

Last County Tournament Starts Next Week with No Favorite

Next Year All Schools will go Directly to Sectional Tournaments

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Believe it or not – tournament time is almost here. The last Putnam County high school basketball tournament will get under way next week. Opening games are scheduled for Thursday night. The tourney dates are February 13, 14, 15, 21 and 22.

The meet has been advanced more than a week ahead of last year's dates. Drawings will be conducted Saturday morning in the assembly room of the court house in Ottawa starting at 10 o'clock.

This will be the 41st annual tournament and the last time that all county schools will compete against each other in a single tournament. Next year there will be no county tourneys anywhere in the state and all schools will go directly into sectional tournaments.

The Ohio High School Athletic Association voted recently to do away with tournaments on the county level because, in too many counties, there are only two or three schools due to consolidations.

This will also be the last time that Ottawa and Glandorf schools will compete against other Putnam County fives in tournament action. Next year the Ottawa-Glandorf consolidation will be in Class AA competition.

At Saturday's drawings, Miller City, Kalida and Ottoville will be seeded along with the team which finishes fourth in the county league standings. The drawing is done on the basis of the final league standings.

IF THE LEAGUE ends in a three-way tie as expected, the three co-champions will draw into separate brackets. Glandorf has the inside edge for the fourth seeded position, but there is still a possibility that Columbus Grove, now in fifth place, could tie the Dragons should the latter be upset by Ottawa on Friday. The remaining, six teams will then draw for positions in the order that they finish in the league.

The tournament set-up will be the same as last year with four gymnasiums being used and two games per night. First and second round games and semi-finals will be at Columbus Grove, Pandora-Gilboa, Glandorf and Ottoville. No team will play on its home floor and a gymnasium will not be used on a night that school's team is playing.

The consolation and championship game will be at Delphos St. John's gymnasium on Saturday night, February 22. Game times will be 7:30 except for the finals at Delphos, which will start at 7:00 o'clock.

Willis Hartman, athletic director at Leipsic, is this year's tournament manager. The tournament committee, which will select the sites and make other important decisions, consists of Supt. John Phillips, Kalida, Lester Latta, Jr., Leipsic and Edward Rieman, Miller City.

FOR THE FIRST time in many a year, there can be no clear cut favorite in the tournament. With three teams going into the final round of league play tied for first place and a good possibility to finish in a three-way for the first time in history, anyone of them could walk off with the final honors.

Two others, Glandorf and Columbus Grove, have to be considered definite possibilities; the Dragons for the consistent good showing throughout the season and Columbus Grove for its late winning surge and the return of Don Hamilton to the lineup.

Miller City was considered probably one of the strongest contingents around in the early part of the season, but they were defeated this year by Ottoville and Kalida, the defending champion, who also came close to beating them on the Miller City floor.

Ottoville, the team with the best overall record in the county, owns a victory over every other team in the county. They lost to Kalida in a league encounter but later beat the Wildcats in a non-league game. The Big Green play Ft. Jennings in their final league game this Friday, but they have already beaten the Musketeers in a non-leaguer.

WITH THIS the final county tournament, the distinction of being the winningest school in history of tournament play will remain with Vaughnsville. Although the former Vikings won their 1st tournament in 1945, they have a record of 10 tournament champions including the first one in 1924.

Next best is shared by Ottoville and Leipsic who have seven apiece. Miller City has won five tourney crowns.

All of the other present schools have at least one championship, although four of them, Continental, Ft. Jennings, Glandorf and Kalida have only one apiece. Columbus Grove has been the top dog twice, while the crown has rested in Ottawa four times, twice with Ottawa Public and twice with Sts. Peter and Paul. The former Blanchard school at Gilboa is the only high school in Putnam County never to have won the tournament.