



Stars OF THE WEEK

Kyle Briesemeister

Minnetonka's senior boys hockey goaltender Kyle Briesemeister did his part with 27 saves as the Skippers beat Prior Lake 3-1 in the Section 2AA semifinals March 20 at Prior Lake.

Paige Bueckers

Former Miss Basketball Paige Bueckers from Hopkins is the leading scorer and also the assist leader for the University of Connecticut women's basketball team in her rookie season. She was named a first-team All-American by the Associated Press. Her scoring average is 19.7 points per game.

Eagles Relay

Eden Prairie's 200-yard medley relay team won the state championship March 19 at the University of Minnesota. Members of the relay are sophomore Luke Logue, senior captain Alex Deng, senior Artem Demidov and Wilson Ellis. EP took third place in the team standings.

Stuart Fish

Hopkins High's senior diver won the state championship with 398.60 points March 19 at the University of Minnesota. The Hopkins aquatics team placed 12th in the team standings.

Ki'ani Lockett

The Minnetonka girls basketball guard was her team's scoring leader in a pair of section wins last week. She scored 23 points in a 68-36 win over Edina and had 14 in the championship game as the Skippers defeated Eden Prairie 57-52.

Luke Logue

Eden Prairie High sophomore Luke Logue won the championship in the 100-yard backstroke in the State Class AA Aquatics Meet at the University of Minnesota. His time was 49.59.

Hunter Newhouse

Two goals by Hunter Newhouse lifted the Minnetonka boys hockey team to a 3-1 section semifinal victory over Prior Lake March 20 at Dakotah Arena.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Minnetonka girls hockey captain Rory Guilday has just scored a goal to give the Skippers a 2-0 lead on the way to a 4-1 win over Holy Family Catholic. Celebrating with Guilday are Olivia LaRoche (2), Kendra Distad (14), Lauren Mack (19) and Hanna Baskin (6).

Tonka girls return to state

Skippers top Holy Family Catholic 4-1 in section hockey

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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A fierce forecheck and good team defense paved the way to Minnetonka's 4-1 win over Holy Family Catholic in the Section 2AA girls hockey finals March 20 at Minnetonka's Pagel Activity Center.

"The win was a team effort and a testament to the leadership of our seniors," Tonka head coach Tracy Cassano said after the game.

Senior defensemen Rory Guilday and Hanna Baskin were dominant performers, not only on defense, but also at the offensive end. Baskin opened Tonka's scoring in the second period with an assist from sophomore Grade Sadura.

In the third period, the Skippers scored again with Guilday converting Kendra Distad's assist. Sadura's goal made the score 3-0 before Holy Family countered with a Power-play goal by Taylor Koepl. Tonka completed the scoring when Lauren Mack scored on an assist from Guilday.

Talking about Guilday and Baskin, coach Cassano noted, "Their presence was felt in all aspects of the game. They each scored a goal and showed a lot of poise with the puck."

It was a game filled with penalties as Holy Family Catholic took eight and Minnetonka took eight.

"I thought it might be that kind of game," Cassano said.

At one point in the second period, two HFC players were in the penalty box for an overlap of a minute and 44 seconds, but the Skippers didn't score in that span. Sedona Blair did a good job in Holy Family's net with 29 saves. Minnetonka goalie

Brynn Dulac faced only 12 shots.

"We controlled the play and had them hemmed in most of the time," Cassano said. "In the second period, I think they had only one shot on goal."

Defense highlighted Minnetonka's other two wins in section play last week.

On March 16 in the opening round, Tonka ran into a hot goalie, but managed to eliminate Prior Lake 2-0 with goals from Alex Alvarez and Distad. Mack and Baskin picked up assists, while Dulac saved all 17 of Prior Lake's shots on goal.

In the semifinals March 18, the Skippers eliminated a pesky Bloomington Jefferson squad 4-2.

Minnetonka jumped ahead 2-0 in the opening period. Sadura had the first goal with an assist from Distad, then defenseman Lauren Goldsworthy scored from Sammie Kittelson and Sadura.

The Skippers made it

3-0 on a goal by Olivia LaRoche in the second period. Assists went to Alvarez and Guilday.

Early in the third period the lead grew to 4-0 when Sammy Schmidt scored from Alvarez and LaRoche.

Jefferson's Jane Lesch and Bella Grant each scored a goal in the final four minutes of the third period.

Dulac stopped 11 of 13 shots, while Jefferson goalie Becky St. George stopped 38 of 42 to keep the game within reach.

"I am incredibly proud of our team," Cassano said. In her second year as Minnetonka's head coach, Cassano is two-for-two on going to state. Last year the Skippers lost a heartbreaker to eventual champion Andover in the state semifinals before winning the third-place hardware.

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Looking AHEAD

State Wrestling

The State Class AAA Wrestling Tournament begins at 9 a.m. Thursday, March 25, at St. Michael-Albertville High. Team competition gets underway at 9 a.m. with the individual portion of the tournament following at 2 p.m.

For individual wrestling, each of the 14 weight-class brackets will include boys who qualified at last week's Super Regionals.

Contenders from Lake Conference schools are led by large contingents from Wayzata and St. Michael-Albertville. Wayzata's leaders are the undefeated Swensen brothers, senior Cael at 152 pounds and freshman Logan at 106 pounds. Adam Cherne also came out of Super Regionals with a championship for Wayzata.

R.J. Chakolis, a defending state champion along with Cael Swensen, will compete for the 220-pound championship after winning at 195 last season. Minnetonka's Quinn Sell and Eden Prairie's Bryce Dagle are two other standouts from the Lake Conference.

St. Michael-Albertville will be the only Lake school competing for the state Class AAA team championship.

State Girls Hockey

State girls hockey opens with a slate of four games Saturday, March 27, at Xcel Energy Center.

Last year's runner-up Edina plays Centennial in the opening game at 11 a.m., and then Minnetonka takes on Alexandria at 1 p.m.

In the lower bracket, defending state champion Andover plays Farmington at 6 p.m. The day closes with the game between Eastview and Stillwater at 8 p.m.

Basketball Finals

In section girls basketball finals at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 25, Minnetonka travels to Chaska in Section 2AAAA and Hopkins hosts Wayzata in Section 6AAAA at Lindbergh Center. Also at 7, the No. 1-seeded Wayzata boys team hosts Cooper in a Section 6AAAA championship contest.

Tonka girls rally for basketball win over EP

Eagles lead most of the game, but Skippers prevail

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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Minnetonka's 57-52 win over Eden Prairie in the semifinals of the Section 2AAAA Girls Basketball Tournament was such a good game that fans on both sides didn't want it to end.

But it had to come to a conclusion. An opponent to face top-seeded Chaska in this week's title game had to be determined.

Eden Prairie led for close to 90 percent of the game, so it was a very tough loss for Eagle coach Ellen Wise and her players.

"We weren't ahead at the time it counted," Wise said. "It was a very well-played game by both teams. It was right there for us to win with the girls executing the game plan perfectly until the end. Minnetonka made big shots late in the game."

Eden Prairie got rolling early in the game and built its lead to 22-11 on a cor-



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Victory meant everything to seniors captains on both sides March 19 at Minnetonka's West Gym. Above, Destinee Bursch of Eden Prairie prepares to drive to the hoop with Minnetonka's Piper Terry blocking her path.

ner three-pointer by sophomore point guard Molly Lenz. A three-pointer by ninth-grade guard Ashley Fritz near the end of the first half sent the teams to their locker rooms with the Eagles holding a 28-20

lead.

In the second half, foul trouble changed the game for both teams. Nia Holloway picked up three fouls in the first half, which hampered her aggressiveness in blocking shots and

rebounding. For Minnetonka, leading scorer Ki'ani Lockett fouled out in the second half with 8:22 remaining. Just before leaving the game, she hit a three-pointer to tied the score 41-41.

"With Ki'ani out, we had to rely on Desiree Ware to handle the ball more," Minnetonka head coach Leah Dasovich said. "We handled the situation. Tori McKinney helped us with the ball handling."

Ware not only handled the ball, but also scored key points down the stretch.

Two key plays put Minnetonka in control of the game for the first time. With 1:34 remaining senior Allah Durkee nailed a three-pointer to put the Skippers ahead 52-49. After getting a stop at the other end, Ware was fouled and calmly sank both free throws for a 54-49 lead. She then made one of two from the line to make it 55-49.

Eden Prairie eighth-grader Tori Schlagel kept her team alive by hitting a three that cut the margin to 55-52 before Ware made two more free throws to settle the outcome. Minnetonka center Sophie Haydon grabbed the last rebound of the game on a missed Eden Prairie shot seconds before time expired.

Despite her exit on fouls, Lockett led Minnetonka with 14 points. Ninth-

grade forward Emma Dasovich came up big with 12 points, 12 rebounds and three assists, plus numerous screens to give teammates opening. Durkee sank 11 points, all at critical times in the game. Ware and McKinney scored eight each.

Lenz led Eden Prairie with 13 points, while Holloway scored 12 and senior guard Destinee Bursch added 10 in her final game as an Eagle. Savanna Jones had five points and Annika Anderson chipped in with four points.

Looking to the section title game, which will begin at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 25, at Chaska High, Dasovich said, "Chaska is a similar team to Eden Prairie, so we won't need to make a lot of tweaks in our game plan in practice this week. We know Chaska is a really good team and that we need to lock in on defense like we did against Eden Prairie in the second half."

Minnetonka is 15-4 going into the championship game, while Chaska is 17-0. The Hawks lost two games to a COVID-19 situation during the regular season. One of them was a matchup against No. 1-ranked Hopkins.

Hopkins-Wayzata III in section girls basketball

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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One thing that's almost as certain as the snow melting in the spring is the Section 6AAAA finals matchup between Hopkins and Wayzata in girls basketball.

Last season Hopkins entered the section title game with two regular-season victories over Wayzata. That is the case again this year. The only difference is that Hopkins enters the finals with a three-year winning streak of 76 games.

When the teams tip off at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 25, at Hopkins Lindbergh Center, the home

team will be heavily favored. The Royals opened this season rich in experience with five players who had all been starters in the past - guards Nu Nu Agara, Amaya Battle and Alayna Contreras and forwards Maya Nnaji and Taylor Woodson. Talented ninth-grade guard Liv McGee joined the returning group as another scoring threat. All that remained for new head coach Tara Starks was putting the pieces in place since Hopkins graduated their leader, Paige Bueckers, who is a first-team Division I All-American as a rookie for the University of Connecticut.

Wayzata head coach Mike

Schumacher knows beating Hopkins this week is a tall order. In regular-season games, the Trojans lost to Hopkins by 50- and 17-point margins.

"Our goal coming into the season was to face Hopkins for the championship," Schumacher said. "Hopkins has been rolling this year."

The Royals are 14-0 going into the title game, while Wayzata stands 13-6 overall.

Ironically, Wayzata has already played two section games and Hopkins has yet to play.

The original section bracket was reduced to seven teams when Cooper bowed out with a

COVID-19 situation. Hopkins was scheduled to play Minneapolis South March 19, but lost that game because of a COVID-19 situation in the South program.

"That is the way it has been in 2021," Schumacher said. "It has been a bizarre season."

The Trojans were missing two players from the lineup March 16 when they beat a tall Armstrong team 69-41 in the opening round of the section playoffs. Wayzata 6-2 senior forward Jenna Johnson scored 27 points, as did Armstrong's 6-3 center, Savannah McGowan. But Johnson's sup-

porting cast was able to come through. Shannon Fornshell scored 12 points, captain Anna Koth scored 10 and Siri Prosser finished with nine.

In the section semifinals March 19, second-seeded Wayzata was back to full strength and hammered third-seeded St. Louis Park.

Johnson was spectacular for Wayzata, scoring 38 points. Junior guard Mara Braun was also in double figures with 10 points and sophomore guard Brynn Senden added seven. The Trojans scored a whopping 50 points in the first half, making the second half academic.

Grace Kuipers makes big plays in section hockey

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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Senior captain Grace Kuipers of the Eden Prairie High girls hockey team closed a brilliant career last week by scoring all three of Eden Prairie's goals in two Section 2AA playoff games.

Eden Prairie defeated Chaska-Chanhassen 1-0 in the first round of the playoffs March 16 with Kuipers scoring the only goal at 4:07 in overtime.

Two nights later the Eagles took a 2-1 lead over Holy Family Catholic on two goals by Kuipers. The first goal came on the power play with Presley Pergande supplying the assist, and the second Kuipers' goal was shorthanded.

"Grace was warrior in the Holy Family game," Eagle head coach Jaime Grossman said. "It was one of the best performances of her career. I just can't say enough about her. She's as tough as they come. I love her heart."

The other standout player in the playoffs for Eden Prairie, senior goalie Molly Goergen, also earned praise from Grossman.

"Without Molly, we don't win that game against Chaska-Chanhassen," Grossman said. "I think she should be a finalist for the Ms. Goalie award this year."

With Kuipers and Goergen graduating this spring, the Eagles will look to a new group of leaders for the 2021-22 season.

"Molly made critical saves for us all sea-

son," Grossman said. "Grace was an All-State player as junior and she deserves it again this year. Next year we will have to focus on becoming a complete team."

The Eagles finished the 2021 season with an overall record of 6-10-3, falling short of the Section 2AA championship team for a rare time in coach Grossman's career at Eden Prairie. The Eagles placed third in the Lake Conference standings behind champion Edina and runner-up Minnetonka.

Eagles, Skippers advance to boys hockey finals

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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Fans were anticipating a great Section 2AA boys hockey championship game, with No. 1 seed Eden Prairie (17-1-2) scheduled to meet No. 3 seed Minnetonka (12-6-2) at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 24, at Eden Prairie Community Center.

In two previous meetings, Eden Prairie won 9-5 and tied Tonka 2-2.

“Minnetonka is a different team than it was last year,” Eden Prairie head coach Lee Smith said. “They are deeper and much more balanced.”

On the way to a second-place finish in the 2020 State Class AA Tournament, Eden Prairie defeated Tonka in the section semifinals.

“We have to be aware of Hunter Newhouse and their first line,” Smith said. “They have Beckett Hendrickson tucked away on the second line, and their third line is a very hard-working group.”

Minnetonka’s task will be to somehow break through Eden Prairie’s big defensemen, who are led by seniors Luke Mit-



Hunter Newhouse of the Minnetonka High boys hockey team celebrates in front of Eden Prairie’s net after scoring in a 2-2 tie with the Eagles earlier this season at Pagel Activity Center.

(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

telstadt and Mason Langenbrunner. If they get the puck inside, the Skippers still have to find a way to get the puck past Zach Hayes, one of the state’s best.

Eden Prairie had little trouble in its first two section games, beating New Prague 9-1 and Holy Family Catholic 6-0.

The win over New Prague featured the Eagles’ 50-15 edge in shots on goal.

Four goals in the first period set the table for an easy victory. Carter Batchelder had two of those goals, while Jackson Blake and Riku Brown had one each. Batchelder completed his hat trick in

the second period with Blake adding his second goal.

Joey Vacek scored on a power play for New Prague to make it 6-1 at the second intermission.

The third period was all Eden Prairie. Drew Holt scored a pair of goals, and then Brown fired in his second goal of the night.

Hayes stopped 11 of the 12 shots he faced before giving way to Cooper Czech, who stopped all three of the shots he faced.

Holy Family Catholic came out fast and physical against the Eagles March 20, holding EP scoreless in the first period.

That changed in the second period when Eden Prairie scored three goals and continued into the third period when the Eagles scored three more.

Holt opened the scoring with assists from Jacob Koering and Langenbrunner, and then defenseman Kam Langefels scored from Mittelstadt and Blake. Langenbrunner scored the third goal of the period on assists from Ethan Peltier and Tyler Marble.

In the third period Holt scored his second goal with defensemen Langefels and Mittelstadt assisting. Oliver Jorgensen scored on Mittelstadt’s assist, and Mittelstadt wrapped up the scoring with a power-play goal on assists from Batchelder and Langenbrunner.

Mittelstadt’s four-point game is not the first of his distinguished prep career.

“Luke is playing at an unbelievably high level this season,” Smith said. “It has all come together for him, offensively and defensively. He’s a gem.”

Minnetonka’s gem is senior forward Hunter Newhouse, the team’s leading scorer.

In the Skippers’ 3-1 semifinal win over Prior Lake March 20 at Dakotah Arena, Newhouse was the best player on the ice. He opened the scoring in the first period on assists from captain Duke Kiffin and Tyler Kueppers. Vinnie Farina gave Tonka a 2-0 lead in the second period when he scored with assists from Hendrickson and Timmy Lagerback.

Tonka put the cap on the victory when Newhouse scored shorthanded on Graham Harris’ assist in the third period. The Lakers got on the board late in the game on a goal by Bennett Soderberg. Kyle Briesemeister was spectacular in Tonka’s goal, saving 27 of 28 Prior Lake shots

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Tonka, EP place second, third in section wrestling

Waconia emerges as team champion

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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Lake Conference rivals Minnetonka and Eden Prairie placed second and third in the recent Section 6AAA Team Wrestling Tournament.

With a 60-19 win over Eden Prairie in the semifinal round, Minnetonka advanced to the finals before losing to section champion Waconia. The Wildcats advance to this week’s State Tournament at St. Michael-Albertville High School.

Minnetonka started fast in its dual-meet win over Eden Prairie.

The Skippers built a 24-0 lead on pins by Charlie Palm (106), Michael Giovinco (113) and Peter Barrett (126) along with a forfeit win by Cory Joos (120).



Eden Prairie’s Bryce Dagal (right) circles his opponent during the Individual Super Regional Meet March 20 at St. Michael-Albertville High School. Dagal reached the finals before losing a 4-2 decision to Cael Swensen from Wayzata at 152 pounds. Both qualified for state this week.

(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Eden Prairie had its first taste of victory in the 132-pound bout with Jax Surprise taking a 3-1 decision from Tonka’s Alex Shanesy.

Diego Pitt scored a pin for Tonka at 138 and

teammate Ethan Stadum followed with a pin at 145.

Eden Prairie captain Bryce Dagal scored a 13-3 major decision at 152 pounds.

After Minnetonka won

on a forfeit at 160, Minnetonka’s Marco Christensen scored the fastest pin of the night in 12 seconds at 170.

Alejandro Torbenson and Quinn Sell of the Skippers followed up

with pins at 182 and 195.

Luc Bouchard of Eden Prairie won by default in his match against Daniel Mbonde. Eden Prairie closed the meet with Will Sather winning at heavyweight.

Minnetonka received a bye in the first round of the tournament, while Eden Prairie defeated Hopkins 57-20 in a first-round match.

Zachary Weisman of Eden Prairie scored a pin at 106 pounds before the teams exchanged forfeit points at 113 and 120.

In one of the most competitive bouts of the night, Tanner Swanson of EP decided Ty Schmidt 5-4 at 126.

Surprise followed with a pin at 132, but Hopkins showed spark with decisions in the next two matches. Mark Gonzales won 7-6 over Eden Prairie’s Lincoln Baune at 138 and Patrick Kubisa won a 17-2 technical fall at 145.

Eden Prairie responded by taking points in the next five matches with

Dagel at 152, Jacory Bates at 160, Tommy Pederson at 170, Julian Berg at 182 and London Bui at 195.

R.J. Chakolis, Hopkins’ senior captain and defending state champion, broke Eden Prairie’s streak with a pin at 220 pounds. Will Sather had his hand raised at heavyweight to close out the meet.

State Meet

Going into the State Class AAA Individual Tournament that begins at 2 p.m. Thursday, March 25, at St. Michael-Albertville, top contenders include Eden Prairie’s Dagel at 152 pounds, Minnetonka’s Sell at 195 and Chakolis from Hopkins at 220.

Two other Lake hopefuls are the Swensen brothers from Wayzata, Cael and Logan, who are both undefeated this season.

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Hopkins hockey season ends with loss to Raiders

By JOHN SHERMAN
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A 10-0 playoff loss to Cretin-Derham Hall was a tough way to end what had been a season of growth and development for the Hopkins High boys hockey team.

First-year head coach Erik Vetsch of the Royals was impressed by Cretin-Derham Hall's speed more than anything else.

"When a team has three lines as fast as theirs, it's hard to stay with them," Vetsch said. Hopkins certainly wasn't sitting back and was able to generate 22 shots on goal, but the Raiders had 57 shots on net.

Freshman goalie Jimmy Davis did the best he could to hold them off and finished with a season-high 47 saves in the first-round Section 6AA game. Wayzata and Benilde-St. Margaret's were scheduled to play for the section championship March 24. Wayzata topped Edina 8-2 in one section semifinal March 20, while Benilde-St. Margaret's eliminated Cretin-Derham Hall 4-0 on the Raiders' home rink.

"We had a great week of practice leading up to the Cretin-Derham Hall



Conor Junker

game," Vetsch said. "In the second period, they took control for four or five minutes, and we had trouble stopping their momentum."

Vetsch praised his seniors for setting the culture in his first year as head coach. "We had great leadership from senior captains Dominic Valentini and Zach Peterson along with [alternate captains] senior Will Nelson and junior Conor Junker.

"Dominic doesn't have an offer for college or Juniors, but he's a 4.0 student, and he will be successful," Vetsch said. "Zach might play club hockey in college. It was

fun to watch him learn to become a leader this season. He was always willing to sacrifice for the greater good of the team."

Other seniors who helped the Royals go 7-10-0 this season are defenseman Hunter Reece and forwards Michael Gretsich and Colin Geiser. Hunter Reece will be missed on defense.

Vetsch is excited about the talent the Royals will have next season, with the young goalie Davis coming back. Davis led the Royals on a four-game winning streak late in the season.

Finn Greeley will be back as a mainstay on defense. "Finn is a show stopper," Vetsch said. "We have a good group of varsity players coming back along with a talented group of Bantams."

Ben Sullivan, Louis DeGiulio and Cade De St. Hubert are returning players who have proven they can score goals.

Other returnees for the 2021-22 season include Junker, Drew Geiser, Nick Hartley, Andre Kristal, Grant Lochner, Ben Pullen, Jacob Reifsteck, Jacob White, Ryan Witte and Lukas Wright.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Chiddi Obiazor shows good form on this two-handed rebound in a 71-45 playoff win over Prior Lake as the Lakers' Malcolm Jones (12) contests. Obiazor had 33 points and 14 rebounds to lead the Eagles.

Eden Prairie boys fall in semis

By JOHN SHERMAN
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The pace of the game was slow and so was the final score as the Chaska Hawks eliminated Eden Prairie from the Section 2AAAA Tournament 48-45 in a semifinal contest March 19 at Eden Prairie.

"To win the game, we had to make some shots," Eden Prairie head coach Dave Flom said. Normally

a good-shooting team, the Eagles struggled.

"It is always hard to lose the last game of the season," Flom said. "Especially when you don't play your best."

Foul trouble plagued EP's leading scorer, 6-5 sophomore center Chiddi Obiazor, who had to sit out part of the first half. He finished with 10 points. Miles Smith led the Eagles with 11 points and Will Foster scored 10. Chaska's leader, Jack Frick,

scored 18 points and teammate Brady Nicholson scored 12.

In the first round of the playoffs March 16, Eden Prairie rolled past Prior Lake 71-45.

"That might have been our best game this season," Flom said. "Chiddi really dominated. He shot 13 of 19 from the field and had 33 points and 14 rebounds."

Seven other Eagles scored - Matt Kelley with nine points, Smith with eight, Jermell Taylor with six, Foster, Tiran and Ryan Warren with four each and Dalal Gaarhaye with three.

Reflecting on the season, coach Flom said, "Will Foster and Cole Tiran, our senior guards, were the bridge from last year's [28-0] team to this year. If we had any chance for success this season, they had to do a phenomenal job. And they did. They are great kids and super mature."

With Obiazor and Taylor returning next year, along with Smith at shooting guard, and Kelley, another guard, the Eagles are in good shape.

"We need a good point guard to emerge," Flom said.

The Eagles finished the 2021 season 12-7 overall and earned sole possession of third place in the final Lake Conference standings with a 6-6 mark. Wayzata (11-1) won the title and Hopkins (9-3) took second place. Buffalo, Edina, Minnetonka and St. Michael-Albertville all tied for fourth place in the league with 4-8 records.

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