



Robbinsdale Cooper girls basketball

A win away from state

Top-seeded Hawks defeat Mound-Westonka

By **ANTHONY IOZZO**
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Robbinsdale Cooper girls basketball is a win from heading back to state to defend its title from last season.

The Hawks (19-8 overall) earned the top seed in the 6AAA section tournament and had a bye in the quarterfinals. Seventh-ranked Cooper took advantage with a 66-30 win over fourth-seeded Mound-Westonka in the semifinals on March 2.

There wasn't much doubt that the Hawks would advance to the finals after jumping out to a 38-14 halftime lead. Cooper nearly doubled up the White Hawks 28-16 in the second half.

Cooper's defense held Mound-Westonka to zero double-digit scorers, and senior guard Aja Wheeler and sophomore forward Kierra Wheeler led the offense with 19 and 17 points, respectively.

Sophomore guard Andrea Tribble chipped in nine points, and senior guard Sierra Lynch added eight. Sophomore guard Jayla Reliford (five), senior forward Arthel Massaquoi (three), senior guard Asia Smith (three) and junior guard Victaeja Leavy (two) also contributed on offense.

Senior forward Jennifer Schiabe and junior forward Melissa Drill led Mound Westonka with eight points each.



(PHOTO BY BRIAN FLANARY)

Cooper senior guard Sierra Lynch drives to the basket on March 2 in the 6AAA section semifinal against fourth-seeded Mound-Westonka. Lynch finished with eight points.

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(SUN STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Paige Bueckers, an All-State basketball guard, contests an in bounds pass by St. Louis Park's Shayla Miller during the Royals' 81-51 win on March 2..

Hopkins girls basketball

Royal coronation Thursday?

Hopkins face Trojans in section finals with trip to state on the line

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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There was never any doubt that this was going to be the matchup for the 6AAAA section championship.

Top-ranked and top-seeded Hopkins (28-0 overall) will face second-ranked and second-seeded Wayzata (26-2) for the third time this season at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7, in the section final.

Beating the Trojans twice during the regular season was a nice bonus for the Royals, but the game they need to win is next.

In the previous meetings, Hopkins topped Wayzata 69-66 and 70-49. It is not known at this time if the third meet-

Coming up

Top-ranked Hopkins hosts second-ranked Wayzata at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7, in the 6AAAA section finals.

ing will resemble either of the other ones, but one thing is certain: both teams are hitting on all cylinders.

Hopkins drilled St. Louis Park 81-51 in the first semifinal on March 2 at Lindbergh Center, and Wayzata followed with an equally impressive 67-42 victory over Armstrong.

Neither head coach felt his team played a perfect game in Saturday's wins.

"We weren't ready to play today," Hopkins head coach Brian Cosgriff said. "If we play like this against Wayzata, we're in trouble. We have to mature. We were

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STARS of the WEEK

Top star



(PHOTO BY BRIAN FLANARY)

Name: Aja Wheeler

School: Cooper

Grade: Senior

Sport: Basketball

Highlights: Wheeler finished with a team-high 19 points in a 66-30 win over Mound-Westonka in the 6AAA section semifinals

Other stars

Anderson Breazeale (senior) Breck/Blake-boys swimming

Breazeale won three state titles in the Class A state meet, the 100 backstroke and with the 200 medley and 400 free relays

Spencer Pruett (senior) Breck/Blake-boys swimming

Pruett won three state titles in the Class A state meet, the 200 free and with the 200 medley and 400 free relays

Dayla Chakolis (senior) Hopkins-girls basketball

Chakolis finished with 16 points and had double-digit rebounds in a 6AAAA section semifinal win

Carly Krsul (senior) Armstrong-girls basketball

Krsul finished with 26 points in a 6AAAA section quarterfinal win

Robbinsdale Cooper boys swimming

Welle breaks 200 IM school record again

By **ANTHONY IOZZO**
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Robbinsdale Cooper senior Nathan Welle finished his high school career in a big way March 1-2 during the AA state boys swimming and diving meet.

Welle had already broken the school record in the 200-yard IM during the 5AA section tournament, but he did it again at state – twice.

Welle broke his own record in the preliminaries on March 1, finishing one spot away from earning a berth in the championship race taking ninth in 1 minute, 55.57 seconds. That time beat his section time of 1:57.13.

But Welle didn't stop there. He shaved another four hundredths of a second off his prelims time in the 200 IM consolation final on March 2 and won his race in 1:55.53 to set the school record again and finish ninth overall at state.

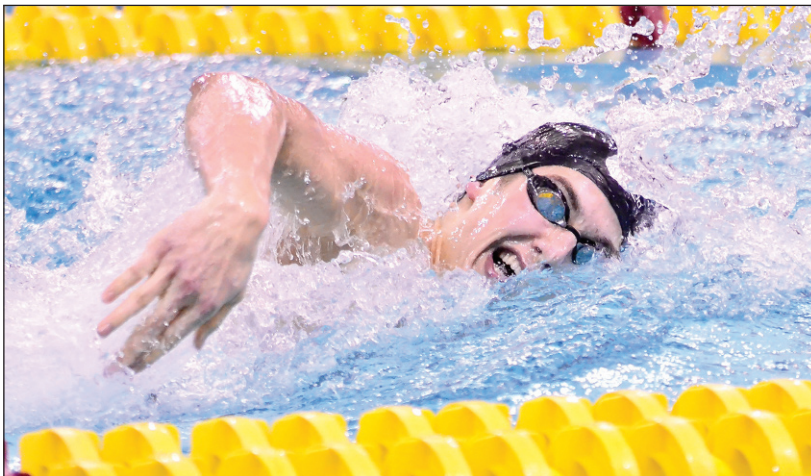
Welle was able to best his prelims time with a faster freestyle portion of the medley. He had a time of 28.29 on March 2, which was better than the 28.55 on March 1.

He was actually behind Friday's time by .22 before his final lap.

Senior Jacob Boswell didn't break any more individual school records after he set the 100 freestyle at sections, but he came very close in the prelims on March 1. Boswell finished 14th overall on March 1 to advance to the consolation final in 48.09, which was a hundredth of a second off of the record he set at sections.

He ended up finishing 16th overall after finishing in 48.96 on March 2.

Boswell also raced in the 50 freestyle and took 16th overall in 22.25. He was 14th in the prelims



(SUN POST STAFF PHOTOS BY ANTHONY IOZZO)

Robbinsdale Cooper senior Nathan Welle swims the freestyle portion of the 200-yard individual medley on March 1 in the AA state boys swimming preliminaries at the University of Minnesota's Jean K. Freeman Aquatic Center. Welle broke the school record in 1 minute, 55.57 seconds in prelims, and he ended up breaking the record again in the finals in 1:55.53 to take ninth overall.

on March 1 in 21.86.

The 200-yard freestyle relay also made the consolation final and nearly rebroke the school record the quartet set at sections. Juniors Nolan Boswell and Ben Hunke, Jacob Boswell and Welle finished 12th overall on March 2 in 1:28.19, which was nine hundredths of a second off of their record of 1:28.1.

The quartet also finished 12th at prelims in 1:28.72.

Jacob and Nolan Boswell, Hunke and Welle also raced in the 400 free relay on March 1 and finished 19th overall in 3:19.75, which was less than two seconds behind their school record set at sections (3:17.49).

Welle added a 21st-place finish in the 100 butterfly on March 1, finishing his prelims race in 52.77, which was just behind his school record time set at sections of 52.28.

Overall, the Hawks finished 25th overall as a team with 21 points. Edina won the team title with



Robbinsdale Cooper senior Jacob Boswell looks up at his time after the 100-yard freestyle on March 1, in the AA state boys swimming preliminaries at the University of Minnesota's Jean K. Freeman Aquatic Center. Boswell finished 16th overall in 48.96 seconds after the finals. He was 14th in prelims in 48.09.

268, led by state championships by senior Andrew Gray (200 free), senior Peter Larson (50 free, 100 free), the 200 free relay and the 400 free relay.

Breck/Blake boys swimming

Mustangs win third straight Class A state title

By **ANTHONY IOZZO**
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The Breck/Blake co-op boys swimming and diving team is still on top of the competition after claiming its third straight Class A team title at the boys swimming and diving championships from Feb. 28-March 2.

The Mustangs, which scored 423 points, now have five state titles in program history and also have six runner-up finishes, all since 1998. Northfield was a distant second with a 188, and Winona took third with a 177.

Breck/Blake claimed state titles in the 200-yard medley relay, 200 freestyle, 500 freestyle, 200 free relay, 100 backstroke and 400 free relay.

The 200 medley relay (seniors Anderson Breazeale, Spencer Pruett and Dylan Brown and freshman James Pan) broke the Class A state record to win their title with an All-American automatic qualifying time of 1 minute, 31.26 seconds.

The Mustangs added three medals in the 200 free with Pruett winning the title in 1:42.4, and senior Thayer Breazeale (1:43.15) and junior Niels Wu (1:43.93) finishing sec-

State champs

200 medley relay: Anderson Breazeale, James Pan, Spencer Pruett, Dylan Brown, 1:31.26

200 freestyle: Pruett, 1:42.4

500 freestyle: Niels Wu, 4:43.31

200 free relay: Charlie Crosby, Luke Hamlin, Thayer Breazeale, Pan, 1:25.93

100 backstroke: Anderson Breazeale, 49.05

400 free relay: Dylan Brown, Anderson Breazeale, Thayer Breazeale, Pruett, 3:06.46

ond and third.

Wu added the 500 free state title in 4:43.31, and Pruett finished third to medal in 4:45.5.

Senior Luke Hamlin, Thayer Breazeale, freshman Charlie Crosby and Pan won the 200 free relay title with an All-American consideration time of 1:25.93, and Dylan Brown, Anderson Breazeale, Thayer Breazeale and Pruett claimed the 400 free relay title with an All-American consideration time of 3:06.46.

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Hopkins boys basketball

Royals gain top seed for 6AAAAA playoffs

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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No. 1-ranked state Class 4A powerhouse Hopkins boys basketball earned the No. 1 seed for the 6AAAAA section tournament.

First-round games were played on Tuesday, March 5, but Hopkins has a bye because there is no the No. 8 seed.

The other two teams on Hopkins' side of the bracket, No. 4 St. Louis Park and No. 5 Minneapolis South met in a first-round game on Tuesday. The top seeds on the other side of the bracket are No. 2 Wayzata and No. 3 Armstrong.

Wayzata is the defending section champion.

The semifinals are set for 5 and 6:30 p.m. Friday, March 8, at Osseo High School with the Hopkins side of the bracket playing the early game and

the Wayzata side of the bracket playing second.

The championship game will be at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 13, at Osseo High School.

Hopkins head coach Kenny Novak Jr. is mostly concerned about a potential matchup in the finals against Wayzata while evaluating the field.

"Wayzata spreads the floor really well and shoots the ball really well," Novak said.

Although the Royals handled Wayzata twice during the Lake Conference season, Novak is taking nothing for granted in the section tournament.

"Basketball is becoming a guard's game," he said.

The implication is that Wayzata's guards are better than most. In fact, Trojan head coach Bryan Schnettler starts five of them – 6-foot-3 senior Keaton Heide, 6-foot senior Luke

Paulson, 5-foot-11 senior Jacob Beeninga, 6-foot-2 sophomore Kody Williams and 6-foot-5 freshman Camden Heide.

"Beeninga is very good," Novak said. "He's a tough kid and a really good shooter who is quicker than heck."

Wayzata has to be concerned with Hopkins' size more than anything else if a third meeting occurs in the section finals.

The Trojans have had trouble stopping 6-foot-11 senior Zeke Nnaji and 6-7 senior Dane Zimmer in the paint.

In its final Lake Conference game, with the league title already in hand, Hopkins lost 77-70 at Eden Prairie.

For the Eagles, it was the Drake Dobbs show. The 6-foot-1 senior guard, well-known for his penetrate-and-dish game, scored 21 points and set up his teammates for open shots time after time in the second half.

Royals

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arguing with officials and some of our defense wasn't that good."

On the other hand, Hopkins' offense was just fine. All-State junior guard Paige Bueckers scored 32 points, and she wasn't the only one scoring for the Royals. Senior guard Dlayla Chakolis chipped in 16 points and had double-digit rebounds, while freshman center Maya Nnaji added 15 points along with more good board work.

Two players kept St. Louis Park in the game - Raegan Alexander with 15 points and Kendall Coley with 14.

There were times when Wayzata looked unstoppable in their semifinal and other times when the Trojans stopped themselves by

forcing shots.

Kallie Theisen, a 6-2 senior captain and forward, set the tone for Wayzata with 19 points and 16 rebounds.

Schrader, a fifth-year varsity point guard, handled all the pressure defense Armstrong threw at her. She did a good job setting teammates up and making sure the everyone was involved.

Neither Hopkins nor Wayzata was giving away any hints of new strategy, although Wayzata briefly played zone in the first half against Armstrong.

Both teams play mostly man-to-man defense, although Hopkins sometimes clamps on a 1-3-1, three-quarter court trap.

Thursday night's winner will probably be determined by one simple variable - which team wants it more?

Hopkins boys swimming



(SUN POST STAFF PHOTO BY ANTHONY IOZZO)

Hopkins sophomore Elliot Berman swims in the 100-yard backstroke on March 2 in the AA state boys swimming finals at the University of Minnesota's Jean K. Freeman Aquatic Center. Berman won the consolation final and finished ninth overall in 52.86 seconds. He was 14th at prelims in 53.44.

Berman finishes ninth

By **ANTHONY IOZZO**
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Hopkins sophomore Elliot Berman didn't mind being in the seventh lane on March 2 in the AA state boys swimming and diving consolation final in the 100-yard backstroke.

Berman bested his prelims time by a half second inside the University of Minnesota's Jean K. Freeman Aquatic Center to win the consolation final in 52.86 seconds.

Berman was 14th in the prelims in 53.44.

Berman's consolation time ended up being better than East Ridge senior Carter Smith, who finished eighth in the championship race in 54.33.

Berman made state in the 100 butterfly, as well. He finished 24th in prelims

in 53.58.

Berman also joined senior Ben Askarov and sophomores Nico Shrestha and Danny Jaeger in the 200 medley relay and almost made the consolation final.

The quartet ended up tying Forest Lake in 1:38.84 for 16th place on March 1, and that led to a swim off to determine which team would swim on Saturday.

Hopkins held a lead after the butterfly and backstroke but fell behind at the end of the breaststroke. During the freestyle, Forest Lake junior Alec Jankowski was able to remain ahead by a small margin before touching the wall about a half second before Jaeger.

Freshman Jackson Malone also made state in the diving competition and finished 29th with 115.25 points.

Robbinsdale Cooper boys basketball

Hawks earn No. 2 seed in 6AAA section playoffs

By **ANTHONY IOZZO**
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Robbinsdale Cooper boys basketball finished the regular season with a win and ended up earning a No. 2 seed in the 6AAA section playoffs.

The Hawks (13-11 overall, 7-7 Metro West Conference) opened the playoffs on March 5 against No. 7 Benilde-St. Margaret's after the Sun Post's Monday deadline. The winner of that game takes on the winner of No. 3 Waconia/No. 6 Orono at 1 p.m. Saturday, March

9, at the higher seed in the 6AAA semifinals.

The section final is set for 7 p.m. Thursday, March 14, at Chanhassen High School.

Top-ranked DeLaSalle earned the topseed. Ninth-ranked Mound-Westonka is seeded fourth.

St. Louis Park 73, Cooper 64

The Hawks fell to St. Louis Park 73-64 on Feb. 26.

Senior guard Jalen Justice finished with 21

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Robbinsdale Armstrong girls basketball

Season ends in 6AAAA section semifinals

By **ANTHONY IOZZO**
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Third-seeded Robbinsdale Armstrong girls basketball defeated No. 6 Minneapolis South 72-52 on Wednesday, Feb. 27, to advance to the 6AAAA section semifinals.

The Falcons (21-7 overall) came into the season with a goal to earn a home playoff game and get a win following last season's early exit at Minneapolis South.

Armstrong went on a 24-6 run with under 10 minutes to go in the first half to build a 20-point lead, and the Tigers (17-10) trailed by as much as 27 points in the second half.

With the win, the Falcons moved to 13-1 at home this season.

"This group thought it was very important to get a home game right away, and they have done a great job playing at home," coach Antiwan Easley said.

Senior forward Carly Krsul was the catalyst during the run in the first half. She scored 13 of the Falcons' 24 points during that stretch and finished with a team-high 26 points in the game.

While Krsul was dominating inside, it was Armstrong's passing that helped fuel the offense.

Eighth-grade guard Karlee Fisher found Krsul inside to start the run, and Krsul banked in a basket off the glass.

Senior guard Masengo Mutanda found Krsul on a long pass in transition a little later for another basket inside, and senior guard Tiahna James found Krsul twice for two more baskets inside.

And when Krsul wasn't scoring, her teammates were there to knock down shots as well.

Sophomore guard Ella Brugnoli knocked down a long jumper after a fake out, and she later came up with a steal after Krsul and Mutanda forced an errant pass.

Krsul found sophomore forward Ephemian Bailey inside for a hard-fought basket during that same possession, and senior guard Imani Reid found eighth-grade forward Savannah McGowan inside for another basket during that first-half run.

"Any time you get a win in sections is good," Easley said. "It means you get to advance to the next game and get another opportunity to work with your team and be around them with an opportunity to get better."

Senior guard Jordan Bloom, who scored six of the first 11 points in the first half, drained a 3-pointer to push the lead to 48-23 in the second half.

A little later, Krsul picked up her fourth block of the game and gained possession before finding Brugnoli wide open down the floor. Brugnoli scored the layup, and she followed that up with a 3-pointer on a kick out by McGowan on the



(SUN POST STAFF PHOTOS BY ANTHONY IOZZO)

Armstrong senior guard Jenna Bloom is fouled while driving to the basket after a steal in the second half Feb. 27 in a 6AAAA section quarterfinal against No. 6 Minneapolis South. Bloom finished with nine points in a 72-52 win for the third-ranked Falcons.



Armstrong eighth-grade forward Savannah McGowan goes up for a putback in the first half on Feb. 27 in a 6AAAA section quarterfinal against No. 6 Minneapolis South. McGowan finished with six points in a 72-52 win for the third-ranked Falcons.

ensuing possession to make it 59-33.

James knocked down two free throws to give the Falcons their biggest lead at 64-37.

Mutanda finished with 16 points, and Bloom added nine. Brugnoli chipped in seven, and McGowan had six.

Senior guard Solana Cushing led Minneapolis South with 17 points, and senior forward Avery Segebarth and sophomore guard JJ Mullins each had nine points.

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Seniors lead Falcons to a 20-plus win season

Robbinsdale Armstrong went from seven wins last season to 21 wins this season, and although the season ended in the 6AAAA semifinals, the senior class leaves as one of the most successful in more than a decade.

The Falcons (21-7 overall) finished 13-1 at home and earned a No. 3-seed for the section playoffs. They also had the first section semifinal berth since the 2015-16 season.

Senior forward Carly Krsul and senior guard Masengo Mutanda were the two leading scorers this season, but senior guards Jordan Bloom, Tiahna James and Imani Reid also played key minutes.

Senior forward Brianna Campbell and senior guard Alyssa Hanson might not have played as many minutes, but they were still vocal on the bench and in practice.

Mutanda finished with 509 points and added over 200 rebounds and 100 assists. Krsul collected 508 points and over 250 rebounds. Krsul also had 81 blocks.

Bloom finished with 154 points, and James had over 50 assists.

There will be several holes on next year's team with the graduation of the seniors, but there are several young players that played key minutes this season.

Eighth-grade forward Savannah McGowan collected 118 points and over 150 rebounds, and sophomore forward Ephemian Bailey added 94 points and over 100 rebounds.

Robbinsdale Armstrong boys basketball

Falcons earn No. 3 seed for 6AAAA playoffs

By **ANTHONY IOZZO**

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Robbinsdale Armstrong boys basketball will begin its 6AAAA section tournament at home as a No. 3 seed.

The Falcons (17-9 overall, 7-5 Northwest Suburban West Conference) closed the regular season with wins over Coon Rapids and Blaine.

Eighth-ranked Wayzata earned the No. 2 seed and took on No. 7 Minneapolis Washburn on March 5. The winner will take on the winner of Armstrong/No. 6 Minneapolis Southwest at 6:30 p.m. Friday, March 8 at Osseo High School in the semifinals.

Hopkins is the top-ranked team, and they had a bye in the quarterfinals. The Royals host the winner of No. 4 St. Louis Park and No. 5 Minneapolis South in the semifinals at 5 p.m. Friday, March 8, at Osseo.

Armstrong 64, Coon Rapids 51

The Falcons traveled to Coon Rapids on Feb. 27 and won 64-51.

Armstrong jumped up 34-16 at halftime.

Junior guard Jake Breitbach had 15 points, and junior forward Adam Biewen and senior guard Devyn Frye each chipped in 11 points. Junior forward Hezekiah Iyawe added 10 points, and senior guard Cole Priem picked up seven.

Armstrong 52, Blaine 51

Armstrong edged Blaine 52-51 on March 1 to close the regular season.

The host Falcons trailed at halftime before doing enough in the final minutes to secure the win.

Priem and Breitbach had 13 points a piece, and Iyawe added eight. Senior forward Tyler Peterson scored seven points.



(PHOTO BY BRIAN FLANARY)

Cooper sophomore forward Kierra Wheeler takes a shot on March 2 in the 6AAA section semifinal against fourth-seeded Mound-Westonka. She finished with 17 points.

Cooper

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Waconia up next

Cooper now sets its sights on second-seeded Waconia (21-7) for the 6AAA section final at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7, at Chanhassen High School.

The Wildcats defeated third-seeded Benilde-St. Margaret's 68-54 in their semifinal.

Some Waconia players to watch are senior Courtney Freeberg, who scored 16 points and had nine rebounds against Benilde-St. Margaret's, and sophomore Addy Salzar. Salzar just returned from knee

Coming up

Top-seeded Cooper takes on second-seeded Waconia at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7, in the 6AAA section final.

surgery and scored nine points against Benilde-St. Margaret's.

Aja (415 points) and Kierra Wheeler (366) lead the Hawks' offense. Massaquoi (266), Tribble (253), Lynch (184) and Reliford (175) are also key.

Kierra Wheeler also has over 200 rebounds, and Aja Wheeler and Massaquoi both over 100 rebounds.

Hawks

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points, and senior guard Jalen Miller added 16 points.

Sophomore guard Broderick

Powell Jr. had 13 points, and senior guard Cam Vaughn chipped in six points.

Cooper 89, Richfield 63

Cooper closed the regular sea-

son with an 89-63 win at Richfield on March 1.

Senior guard Quincy Snoddy had 22 points, and Miller added 20. Justice chipped in 13 points, and senior guard Roosevelt Adams had nine.

Armstrong

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Wayzata 67, Armstrong 42

The season came to a

close on March 2 in the section semifinals in a 67-42 loss to second-seeded and second-ranked Wayzata (26-2) at Hopkins.

The Trojans led 29-18 at halftime and out-

scored the Falcons 38-24 in the second half.

Mutanda (16) and Krsul (15) finished their high school careers with a combined 31 points.

Sophomore guard Jen-

na Johnson led Wayzata with 22 points.

The Trojans will travel to top-seeded and top-ranked Hopkins in the 6AAAA final on Thursday, March 7.

Breck

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Anderson Breazeale claimed the 100 backstroke title with an All-American automatic qualifying time of 49.05. Crosby was the runner-up in 50.94.

Pan added a runner-up finish in the 200 IM with an All-American consideration time of 1:51.29. Minnehaha Academy junior Andrew

Karpenko won the state title with a Class A record and All-American automatic qualifying time of 1:48.05.

Sophomore Mitchell Brown also medaled for Breck/Blake with a seventh-place finish in 1:59.64.

Anderson Breazeale (21.07) and Dylan Brown (21.27) finished second and third in the 50 free, and Hamlin finished sixth to medal in 21.69.

Dylan Brown added a runner-up finish in the 100 free with an

All-American consideration time of 45.47. Hamlin also medaled in the event with a fifth-place finish in 47.74.

Thayer Breazeale took third in the 100 butterfly to medal in 51.67, and Pan and senior Christopher Chang finished third and fourth in the 100 breaststroke. Pan had an All-American consideration time of 56.75, and Chang finished in 58.83.

Mitchell Brown also medaled in the 100 breaststroke with a sixth-place finish in 59.14.

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