

2017 North Dakota Youth Basketball State Tournament

Frequently Asked Questions • *Notes by Jeff McCarron, Director*

What is Pacesetter Sports?

Pacesetter Sports was created in 1980 to provide high-level coaching through low-cost basketball camps for players of all ages. Pacesetter grew from offering 8 camps in 1980 to over 100 camps annually throughout North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. In 1992 Pacesetter began offering low-cost varsity/JV tournaments. Since 1993 Pacesetter Sports has conducted a youth basketball state tournament system for Minnesota teams with over 600 teams playing annually. In 2010 Pacesetter added state tournaments in Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota with the top two teams from each state advancing to the Pacesetter Great Four-State Championship at the Target Center in Minneapolis.

What is the background and mission of Pacesetter?

Message from Jeff McCarron, Pacesetter Director

Our mission at Pacesetter is to provide high-quality, low-cost camps and tournaments for players, coaches, and parents. I am from a small town, Sherburn, MN (pop.approx.1100), just 10 miles from the Iowa border north of Estherville - corn and bean country. Our high school team had a "Hoosiers" experience by winning the last single-class state basketball championship in Minnesota in 1970. I had a chance to be on MN Gopher football and basketball teams 1970-72, but when playing both sports was no longer allowed, I decided to play both in the North Central conference at Augustana 1973-75. I have met many players and coaches and fans from the four-state area since that time. My high school coach was from North Dakota (Tolna), and my college coaches were both from South Dakota. One coach, John Thomas, made the cut for the 12-player roster of the Boston Celtics and got me started teaching championship fundamentals at his camps in 1976. I started Pacesetter in 1980. This background is the reason we are focusing our efforts in this four-state area and the reason we focus on helping "Hometown Teams". We love basketball, small towns, teaching kids and providing high-quality experiences at an affordable cost. I thank our staff and all who have participated in making Pacesetter possible for 37 years.

What are the Pacesetter Region Playoffs?

The Pacesetter North Dakota Youth Basketball State Tournament for 2017 will involve a two-region playoff system in Grand Forks/Fargo (EAST) and Dickinson (WEST) leading to the over-all state championships. Each age/gender division in each region will be limited to 16 teams. All teams that enter the region playoffs will play 3-4 games in one day. The top two teams will be invited to advance to the North Dakota Youth Basketball State Tournament in Jamestown.

What is the Pacesetter North Dakota State Tournament?

The Pacesetter North Dakota Youth Basketball State Tournament will feature four teams in each age/gender group in each bracket, which will be a Final Four-style format with a third place game, so all teams will play two full longer games with 8-minute stopped time quarters. The top two teams will be invited to play in the four-state tournament at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul. (Target Center is being remodeled.)

What is the Great Four-State Championship?

The youth champions and runner-up teams from each state are invited to play in the Great Four-State Championship. Players and parents from four states will be treated to a special summer weekend that will provide them with a chance to meet teams from the four-state area, play in a highly-competitive tournament in a world-class setting, and enjoy activities off the court as well. All Great State tournaments are held in conjunction with Minnesota Lynx WNBA games, so players and families attend a game and often join in special fan activities.

Are teams separated by class?

Teams are not separated by class. We will seed the teams roughly based on their team rating in an attempt to balance the bracket and divide the strongest teams. We look at the previous year's bracket to help assess the strength of returning teams. We do not place a WEAK team against a STRONG team. As the tournament progresses, all teams will be playing teams that have fared the same, whether winning or losing, so the competition becomes more balanced as the day progresses.

”How many teams have entered? Who has signed up so far?”

We have made it our policy not to release the number of teams or the names of teams who have registered. The reason for this policy is to prevent teams from being discouraged when the numbers are still in the low range and to prevent our office staff from spending time checking registration lists.

Here is an example of what can happen by releasing numbers: Let's say two teams have registered, and the limit is 16 teams. Six teams call in to ask how many teams have registered. When they are told "two teams", they decide not to register. Had they all registered, we would have had a great 8-team tournament. Instead, the tournament ends up having only two teams and either has to be cancelled or they play a 2-team Best of Three modified play off. We have had three teams on a Friday eight days before a tournament that grew to eight teams by Monday. So...we ask all teams to understand and respect this policy. It is in place to help provide the best possible tournament for all interested teams. *Register early!* It helps our planning.

What if there are fewer than four teams entered?

For this tournament system, two teams always advance to the next stage: two teams from the region advance to state and two teams from state advance to Great State. So we are always seeking two teams. If we have three teams, we will offer teams a 3-team Playoff with teams playing a double round-robin format of half games, followed by full games, so all three teams play two half games and two full games for the equivalent of three full games. Teams are refunded 1/3 of the fee under this format. If we have two teams, the teams are offered a Best of Three format, playing it off like an NBA/WNBA series with the first team to win two games declared the winner. Teams will have the option to play the third game even if one team starts 2-0. Teams are refunded 1/2 the fee under this format. If only one team enters, that team will be declared the winner and automatically advance to the next stage. A third wild card team would be selected from the other region to fill out the 4-team state tournament bracket. If no teams enter a region, the two teams from the other region would be declared state champion and runner-up and automatically advance to Great State.

How are the brackets created? How long will the tournament be?

The format is set for all teams to play 3-4 games. All tournaments with 4-6 teams will involve some shorter pool play games that will be used for seeding into the main tournament. All tournaments with 7-16 teams will play only full games with single elimination from the championship. Teams that lose in the first round will play in the consolation bracket.

We will do our best to avoid scheduling any back-to-back games. If we do, we will allow a rest period. We will also try to play the games as efficiently as possible. Coaches and parents need to be aware that larger tournaments with over 8 teams will require most of the day to complete in order to give teams some time to rest in between games. Teams should schedule some meetings, meals, trips to sites around the area or relaxation time to give the day some positive structure during all "down" time. Managing "down time" well can help build teamwork and mold great "teams".

Do all players have to be from the same school?

All youth teams in grades 4-9 from North Dakota are eligible to enter the state tournament playoffs. All players on a team must either be enrolled in the same school system or live or attend school in the same city, the same school district or the same tribal community. Smaller schools, however, may combine to form one team if the combined enrollment of their high schools grades 9-12 is 400 or fewer. Schools that combine should be from the same area.

Some exceptions include private schools whose "feeder" schools are located in another school district, schools or programs consolidating for the following year and transfer students who have officially enrolled. In these circumstances, players are allowed to play together with their future teammates if the connection is official. The philosophy behind this decision is that the whole system is designed to help "hometown teams", or area community-based teams, improve with their future teammates, and these players are part of that future. A player who is "thinking" about transferring to another school would not be allowed to play for that school.

May players play at an older or younger grade level?

Players may play at an older grade level, but older players may not play at a younger level.

May players play on more than one team?

Players may play at more than one grade level and may even play at two grade levels on the same day if that is the decision of their coaches and parents.

Who advances to Pacesetter "Post season" tournaments?

Teams from each regional tournament are invited to advance to "post-season" tournaments in the summer. The champion and runner-up teams from the EAST and WEST regional sites are invited to play in the North Dakota state championship in Jamestown the weekend of April 1-2. The top two teams in the North Dakota State Tournament will advance to play the top two teams from Minnesota, South Dakota, and Iowa in the 8-team Great Four-State Championships in June or July. Those dates will be posted on our website when they have been finalized.

Can teams play in more than one region?

Teams are welcome to play in both regions. There are several reasons for this provision: 1) The first goal is to provide teams with opportunities to play and to improve through competition. If teams are motivated to play in more than one region, this system provides them with two opportunities. 2) Teams may have conflicts for the tournament closer to their geographical area, so in this case they need to travel farther in order to enter the play-off system. 3) Some tournaments may not have enough teams (min. of 4) from the local region to conduct a full tournament, so the tournament then actually depends on teams from another region to make the bracket. 4) Teams enjoy playing opponents they have not faced during the season, so allowing teams to travel to another region provides the local area teams with competitive variety. 5) Allowing teams to play in another region also strengthens the field for the state championship, providing the strongest teams with more opportunities to join the state championship field.

Why not keep it simple and allow teams to play in only one region?

If both regions provided enough teams (4-16) well in advance to conduct a full tournament for every age/gender group, it would be feasible to adopt this policy, but any advantages may still not outweigh the elimination of the opportunities and benefits outlined above. Even if both regions fielded enough teams, would the benefits of simpler advancement truer to geographical region outweigh the benefits of greater opportunities for teams? That's a tough call. If that circumstance arises in the future, this policy could be re-evaluated at that time.

What happens if a team wins more than one region?

Teams can play in both region tournaments. If one team qualifies at both regional sites, a fourth "wild card" team would be selected by Pacesetter to advance to the state tournament based on their performance in the region tournament.

Which region is designated as our Home Region?

The home region for a team will be the regional site closest by mileage (Google Maps) from the site address to the school address. For teams with combined schools, it would be the closest school in the combined group to the tournament site.

Who should I contact with a question?

Please feel free to email either Tracey Haines, office manager, at tracey@pacesetternet.com or me at jeff@pacesetternet.com or call us at 320-243-7460 with any thoughts or questions.

Thank you for your cooperation and your efforts to make this tournament system a success.

Jeff McCarron
Director