Trojans, who this year celebrate the 10th anniversary of the school's first and only state basketball championship, entered the season with what today seems like a

diminutive goal for an unstoppable giant: Just get to the semistate.

"The only thing I wanted to do that year was win the regional," said Jenny Martin, the leading scorer on an incredibly balanced team. "And then once we got past that, we started to realize what we had once we did win that regional."

Venus (Harmeyer) Thorne remembers it the same way.

"Definitely, the big hump was getting over regionals and getting that confidence built up," said Thorne, the team's starting point guard. "That was kind of always our goal."

That's because it was always elusive. Winning sectionals were no problem.

The Trojans dominated the local tournament from the late 1980s through the mid-1990s. They won seven in a row heading into the 1995-96 season.

But that's where the postseason always ended. A couple of immovable state powers stood in the way.

"It seems like our regional every year

was really tough with Rushville and Connersville," said Lisa Eckart, a starting power forward. "They were always good competition."

Although players fixated on the regional, coach Joe Lentz contemplated something else.

Heading into his second season as head coach, he knew he had a special team. Martin, Thorne and guard Liz Stansberry were juniors with All-Star-caliber talent. Eckart was a sophomore with the same ability. And freshman guard Emily Butler, the other starter, was a fiery competitor who would go on to make history.

But that wasn't all.

Center Grove also had a deep bench stocked with unselfish players. Margo (Atkerson) Seastrom and Pam Eckart were the only seniors and were invaluable leaders. Junior Natalie (Johnson) Wise was a dangerous 3-point shooter

(SEE SEASON, PAGE B3)



Center Grove celebrates its 55-44 victory against Valparaiso in the 1996 IHSAA state championship game at Market Square Arena in Indianapolis. The Trojans, winners of a single-class tournament, are the most recent Johnson County team to win a state championship in basketball.

Mid-State champs

Woodmen secure conference title

By JOHN GROTH
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER
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WOODMEN	65
GRIZZLY CUBS	53

INSIDE

Indian Creek falls to North Decatur in Mid-Hoosier Conference game.

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That is, until now.

Three seniors scored in double figures to power Greenwood to a 65-53 win Thursday night at county and conference rival Franklin.

With the victory, the Woodmen (13-4, 4-0) secured sole possession of the conference title. They have no conference games remaining. Every other Mid-State team has at least one loss.

Senior Evan Checkey led the way offensively with a game-high 20 points. Senior teammate John Pfifer had 14, and senior Matt Allee added 11 points and 12 rebounds.

"We emphasized that the con-

ference was in our hands all week," Hensley said. "We didn't want to have to worry or need someone to help us. To finish undefeated in the conference is kind of a feather in our cap."

"It's a nice reward for these kids' hard work."

The Woodmen were co-champions in 1994 and finished in a five-way tie for first in 2001.

And now they're now on a five-game winning streak. But keeping it alive wasn't easy.

Franklin, which trailed by

(SEE CHAMPS, PAGE B2)



Franklin Community High School junior Adrian Moss, right, shoots over Greenwood senior John Pfifer during Thursday's game at Franklin.

Trojans put clamps on Warriors in big victory

By GREG DODDRIDGE
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

TROJANS	84
WARRIORS	41

Joey Clawson has been guarding the Center Grove High School boys basketball team's starters in practice the whole season.

Guarding good players has given him a chance to improve his defensive skills, so much so that Center Grove coach Cliff Hawkins gave Clawson, usually a reserve, the start on Thursday night against Whiteland.

Led by Clawson, Center Grove used its defensive skills to dominate Whiteland, scoring an 84-41 victory in the old West Gym at Center Grove.



Center Grove senior Joey Clawson played a key role on defense in Thursday's win against visiting Whiteland.

The win snaps the Trojans' three-game losing streak and ends Whiteland's four-game winning streak.

"Clawson has worked hard," Hawkins said. "We feel like he has been working every day. And he got double figures."

The 6-foot-4 Clawson scored 11 points and grabbed four rebounds. Todd Price and Tyler Kitchel had 20 points each, while senior Eric Hazelbaker came off the bench to contribute 10 points.

"Coach has always told me to focus on my defense, rebounding and running the floor, and the rest of the game will just come to me," Clawson said. "We wanted to focus on shutting down some of (Whiteland's) better scorers."

Clawson and junior Mitch

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