

Doc Edwards tournament gets under way today

Written by Russell Hedges

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One thing is certain in the 2012 Doc Edwards Invitational high school basketball tournament. There will be a new girls champion.

Southwood, which won the tournament the last two years, isn't in this year's field.

That leaves no clear favorite in the girls field.

Defending champion Huntington, Bossier and Ouachita are the favorites in the boys' field.

The annual tournament, which features 14 boys and 16 girls teams, gets under way today at four parish gyms — Airline, Bossier, Benton High and Benton Middle.

The semifinals will be played at Airline, the tournament's host, Friday. The consolation, third-place and championship games will be held at the CenturyLink Center Saturday.

Tickets are \$7 through Friday. For games at the CenturyLink Saturday, they are \$14 for all day or \$8 per session.

Huntington defeated Airline 71-64 in last year's boys title game.

The Raiders are off to an 9-1 start this season with their only loss coming against Bossier 72-53 on Dec. 6.

Ouachita (11-4) and Bossier (11-2) split a pair of games. The Lions won 60-45 on Nov. 21 and the Bearkats won 63-62 on Dec. 18.

Last season, Ouachita went into the Class 5A playoffs as the No. 2 seed but was upset in the second round.

The Lions have a pair of wins over Richwood, which defeated Bossier in the Class 3A state title game last season.

Some of the top players that will be on display include Huntington's Brandon Sheppard, Chance Chambers and Jeremy Jones, Bossier's Tevin Robertson and Devonte Hall, and Louisiana New Tech at Plain Dealing's Cardarrious Ray and Deaumante Johnson.

Robertson, Hall and Ray were all first-team All-Parish selections last season.

Today could also mark the return of Airline All-Parish guard Hayden Hildebrand, who underwent knee surgery for a torn meniscus in late November.

Bossier received a first-round bye and will play the winner of today's first-round game between Houghton and Green Oaks Thursday at 7 p.m. at Bossier.

The Bearkats, who last won the tournament in 2009, lost to Southwood in the quarterfinals last year.

In other boys' first-round games involving parish schools today, Airline (2-8) plays Red River (5-6) at 7 at Airline, Louisiana New Tech (3-6) faces Captain Shreve (4-9) at 8:30 at Airline, and Parkway (3-7) plays Pelican (13-4) at 7 at Benton Middle.

The girls field features two defending state champions — Class C Pelican (17-1) and Class 1A Louisiana New Tech at Plain Dealing (6-4).

Pelican has won 14 straight since falling to Florien 60-56 on Nov. 3.

Today's first-round game against Class 4A Huntington (6-7) will be Pelican's first game this season against a team in a higher class than 1A.

Louisiana New Tech has perhaps the tournament's top player in senior guard Dennisha Chambers. The 5-foot-4 Chambers, last season's 1A Outstanding Player, is averaging about 35 points per game.

She is the only returning starter for coach Shelia Dupree, who otherwise has a young lineup that includes two seventh-graders.

Captain Shreve (10-1) brings a seven-game winning streak into the tournament. The Lady

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Gators, who open against Mansfield (9-6), could meet Pelican in the quarterfinals. Benton (8-4), last year's runner-up, opens against North Webster (0-8) tonight at 7 at Benton. Haughton (7-3), which has gotten off to a good start, faces Northwood (1-9) at Benton Middle at 8:30.

Airline (6-7) and Bossier (5-7) square off in a first-round game at 7 at Airline.

The girls field features two Texas teams — Carthage High School and Nacogdoches High School. They play each other in the only first-round game to be played Thursday.