

- BUSINESS, B4
- HEALTH, B5
- COMICS, B6
- CLASSIFIEDS, B7-B9
- FACES & PLACES, B10

SPORTS

www.thejournalnet.com

SECTION B

GIRLS BASKETBALL: IHSAA SECTIONALS

CG, Whiteland among favorites



Center Grove High School sophomore guard Jordan Price lies on the floor as she fights for the ball during the Johnson County Girls Basketball Tournament

championship game against Whiteland on Nov. 19. The Trojans enter this week's sectional round of the state tournament with a 17-3 record.

TEAMS AT A GLANCE

A look at the teams in IHSAA girls basketball sectionals that include Johnson County schools:

CLASS 4A At Greenwood Center Grove

Nickname: Trojans
Location: Greenwood
Enrollment: 2,260
School colors: Red and white

Conference: Metropolitan Interscholastic
Coach: Joe Lentz
Record: 17-3
Offensive average: 60
Defensive average: 47.5

Sagarin rating: 3 of 388 teams
Notes: Eighth-ranked Trojans concluded regular season by earning a share of the MIC championship. They are looking for their first sectional title since 2001.

Quotes: "I really like our draw, especially after the teams we ended the season playing," coach Joe Lentz said. "That helps prepare us for the sectional. (The draw) gives us time to get some rest and to practice. We know that whoever we play is going to be a good team, and everyone is going to be prepared."

Decatur Central

Nickname: Hawks
Location: Indianapolis
Enrollment: 1,625
School colors: Blue and gold
Conference: Conference Indiana
Coach: David Cupp
Record: 5-14
Offensive average: 46.4
Defensive average: 57.2
Sagarin rating: 51 of 388 teams

Franklin

Nickname: Grizzly Cubs
Location: Franklin
Enrollment: 1,338
School colors: Blue and white
Conference: Mid-State

Coach: Walt Raines
Record: 9-12
Offensive average: 39.1
Defensive average: 41.3
Sagarin rating: 89 of 288 teams
Notes: Grizzly Cubs enter the post-

season on a six-game losing streak. They have lost seven of their past eight overall but open the sectional against an opponent (Southport) that has won only two of its past 12 games.

Quotes: "I think it's wide open," coach Walt Raines said. "I think Center Grove's obviously got to be the favorite, but all six teams at one time or another have beaten someone who has beaten someone who has beaten someone. Even though Center Grove's the favorite, nobody's a shoo-in."

Franklin Central

Nickname: Flashes
Location: Indianapolis
Enrollment: 2,070
School colors: Blue and white
Conference: Conference Indiana
Coach: Pam Taylor
Record: 15-7
Offensive average: 55
Defensive average: 47.3
Sagarin rating: 21 of 388 teams

Greenwood

Nickname: Woodmen
Location: Greenwood
Enrollment: 1,177

School colors: Green and gold
Conference: Mid-State
Coach: Debbie Guckenberger
Record: 11-9
Offensive average: 50.1
Defensive average: 49.5
Sagarin rating: 97 of 388 teams

Notes: The Woodmen have a winning record for the first time since the 1996-97 season. They are bidding for their first sectional championship.

Quote: "At this point, I feel like we're at the stage where we're beating the teams we should be beating," coach Debbie Guckenberger said. "We're wanting to get to that next level where we're beating teams that are favored."

Perry Meridian

Nickname: Falcons

(SEE TEAMS, PAGE B3)

Warriors going for first sectional championship

By RICK MORWICK

DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS EDITOR
rmorwick@thejournalnet.com

They have identical records, are both state ranked and have front-runner status in their respective sectional fields. They also have first-round byes.

But that's where the similarities end between the Center Grove and Whiteland girls basketball teams.

A long-time area power, Class 4A No. 5 Center Grove is no stranger to postseason success. The Trojans (17-3) have won 15 sectional titles, three regionals,

one semistate and one state championship.

By comparison, Class 3A No. 8 Whiteland is a complete stranger to tournament glory. The Warriors (17-3) have never won a post-season championship of any kind and are eager to end the drought as sectional play begins tonight around the state.

Center Grove and Whiteland have first-round byes and share the same objective: To win and advance.

"Our team has a lot of confidence right now," said Whiteland senior Jessica Huffman, a four-year starter. "We're prepared. We

want to play. We want to win." So do the Trojans, who are bidding for their first sectional title since 2001.

Veteran coach Joe Lentz, who led the Trojans to the 1996 single-class state championship, likes their chances but hardly to the point of guaranteeing anything.

Ranked No. 3 in the Sagarin power ratings, Center Grove has consistently been one of state's top teams all season. But the seven-team Greenwood Sectional includes formidable obstacles in defending champion Franklin Central (15-7), traditional south-side power Perry Meridian (8-11),

resurgent Greenwood (11-9) and unpredictable Franklin (9-12).

That's why the co-Metropolitan Interscholastic Conference champion Trojans take nothing for granted. They play at 6 p.m. Friday against the winner of tonight's opener between Franklin and Southport (6-13).

"(Going) 17-3 through our schedule, you feel pretty good about that," Lentz said. "I feel good about what we can do, but there's plenty of things we can't rely on along the way."

"Franklin Central's a good

(SEE SECTIONAL, PAGE B3)

WHEN THEY PLAY

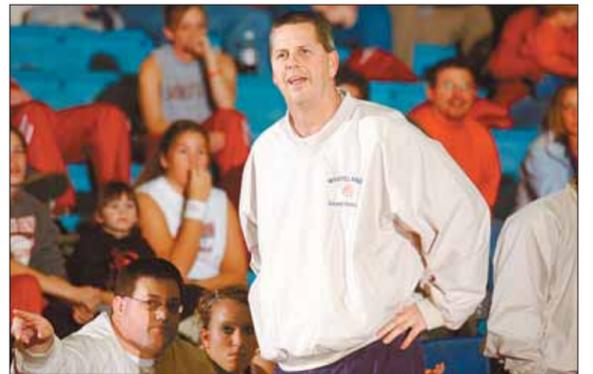
A look at the schedules for the IHSAA girls basketball sectionals that include Johnson County schools:

**Class 4A
At Greenwood
Tonight**
7 p.m. — Franklin vs. Southport
Wednesday
6 p.m. — Franklin Central vs. Decatur Central
7:30 p.m. — Greenwood vs. Perry Meridian
Friday
6 p.m. — Center Grove vs. Franklin/Southport winner
7:30 p.m. — Winners of Wednesday's games
Saturday
7:30 p.m. — Championship game

**Class 3A
At Beech Grove
Tonight**
6 p.m. — Washington vs. Roncalli
7:30 p.m. — Beech Grove vs. Howe
Friday
6 p.m. — Winners of tonight's games
7:30 p.m. — Chatard vs. Whiteland
Saturday
7:30 p.m. — Championship game

**Class 2A
At Triton Central
Tonight**
6 p.m. — Heritage Christian vs. Triton Central
7:30 p.m. — Indian Creek vs. Park Tudor
Friday
6 p.m. — Winners of tonight's games
7:30 p.m. — Speedway vs. Sececina
Saturday
7:30 p.m. — Championship game

**Class A
At Southwestern (Shelby)
Tonight**
7 p.m. — Hauser vs. Waldron
Friday
6 p.m. — Edinburg vs. Morristown
7:30 p.m. — Southwestern vs. Hauser/Waldron winner
Saturday
7:30 p.m. — Championship game



Whiteland Community High School girls basketball coach Bill Hogue reacts to a play during the Johnson County Girls Basketball Tourney championship game against Center Grove on Nov. 19. The Warriors are 17-3 this season.

Jimmie Johnson, shown during a stop in Concord, N.C., on the NASCAR media tour on Jan. 25, figures to be one of the drivers to beat for this year's NASCAR Nextel Cup championship. Johnson was fifth in the standings last year after placing second in 2004.



AP PHOTO

Johnson, crew chief have nothing to lose

By JENNA FRYER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLOTTE, N.C.

Shortly after Jimmie Johnson's second failed attempt to win the Nextel Cup championship, car owner Rick Hendrick summoned his driver and crew chief.

There was a rumor crew chief Chad Knaus wanted out. Word of his desire to leave popped up during the season finale, when Johnson still had a shot at the title. Despite denials from the Hendrick camp, the talk wouldn't go away.

Johnson and Knaus maintained they had no idea where these tales

of turmoil originated. By the time the meeting was over, Hendrick was satisfied all was well with his No. 48 team.

"Jimmie and I have never been more committed to each other, to the team and to winning a championship than we are right now," Knaus said.

That commitment should make Johnson the favorite to finally break through and claim his first NASCAR championship. He's come agonizingly close three times already, finishing second in the points in 2003 and 2004 and fifth last year.

(SEE LOSE, PAGE B3)

Road trip worth it for Steelers

By ALAN ROBINSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT

The Pittsburgh Steelers owned the easy road to the Super Bowl all those years they squandered home-field advantage, all those years coach Bill Cowher's teams couldn't stand up to the pressure, the moment, the challenge.

Maybe this is what was needed to bring out the best in a team that often was among the NFL's top teams but never played like it when it counted most: the toughest road to a Super Bowl championship.

No team had won three road playoff games and then the Super Bowl, much less by beating the top three teams in its conference and the best from the opposing conference.

Making the challenge even greater, the Steelers had to win their final four

regular-season games just to reach the playoffs.

"It feels so much better to do something people say you can't do," linebacker Joey Porter said after the Steelers won their first Super Bowl in 26 years by beating the Seattle Seahawks 21-10 Sunday night. "There's no better feeling than that. We will always be remembered for the way we did it."

After going from 15-1 a year ago to an underachieving 11-5 during a regular season marked by injuries (quarterback Ben Roethlisberger was out four weeks with two knee problems) and a three-game losing streak, the Steelers fit a career's worth of highlights into a month's worth of playoffs.

By doing so, those four AFC Championship game losses and one Super Bowl defeat since January 1995 finally

(SEE TRIP, PAGE B3)

STEELING THE SHOW

After losing three straight games, the Pittsburgh Steelers ran off seven wins in a row — five of them on the road — before beating the Seattle Seahawks in Super Bowl XL in Detroit on Sunday. Here's a look at Pittsburgh's winning streak:

Date	Opponent	Score
Dec. 11	Chicago Bears	W 21-9
Dec. 19	at Minnesota Vikings	W 18-3
Dec. 24	at Cleveland Browns	W 41-0
Jan. 1	Detroit Lions	W 35-21
Jan. 8	at Cincinnati Bengals	W 31-17
Jan. 15	at Indianapolis Colts	W 21-18
Jan. 22	at Denver Broncos	W 34-17
Sunday	vs. Seattle Seahawks	W 21-10

McNabb raising T.O.'s value on free-agent market

What you are about to read might be disturbing.

Perhaps the Indianapolis Colts should give some thought to signing wide receiver Terrell Owens.

You're right. That is crazy. Forget I just wrote that.

But you have to admit this: T.O.'s stock has risen considerably since former teammate Donovan McNabb decided to open his mouth last week.

How's that? While Owens has undoubtedly been a cancer on any team he has played for, he clearly wasn't the entire problem in Philadelphia. In fact, he may have been only half of the problem.

One of the great things about the



Jeff Decker

week of hype leading up to the Super Bowl is that we're all exposed to stories that have nothing at all to do with the big game.

For example, The Associated Press late last week produced a feature story

about Steelers safety Troy Polamalu and what he's like on and off the field. But it also offered a separate story on Polamalu's hair and what those who cut hair for a living think about the Pittsburgh player's flowing locks.

Haircuts aside, the biggest news coming out of Detroit last week was Eagles quarterback McNabb, in an ESPN interview (where else?), revisiting his feud with T.O.

As Philadelphia's 2005 season was falling apart and McNabb was struggling with injuries, Owens was critical of the McNabb and the Eagles franchise.

(SEE VALUE, PAGE B3)