

Sports & Outdoors

SCHEDULE

CLASS A GIRLS
STATE TOURNAMENT**Thursday, March 12**
Quarterfinals*At Maturi Pavilion,
University of Minnesota*
Red Lake (21-9) vs. No. 1
seed Minneota (30-1), 11
a.m.No. 5 Heritage Christian
Academy, Maple Grove
(22-7) vs. No. 4 Water-
ville-Elysian-Morristown
(26-4) 1 p.m.Belgrade-Broten-Elrosa
(19-10) vs. No. 2 Crom-
well-Wright (28-2), 3 p.m.
Fillmore Central, Harmony
(22-8) vs. No. 3 Henning
(28-2), 5 p.m.**Friday, March 13***At Gangelhoff Center,
Concordia University***Consolation semifinals**
10 a.m., noon*At Williams Arena, Univer-
sity of Minnesota***Championship semifinals**
Noon, 2 p.m.**Saturday, March 14***At Gangelhoff Center,
Concordia University***Consolation final**

9 a.m.

Third place

11 a.m.

*At Williams Arena,
University of Minnesota***Championship**

Noon

PREVIEW

REMATCH POSSIBLE

Should Cromwell-Wright make it to the championship game in the Minnesota Class A Girls State Basketball Tournament Saturday, they could very well be facing a rematch. The Cardinals are seeded No. 2 in the opposite bracket from No. 1 Minneota, the defending state champions.

The Cardinals opened the season against Minneota in the Tip Off Classic at Hopkins High School just southwest of Minneapolis. It was a close game, with Minneota edging Cromwell-Wright 49-47.

The Cards led 31-23 at the half, thanks to four three-pointers from Shaily Hakamaki. But the Vikings shut down the Cardinals' perimeter game in the second half, limiting them to just one three-point basket. Minneota slashed under the boards for layups as the teams traded leads throughout the second half. Minneota used free throws in the end to seal the game.

The Cardinals players got over one hurdle last week, finally wresting the Section 7A championship from perennial winners Mountain Iron-Buhl. All season, team members have talked about finally making it to state. With MIB out of the way, it's natural that they would relish a rematch with Minneota with a state title on the line.



Taya Hakamaki, right, jumps for joy next to cousin and Cromwell-Wright teammate Shaily Hakamaki as they hoist the Section 7A championship trophy. Emmalee Hoover moved in to join the two along with the rest of the team after a convincing win over Mountain Iron-Buhl in Duluth Thursday. The Cardinals opened play in the state tournament Thursday. *Dan Saletel / Pine Knot Sports*

No doubter

Cardinals girls headed to State

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A year ago the Cromwell-Wright girls basketball team sat on the doorstep of the Minnesota State Basketball Tournament. In their path was the Mountain Iron-Buhl Rangers, a team that the Cardinals had manhandled earlier in the season. Instead of heading south for the state tourney, the Cards headed home after suffering a devastating defeat.

Flash forward to last Thursday with the same scenario in play, but this time the Cardinals proved their resilience by claiming the Section 7A title with a convincing 68-43 win.

After a tightly played first half, the Cards led just 28-24, but things changed in the second half. Cromwell-Wright went on a massive 40-19 run to win easily.

"We didn't change anything for the second half, we just shot really well and we went 9-of-10 on 3 pointers in the second half and a total of 62 percent field goals for the game and 68 percent from the 3-point arc for the game," coach Jeff Gronner said. "You're not going to lose often doing that."

In all the Cards hit 13 3-point shots in the game with Taya Hakamaki leading the scoring charge with 28 points. The year before, MIB had changed its defense going into the title game by going to a triangle and two — a move which frustrated the Cards as they strug-



Taya Hakamaki steals the ball from Mountain Iron-Buhl Thursday during Thursday night's championship game at UMD. Defensive pressure all season long is one reason the Cardinals were headed to state this week. MIB had won nine-straight section titles.

gled to score.

"We had prepared all season to see a triangle and two," Gronner said. "Not many teams did it all season so we just had to rely on practice to get better at it. MIB played a triangle about half the game."

It didn't seem to matter what defense was thrown at the Cards

as they handled everything the Rangers could throw at them. Whether it was the 28 points from Taya Hakamaki, or the 15 and 11 points, respectively, from Shaily Hakamaki and Emmalee Hoover, the Cardinals were in top form.

Nothing would get in their way to claim the Section 7A championship.

"They kept switching defenses on us," Gronner said.

"Defensively we switched pretty much all screens and worked to keep girls in front of us. In the first half they shot well, but then we clamped down a little more on the D-end and less of their shots fell."

Continued on Page 16