

Looking back at first basketball titles for area schools

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There is only one first.

A pair of Vermont high school basketball teams became the first team in school history to win a hoops state title, with the Green Mountain boys winning in Division III and the North Country girls winning in D-II.

Both teams set the blueprint for future teams to follow and will go down in history.

Let's take a look back the first basketball state championship for the Herald coverage teams.

A big shoutout to Vermont Sports History's Paul Stanfield for his database that allowed for a lot of this research.

BOYS Rutland has won eight boys basketball state championships, with its most recent coming in 2018, but 90 years before, in 1928, RHS took home its first title.

Rutland won the 1928 title beating Cathedral High School, the forerunner of Rice Memorial, 20-15. Cathedral led by seven midway though the second quarter, but RHS kept them without a field goal for the final 21 minutes of the game. Rutland beat Northfield and Black River to get to the title game.

Mount St. Joseph finally captured its first state championship in 1954 after losing in four D-I title games previously.

MSJ beat Cathedral 50-42 on that day, after having beaten rival Rutland in the semifinals and Springfield in the quarterfinals. MSJ led by 20 at point in the fourth quarter against Cathedral. Their lead was cut more than in half by the final buzzer, but they held on.

Basil Nichols had 13 points to lead MSJ, while Bob Gilliam had 12.

Fair Haven has won seven state championships with its first coming in 1957 in Division II, a 53-43 win against Peoples Academy. The Slaters were up by four at the half, but a late 13-2 run gave Fair Haven some breathing room to grab its first title.

Vic Ferris starred for the Slaters scored 23 points.

Mill River has reached the top of the mountain twice. The Minutemen's first title came in 1982, when they went 21-2 en route to the D-II championship.

Paul Doaner and Scott Lorimer played a huge role getting Mill River an 11-point first half lead against Fair Haven and they held on for a 61-53 win. Doaner shined on the championship stage with 33 points and 15 rebounds. Fair Haven's Rob Reed had 32 points in that game.

Springfield picked up its first championship in 1946, in Division I. The Cosmos bested Montpelier 41-29 behind a strong middle stretch of the game. Springfield pitched a shutout in the second quarter and led by 10 heading into the fourth.

Percy Clark led the Cosmos with 13 points and Kermit Morrison had 12.

Proctor finished off its 19th state championship on Sunday, but the Phantoms won their first title in 1944, in D-II.

Proctor bested St. Michael's (Montpelier) 30-29. Allen Pratt had a game-high 13 points and hit the game-winning free throw in the closing seconds.

West Rutland has won 13 state championships, with eight of those coming in D-II. The first of those D-II titles came a year after Proctor won its first title.

The Golden Horde bested St. Michael's (Montpelier) 50-40 in the 1945 final. Westside dominated the third quarter to open up a lead after trailing at the half. Leonard Tyl had 16 points to lead the Horde.

Poultney has won 10 state titles with its first coming in D-II in 1939. The Blue Devils beat St. Michael's (Montpelier) 18-17.

Poultney was down by three in the fourth, but Ed Hannon scored the game's final four points to secure the Blue Devils' title.

Green Mountain's first state basketball state title on Sunday, a 52-51 overtime win against Williamstown, featured standout performances like Jack Boyle with his double-double and crucial plays like Branden Rose's late steal.

GM's forerunner, Chester High, took home one title, in 1954, and it was similarly close. On that day, Chester bested St. Michael's (Montpelier) 51-48 in the Division II final. It was Mike Nason who starred for the winners, scoring 35 points, hitting 11 field goals and sinking 13 free throws to knock off the defending champions.

Otter Valley is still in search of its first title. The Otters made the D-II title game in 1985, but fell to Vergennes.

GIRLS Rutland has two girls state championships and one outright championship, which came in 2005.

RHS went 20-4 that season winning the Division I title as a four-seed by beating Middlebury 36-26. The win was revenge for the previous season, where the Tigers eliminated Rutland in the state quarterfinals.

In the final, RHS dominated the second half to pull out the double-digit win. Natalie Marchese and Laura Hassebroek led Rutland with 13 points apiece.

In 2015, Mill River won its lone girls hoops title, beating Lake Region 50-46 in the D-II final to finish off a 19-5 season.

Four free throws in the final minute of the game secured the Minutemen win. Ella Bankert, currently playing soccer at the University of Vermont, led Mill River with 14 points, with eight coming in the fourth. It had been 29 years since their last finals appearance.

Fair Haven fell short of its fourth title and third outright title on Sunday. The Slaters won their first D-II title in 2016, having fallen in the title game four times before that.

Fair Haven knocked off the defending champions Mill River 44-29 behind a dominant run in the second quarter. Alexis Quenneville had 16 points to lead the Slaters.

Mount St. Joseph is known for its four straight D-IV championships from 2015 to 2018, but its first title came in 2002 when it beat Windsor 40-21 in the D-III final. The Mounties went 23-1 that season.

Kim Levins, now an outstanding official and the reigning Proctor-Pittsford women's golf club champion, coached MSJ to that crown.

Mary Crawford led MSJ with 12 points and Lauren Layn had 13 rebounds as the Mounties stifled Windsor.

Proctor has six state titles in its history, following Danville's forfeit last week. The Phantoms had their best run of success with a 3-peat from 2012 to 2014, but won their first title in 1984, in D-III, when they beat Enosburg 47-43 to finish a 21-2 season.

Proctor had a dominant stretch in the third to go up by eight heading into the fourth. The Hornets battled back, but didn't have enough. Nancy Tilden led Proctor with 12 points and Nicky Valente had 11.

West Rutland has three state titles, with its last coming in 2019. The Golden Horde won their first championship in 2006 when they beat Canaan 51-46 in the D-IV title game.

West Rutland, who finished 20-3, led at the half and held off a late Canaan run to win. Melissa Hughes led the Horde with 17 points.

Poultney first went to the state championship in 1990, losing to Richford, but in 2011, the Blue Devils finally won their title.

Behind a 24-point outing for Ali Jones, Poultney blew out Arlington 51-31. Teammate Kelly Festa had a double-double with 16 points and 14 rebounds.

Otter Valley, Springfield and Green Mountain are still in search of their first girls basketball championships.