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Sports & Outdoors

Cards' state wait ends



The Cromwell-Wright Cardinals celebrate winning the Section 5A championship game Friday night in Crosby over Belgrade-Broton-Elrosa. The win ends a 23-year drought for the team in state competition.

Cromwell-Wright returns to state dance after 23 years

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CROSBY—The last time Cromwell-Wright sent a boys basketball team to the state tournament, there was just one champion crowned. The next year, boys basketball would move to the four-class format as we know it today. That 1996 boys state tourney was the final year of a two-year experiment that mixed small schools with large schools that resulted in one champion in the end. Both years, Minneapolis North would come away winners of the “Sweet Sixteen” tournament format.

Although Minneapolis North has made several trips back to the big dance — winning some more titles along the way — the feeling of just making the boys state tournament had eluded the Cromwell-Wright Cardinals boys since making their lone visit 23 years ago.

Until now.

Last Friday, in front of a nearly filled Crosby-Ironton High School gymnasium, the Cardinals were crowned the Section 5A Champions with a 65-52 win over Belgrade-Broton-Elrosa.

“It’s a dream come true for all of us,” said junior guard Micah Pocernich, whose seven three-pointers and 37 points total were well above the rest of the field in the biggest ball game of his team’s life. “We’ve been playing sports together for 10 years now, and we’ve always been competitive. This was a lot of fun.”

The two teams traded punches in the early going with several lead changes, but a 19-18 score in the first half was as close as the BBE Jaguars would get the rest of the way. Cromwell-Wright closed the first half on a 14-5 run to lead by 10 at the break, 33-23.

Pocernich continued his three-point accuracy in the



Cromwell-Wright’s Cameron Cahoon works the ball under the basket around a block from Evan Wiener during Friday night’s section championship game in Crosby. Photos by Dan Saletel / Pine Knot Sports

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TRACK & FIELD Cloquet on track for great season

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With a state champion on their roster, the Cloquet girls and boys track teams are hard at work getting ready for the upcoming season. Kendra Kelley, who won the 200-meter Class AA race at the Minnesota State High School Track Meet last spring, returns to help guide a team that is loaded with talent.

“We have a lot of great returners,” coach Tim Prosen said. “We also have several new faces that I expect to make an impact on our team.”

Like most area teams, the Lumberjacks are doing their workouts in the Cloquet High School gym as well as on the streets in the neighborhoods surrounding the high school campus.

“The weather is normal for this time of year and we have adapted for it,” Prosen said. “If it is not snowy, it is cold and rainy early on. We just plan to be inside for the first few weeks anyway. Our coaches are very creative and have even included pool workouts.”

The Lumberjacks welcomed a strong contingent of returnees as well as new runners, and participation is up in the program.

“Our numbers are very strong, and we are very strong in both underclassmen and in the middle school,” Prosen said. “I have great coaches to work with and that makes it all possible.”

Kelley, who is a senior and has long dominated the local sprint scene, will not be the only athlete Prosen will rely on to score points. Look for points to come from MacKenzie Brummer in the triple jump, Natalie Completado in the sprints, Kelly Lorenz in the hurdles, Elise Pickar and Rosie Richardson in the distance events, Payten Schneberger in the pole vault and the mid-distance events, Kaitlyn Simmonds in mid-distance and Makayla Suominen in throws and sprints. Watch for sophomore Katelyn Kelly, Kendra’s sister, to be a force in the sprints along with Harmony Tracy, a ninth-grader in the distance events and another freshman, Olivia Jameson, in jumps and Ilei Benson in the pole vault.

The boys team also has a good number of athletes and that includes a couple of state entrants from a year ago.

“Our boys returning state-entrants include Alex Leuzzo in the triple jump and hurdles and Blaine Bong in the 400-meter run,” Prosen said. “Other seniors include Luke Konietzko and Jordan Leimer in the throws, Riley Leslie in the triple jump and mid-distance events, Andre Peters in the sprints, Dru Senich in the jumps and Colton Wenneson in sprints.”

A huge key for the ‘Jacks will be their overall depth and the ability to score points across events.

“The depth in both teams is good, and we have more kids on the roster than ever before,” Prosen said. “We hope to defend our Lake Superior Conference title in both boys and girls along with our Section 7AA True Team title in boys and girls.”

Cloquet will compete in their first meet of the season today at 4 p.m. in an indoor meet at the University of Wisconsin Superior.