

Cards motto "1MORE"

in the win. Isaac Shelton added 15 points, Micah Pocernich scored 14, Jaden Gronner pitched in 10, Gage Jones had seven and Cameron Cahoon finished with six.

"We knew we might see a box-and-one defense on Micah this season and prepared for it," said Pocernich. "After Micah hit a couple of shots, Nevis attempted the defense but we responded well. On two straight possessions we ran our box offense and Isaac Shelton hit back-to-back 3-pointers."

Nevis would bail on the defense and Isaac would finish with a career high 15 points.

The Cardinals returned home from Brainerd the North Subsection Section 5A Champions for the second year in a row, but they wanted one more.

Every year since 2005, coach Pocernich gets the team wristbands with a slogan written on them—a constant reminder of where they are going or what they want to accomplish. This year, the wristbands said, "1MORE."

"I wanted to fight complacency," he explained. "1 more stop. 1 more basket. Don't be satisfied. I also was going to use it in the postseason — advance one more game than a year ago."

The results:

Last year, the Cardinals went 9-1 in the conference. This year 10-0 — 1MORE.

Last year, the Cardinals went 20-6 in the regular season. This year 21-3 — 1MORE.

Last year, the Cardinals lost in the Section Final. This year, a win in the Section Final. "We get to play for '1MORE' week," concluded Pocernich.

Passion for the game

Bill Pocernich took over the Cromwell-Wright boys basketball program the year after the Cardinals went to their first state tournament ever. That was 23 years ago. Patience and perseverance would lead Coach Pocernich on a long road to a state tournament berth. The timing couldn't be more special. Coach Pocernich, his two boys Marcus and Micah and a special group of players are headed to Williams Arena.

During those 23 years, Bill's passion for the sport never wavered.

"I've always loved basketball even before I had children," said the coach. "Then, when my first two children were boys, I obviously dreamt of something like this. Them liking basketball, being good at it and being on a team good enough to make it all factored in... and this group of kids got it done!"

Coach Pocernich concluded by sharing, "It is a

dream come true, but it hasn't really settled in yet and I'm so proud of our guys. We battled through sickness and playing three games this week. To play like this is pretty special."

There isn't much time to let things sink in. Coach Pocernich has plenty to do as his team prepares for a first round match-up with Section 8 Champion Ada-Borup Cougars (28-1). The Cougars are similar to the Cardinals in the fact that they have a balanced offensive attack. They are led by 6' 8" junior Mason Miller who averages 12 points per game. He joins Preston Gwin (9ppg), and four other players that average about six points per game — Colby Stevenson, Verdis Barber, Jared Brainard, and Tommy Stewart.

Scoring balance aside, the teams probably aren't similar at all. The Cougars have the big inside presence and average 37 rebounds per game. The Cardinals average just under 30, but have held their own all season. Where the Cardinals have the advantage will be outside shooting. The Cardinals have sunk over 240 3-point shots on the season, while Ada-Burup has about the same number of 3-pointers as one player (Micah) has for Cromwell-Wright.

Taking care of the ball is also a strength on paper. The Cardinals average just 10 turnovers per game, while the Cougars average 17.

Should the Cardinals knock down shots and clamp down on defense, they have a good chance of advancing to the Target Center.

How about advancing "1MORE" round in the state tournament than the 1996 team?

The Cardinals (25-3) quarterfinal match-up with the #2 seeded Cougars (28-1) will take place at 3:00 p.m. at Williams Arena on the campus of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Section 7A Champion North Woods (#3 Seed) will take on unseeded Westbrook-Walnut Grove at 5:00 p.m.

The upper bracket includes #1 seeded Springfield vs unseeded Spring Grove at 11:00 a.m. and #4 Henning vs #5 Christ's Household of Faith at 1:00 p.m.



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— Cardinal head coach
Bill Pocernich

SECTION 5A SCORES

CHAMPIONSHIP

BELGRADE-BROOTEN-ELROSA — 23-29 — 52
CROMWELL-WRIGHT — 33-32 — 65

BELGRADE-BROOTEN-ELROSA — Dylan Meyer 5, Abe Peter 3, Jackson Peter 2, Ashton Dingmann 22, Gavin Kampsen 9, Blake Goodall 11. FG 19, FT 9-14. 3-point goals — Meyer, Dingmann 3, Kampsen. **Cromwell-Wright** — Marcus Pocernich 11, Drew Libbon 4, Micah Pocernich 37, Isaac Shelton 3, Cameron Cahoon 10. FG 23, FT 10-14. 3-point goals — Ma. Pocernich, Mi. Pocernich 7, Shelton.

SEMIFINALS

NEVIS — 22-29 — 51
CROMWELL-WRIGHT — 30-39 — 69

NEVIS — Matthias Worthington 8, Luke DeWulf 12, Derek Lindow 14, Eddie Kramer 3, Michael Linquist 14. FG 17, FT 13-17. 3-point goals — Worthington, Lindow 3.

Cromwell-Wright — Marcus Pocernich 17, Micah Pocernich 14, Isaac Shelton 15, Jaden Gronner 10, Gage Jones 7, Cameron Cahoon 6. FG 25, FT 9-14. 3-point goals — Ma. Pocernich 4, Mi. Pocernich 2, Shelton 3.

QUARTERFINALS

CROMWELL-WRIGHT — 22-25 — 47
BROWERVILLE-EV — 21-21 — 42

CROMWELL-WRIGHT — Marcus Pocernich 9, Drew Libbon 2, Micah Pocernich 12, Isaac Shelton 6, Jaden Gronner 6, Gage Jones 4, Cameron Cahoon 8. FG 15, FT 8-11. 3-point goals — Ma. Pocernich 3, Mi. Pocernich 2, Shelton 2, Gronner 2. **BROWERVILLE-EAGLE VALLEY** — Zak Irsfeld 17, Brady Emery 7, Chris Ogle 6, John Schueller 7, Brian Kunerth 5. FG 14, FT 11-17. 3-point goals — Irsfeld 2, Emery.



DEFENSE: Cardinal senior Isaac Shelton clamps down on defense during the second half of the Section Final match-up with BBE.

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