

Wandering Indiana ~



It's March Madness time! I cannot wait for the NCAA basketball tournament to commence. For my Evansville Purple Aces fans, how can you beat the number one team in the country, at the time, Kentucky, then lose your coach and then proceed to lose every game in your conference? I digress, this is about high school basketball and a shout out to those places to wander and the recent results of the girls state tournament and the start of the boys.

Unfortunately, the memories I really have of Indiana high school basketball center around the one class system. All were equal. All competed in the same tournament and there was only one class. Participation awards were still in the future. The small school Centerville Bulldogs traveled 10 miles to take on the mighty Richmond Red Devils – North Central Conference (NCC). There was always a chance but likely not much of a chance. You just never knew because high school basketball was always so unpredictable. One of these days, that victory would come. Although it never happened in my lifetime, it now will never occur because of class basketball, which has been a blessing and a curse both. Again, I digress because in the last couple of weeks, there has been great success with the girls' state tournament – exhilaration as well as tears. Congrats to all those teams that competed!

In today's tournament we crown four champions and although basketball is still king in Indiana, it just isn't what it used to be. The recently crowned four girls state champions and runners up represent much of the state. Can you imagine taking a road trip for a couple of days to visit the eight schools that participated? You would have quite an adventure with many places to visit and would see a cross section of how Hoosiers live in different parts of the state. Try it out!

[Loogootee](#) in Martin County has been known for years as a great basketball hotbed. The girls team took home the state championship, something the boys couldn't do in the single class system but boy were Jack Butcher's teams competitive! The former coach had his small school on even footing with the big boys for such a small school. Pioneer was runner up in the single "A" championship. I must admit, I was not aware of the school's location. You can find the school in northwestern Cass County in the town of Royal Center. I think of the Logansport Berries and their success in the North Central Conference (NCC) back in the day. One of the greatest sports conferences when I was a kid.

Then there is [Linton-Stockton Lady Miners](#) which is found in Greene County home of Phil Harris and the always noticeable signs – You'll Like Linton. The coal mines found in the area give you an understanding of the school's nickname. Frankton happened to be on the losing end of this class 2A basketball game. You would need to travel northeast of Indy to Madison County to visit this small town. Again, a community snuggled up against a NCC team and big-time state powerhouse in Anderson.

Then there is [Northwood](#), yet another school I had to discover. The school is located in far northern Indiana between Wakarusa and Nappanee in Elkhart County. The school is located between many communities with significant basketball history such as Warsaw, Plymouth, South Bend, Elkhart, and Goshen. The Salem girls happened to be on the short end of the scoreboard in the 3A Championship. The county seat of Washington County holds many memories of my childhood being located near one of my favorite campgrounds – Starve Hollow.

And then there was the class 4A Championship which turned out to be quite a ball game. [Lawrence North](#) upended Brownsburg for the championship. The urban school located in northeastern Marion County with a huge history of basketball greatness on the boys side with Jack Keefer as their coach and his many championship caliber teams. While Northwestern is found in Howard County northwest of Kokomo, another NCC dominated community in the past, where the Lady Tigers have made a name for themselves and had great success over the past several years.

Congratulations to the girls teams that have competed over the past several weeks. Competing in sports and other school activities helps our students mature and become well rounded citizens. Our tour around Indiana has only just begun. The boys' tournament is in full swing and there will be many places to visit, wander and discuss next time. Take a tour, take your time and enjoy. And dare I say, we might need to wander around the country for the NCAA Championship as well. Send us your places to travel!