

Woodlawn looks to continue postseason win streak

Oblong, Nokomis, North Clay stand in the way

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ALTAMONT - Once again the **Woodlawn Cardinals** find themselves the favorite heading into their sixth-consecutive sectional.

No other school can make that claim since the state went to four classes in 2007-08.

Coach Shane Witzel has his team playing well without question, winning their own regional with wins over South Central and Christ Our Rock Lutheran.

Gabe Owens is a 6-foot-5 senior guard who is a major threat from the outside.

Owens is long enough to get his shot away against most forwards and he can post up smaller guards.

He leads the team with 16.4 points a game and 4.4 rebounds.

Owens has hit 42 percent of his 3-pointers this season while also having a 2-to-1 assist to turnover ratio, which is excellent.

He is tops on the team in free throw shooting at 83 percent.

Second on the club with 10.7 points a game is Kris Harlow, a 6-foot-1 senior guard/forward. Harlow can also fill it up from behind the arc (35 percent) and grabs over three rebounds a contest.

Logan Isaac, a 6-foot senior, has added scoring punch to a lineup that averages 63.4 points a game.

Coach Shane Witzel (365-135 including this season) has a group of role players who are Academy Award types, all filling in the blanks this season in supporting roles.

With a 25-3 record, the Cards are primed for another trip to Peoria but this time around this might be a much tougher gauntlet of opponents than what they have faced in the past.

Oblong has been anxious for another crack at the Cardinals since Coach Brent Harper's club dropped a heart-breaking 53-51 decision last March at the Red Hill Sectional.

This year's Panthers have waged a war against some much bigger schools this season.

Oblong is now 21-11 after dismantling Dieterich, 61-46 last Saturday night to capture their second consecutive IA Regional title.

Anthony Johnson, a 6-foot-4 senior, is the leader of this Panther pack.

His 25.1 points a game is one of the top averages in the State of Illinois and he leads the club with 9.6 rebounds a night.

Johnson is being courted by some Division II schools, including the University of Southern Indiana.

He tallied 17-points and grabbed 11-rebounds in the win over the Maroons.

Second on the team is Collin Meese, a 5-foot-9 senior guard (9.2 p.p.g.).

Six-foot-two senior Gerald Richardson adds 7.2 points a night.

Oblong also has Kyle Knollenberg, a 6-foot senior guard, who can dial up long distance as he hit a pair of big 3-pointers in the regional title game.

The list of teams that Oblong has lost to is impressive. Newton topped the Panthers four times this season, twice in tournament title games.

The have also lost to Robinson, Casey-Westfield, Flora and Marshall. All five of those teams

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combined for a 111-33 won-loss mark.

Nokomis is the wild-card in this deck, having played arguably the toughest schedule of this group.

Coach Steve Kimbro is no stranger to postseason play as his Redskins have won over 600-games in his tenure and captured the second place trophy in 2008.

That season his club took the same path as this season, heading south through the Carbondale Super.

In fact they are the only team to hand Woodlawn a sectional defeat in this run, a 61-52 loss at Nokomis.

This season, Nokomis won the Litchfield Invitational Tournament, beating three consecutive large schools (Pana, Columbia and Roxana) to capture the crown.

Nokomis is 21-9 but after dropping their first four games of the season, have played well.

The Redskins have won 13-of-14, including a pair of close victories over St. Elmo and Altamont to win the St. Elmo IA Regional title last Friday night, rallying late in the Altamont game for their 17th regional championship.

This year's team is led by 6-foot-1 senior Devon Wright who is averaging about 17 points a contest.

Tyler Herpstreith, a 5-foot-5 senior guard, 6-foot-2 senior forward Austin Leigh and 5-foot-11 senior Evan Huber have all contributed in this run.

Five of the Redskins' losses have come to 4A Granite City and 3A schools Alton Marquette, Taylorville, Troy Triad and Bethalto Civic Memorial.

They have split a pair of games with Pana and have beaten four National Trail Conference teams (Beecher City, Stewardson-Strasburg, Altamont and St. Elmo).

Louisville North Clay pulled the mild upset on Friday night, topping top-seed Cisne 62-59 to win the Edwards County IA Regional Championship for head coach Brian Wattles.

The Cardinals are led by Logan Hilderbrand, a 6-foot-4 senior, who leads the 14-11 club with 15-points and 11-rebounds a contest.

Nate Micklantz, a 6-foot-3 senior forward, averaged 12 p.p.g. this season for North Clay while 6-foot-3 senior Cody Yoho chipped has added seven a night.

Lawson Britton, a 5-foot-9 junior guard, has added to the mixture in the backcourt by tossing in seven points a game as well.

Dylan Walker, a 6-foot-2 senior, is another one in the backcourt for the Cards while 5-foot-10 Adam Cox is a sophomore who is usually the first player off the bench for Coach Wattles.

The Cardinals have lost to both Woodlawn and Oblong this season but have won six-straight games and are 15-11 heading into the sectional.

ABV Projected Champion – Woodlawn.

Jack Bullock is the Editor/Web Publisher of A Baseline View.com. For the past 15-seasons, ABV has covered boy's high school basketball in southern Illinois. Previews, Rankings, Scores, Standings, Tournament Brackets and Game Stories for over 100-teams.