

## **Bossier High has most impressive basketball start in parish**

Written by Jerry Byrd  
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Bossier High is off to a 6-2 starts in the 2012-13 high school boys' basketball season.

Coach Jeremiah Williams' Bossier Bearkats beat Airline 61-50 in their first test against a parish opponent.

Haughton, which is 4-3 under new coach Brian St. Andre, is the only other parish team with a winning record.

Class A Louisiana New Tech (Plain Dealing) was 0-4 before a 50-41 win over Parkway, with the only close loss being a 70-66 decision against Calvary Baptist. Parkway's only win in the Panthers' first four games was a 63-60 squeaker past Benton.

Most teams that win state basketball championships have at least one All-State player, but that isn't always the case. In 1994, when Byrd beat St. Augustine (New Orleans) 48-47 to win the Class 5A championship, neither of the finalists had an All-State player.

Byrd, which finished that season with a 33-6 record, was coached by Delbert Clinton, who was selected 5A Coach of the Year.

Even the legendary coaches in Louisiana high school basketball history went through tough times. In girls' basketball, Steve McDowell's first two Southwood teams had losing records before launching their amazing streak of 18 straight 30-win seasons that included 10 state championships. Two of those teams (2000, 2002) were 36-0.

Of course, it is much too early in this season for anybody to be thinking about the state playoffs, much less a state championship.

Coach Chris White's Airline Vikings won only two of their first six games this season, beating

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Benton 84-61 and Hammond 62-56. Their losses were to Northwood, Woodlawn (Baton Rouge), Sterlington and Bossier High.

Bossier High is the last Bossier Parish school to win a state championship in basketball. The Bearkats were Class 4A state champs in 2011, beating Peabody (Alexandria) 59-48 in the championship game, and reached the Class 3A finals last season, falling to Richwood 67-55.

In 1960, a Bossier High team coached by John McConathy was the first Bossier Parish team to win a state basketball championship, beating DeLaSalle (New Orleans) 39-35 in the Class 3A (then the top class) title game, played in the tiny gym at the end of the school building that is now known as the girls' gym. DeLaSalle, coached by Johnny Altobello, had won three state championships in a row, and was hoping to become the first school in any class to win four straight titles.

Cecil Upshaw and Dennis Kile were All-Staters on that Bearkat team, which set a school record that still stands with a 41-4 record.

The first Bossier High team that reached the state finals was the 1948-49 edition, which was Frank Lampkin's first season as the Bearkats' basketball coach. Bobby Ray McHalfey and Tommy Woodall were All-Staters on that team, which posted a 28-12 record but fell to Many, 46-27, in the championship game. A Bearkat team coached by Bill Collinsworth reached the state finals in the top class (3A) in 1968, falling to unbeaten Baton Rouge High, 77-62.

Haughton teams coached by Billy Montgomery won Class A state championships in 1968 and 1969. Kenny Covington was the All-State Most Valuable Player and Benny DePrang also made All-State for the 1969 state champs, who had a 38-2 record. Covington was also the All-State MVP on the 1968 team, which posted a 29-9 record, and Montgomery was selected Coach of the Year by the Louisiana Sports Writers' Association.

**Jerry Byrd is the former sports editor of the Bossier Press-Tribune and an award-winning columnist. Check out a few hundred of his columns on [www.jerrybyrd.com](http://www.jerrybyrd.com). You can contact him by E-mail at [jbsportswriter@comcast.net](mailto:jbsportswriter@comcast.net)**