

Green Oaks blocks Bearkats' path to another 1-3A title

Written by Jerry Byrd
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After a 3-2 start this season, Bossier High's Bearkats carry a 25-3 record and 12-game winning streak into the final week of regular-season basketball play.

Coach Jeremiah Williams' Bearkats play Loyola Tuesday night in a rematch of a 30-point blowout win and travel to Green Oaks Friday night to try to wrap up another District 1-3A championship against a team that Bossier squeezed past, 40-39, in the first round of district play.

Four senior starters on the Bearkat team, ranked No. 1 in Class 3A by the Louisiana Sports Writers' Association, are 6-5 Rashard Owens, 6-4 Tevin Robertson, 5-11 Deorvion Robinson and 5-11 Breon Morris. The fifth starter is 6-2 junior Devonte Hall.

Bossier High has more than 30 wins in each of its last four seasons, reaching the state finals all four years. But the Bearkats would have to win both games this week and three more in the state playoffs to keep their streak of 30-win seasons alive.

The Bearkats' only loss since the first five games of the season was a 43-42 loss to Ouachita in the championship game of Airline's Doc Edwards tournament. Ouachita, 24-3, is ranked No. 2 in Class 5A by the sports writers.

This week, Williams is more concerned about keeping a streak of five consecutive district championships alive.

Bossier High is the only Bossier Parish team with a winning overall record in boys' basketball this year, but Plain Dealing (9-10) is in position for another District 1-A championship after the Lions' 64-51 victory over Ringgold Friday night.

Defense has been the key to Bossier's success this season. Only one of Bossier High's last 15 opponents has scored more than 45 points against the Bearkats. That was Class 5A Captain Shreve, in a 60-51 loss to Bossier.

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The Bearkats' rich basketball tradition started in the 1948-49 season, when a team coached by Frank Lampkin posted a 28-12 record and reached the Class A state finals (then the second highest class) before falling to Many, 46-27. Bobby Ray McHalfey and Tommy Woodall were All-Staters on that Bearkat team.

The first state championship came in 1960, when a team coached by John McConathy set a Caddo-Bossier record for total wins that still stands with a 41-4 record, capped by by a 39-35 win over DeLaSalle (New Orleans) in the Class 3A (then the top class) title game. Cecil Upshaw and Dennis Kile were All-Staters on that team.

The 1962-63 season was the year of the "Big Three" in Caddo-Bossier basketball as state champion Fair Park, Byrd and Bossier High were considered the best three teams in the state, regardless of class. Fair Park was 32-5, Byrd was 32-4 and Bossier High, coached by George Nattin, was 29-7. The Bearkats' seven losses, all to Byrd and Fair Park, were by a combined margin of 13 points, and Bossier didn't qualify for the state playoffs. Tommy Thigpen, who went to LSU, and Bobby Misso, who went to Louisiana Tech, led that Bearkat team.

Scotty Robertson, who was Byrd's coach in the "Big Three" season, later coached at Louisiana Tech, and became the first head coach of the New Orleans Jazz in the National Basketball Association. But before he went into college and pro coaching, he ended his high school coaching career with three straight district championships at Byrd. But neither Robertson nor any other local high school coach ever came close to Williams' streak of four straight 30-win seasons (with a chance to make it five this year).

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