

 SATURDAY, FEB. 29 Partly Cloudy High 46 Low 26	 SUNDAY, MARCH 1 Mostly Sunny High 46 Low 29	 MONDAY, MARCH 2 Partly Cloudy High 48 Low 35	 TUESDAY, MARCH 3 Partly Cloudy High 51 Low 32
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STATE 1A REGIONAL BOYS BASKETBALL: No. 14 King's knocks Deer Park out of tournament

BOWING OUT: King's pulls away from Deer Park in second half, despite 11 points from NEA League MVP Jobi Gelder

STAFF REPORTS

Chewelah Independent

No. 14-seeded King's eliminated No. 11-seeded Deer Park in the regional round of the State 1A Boys Basketball

Tournament on Friday at West Valley High School.

The Stags, fresh off their second-straight District 7 Tournament title, fell behind 26-19 at halftime and would end up losing 62-44 as King's Tyler Linhardt poured in 20 points.

Deer Park finished the year 16-7 overall and was led by Hunter Dryden's 11 points in the matchup against King's. It was the second straight year King's ended Deer Park's season.

Down 26-19 at halftime, King's was able to hold the line in the third quarter and led 43-33 heading into the fourth quarter. A comeback would not be in the cards for the Stags as the Knights added eight points to their lead in the final stanza.

NEA League MVP Jobi Gelder and Jake Black each scored 10 points for Deer Park. Former Chewelah player Dawson Youngblood notched six points for the Stags as well. The loss snaps a three-game winning streak for Deer Park and was their

lowest point total since a 41-38 loss to Newport back on Jan. 28. It was well below their 57 points-per-game average this season. Deer Park will graduate five seniors including Gelder, but will return First Team All-Leaguer Dawson Youngblood next year.

The other NEA League team in the playoffs was district second place team Freeman, which lost to Omak 67-62 last week in the crossover round of the playoffs.

BASKETBALL

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during the summer and had the team goal of making it to the Spokane Arena. Early in the season, the Bulldogs had its record sitting at 4-4 after a 54-39 loss to highly-regarded St. George's on Jan. 4. Kettle Falls would go on to win five of their next six matchups and began to catch the notice of local basketball fans.

In the district tournament, the Bulldogs ripped off victories against Reardan, Davenport and Lind-Ritzville/Sprague to punch their ticket to state. For many players, they had been waiting for this their entire lifetime.

"Our guys are playing with energy and confidence," Stewart said. "This team has been through adversity, not only this season but in previous seasons. We have guys who put in a tremendous amount of work from the end of last season until now. They have learned how prepare and how to win. The improvement has been steady and continuous. Having seven seniors, I think our maturity shows."

To advance to the District 7 2B third-place game, the Bulldogs faced off against a very good Lind-Ritzville/Sprague team that had a 16-7 record. In the close matchup, it took a go-ahead three-pointer by Cade McKern with less than a minute to go to eliminate the Broncos from the postseason.

Clutch McKern, as some newspaper reporters know him, scored 14 points in the fourth quarter and 20 overall, while scoring machine Matthew Thompson added 10 points. Thompson eclipsed the 1,000-point mark for his career earlier in the year. While these two certainly get attention from the other team, it's Kettle Falls depth that has allowed it to climb new heights this year.

"Everyone seems to know about Matthew Thompson and Cade McKern by now," Stewart said. "They are our playmakers. Matthew is a three-time all-league selection and he's scored close to 1,300 points in his career. He has tremendous skill and body control and he's extremely competitive."

McKern is a one of a kind player, Stewart added saying he has "old man game" where he played the game with incredible vision and unwavering confidence.

"But his is a team game and we have several other key players who did big things for our team without the same recognition," Stewart said.

Carter Matney is a two year starter who Stewart thinks is one of the best on-ball defenders in the league.

"He's a really tough kid who always keeps a level head," Stewart said.

Morgan Keller is another two-year starter who continues to make strides for the Bulldogs as an inside presence on both ends of the court.

"He's a smart player and he's playing with confidence," Stewart said.

Then the Bulldogs have more seniors that come off the bench and give steady minutes. Those seniors are Pheonix Dodson, Eli Gergison and Tylor Feist. In playoff basketball, depth comes into play in a big way and when Kettle Falls has players they can rely on, it gives them an advantage down the stretch.

Underclassman have been a plus too, with two sophomores making a big impact.

"Braylen Pfeffer starts for us and shows nice potential while Isaac Bair is another solid ball-handler who often plays in crunch time," Stewart said. "So yeah, we can talk about Thompson and McKern but every one of these guys, including three others on the deep bench, have been key to our success."

Coming to Mt. Spokane High School today will be a No. 13-seeded Darrington team that is coming off a big dramatic finish in the district playoffs to advance to the state tournament.

"We know they are resilient and tough," Stewart said. "They can score inside and out."

A win against Darrington would get the Bulldogs to the Spokane Arena, which almost makes their state experience a home game as many fans could make the drive down for the State 2B Tournament.

"While it feels amazing to be in this position, we still need one more win to reach our ultimate goal of playing in the arena," Stewart said. "If we can do it, then we'll be setting new goals for next week."

Judging from the Kettle Falls' players rising to the occasion in the district tournament, the high-pressure nature of regionals shouldn't phase them as they've been waiting and working on this for a long time.

"These guys are not afraid of the moment, they just want to make it last as long as possible," Stewart said.



The St. George's basketball team is taking on the defending 2B football champs, Onalaska, today at Mt. Spokane High School at 2 p.m. *Courtesy photo*

SELKIRK HEADING WEST FOR 1B REGIONAL MATCHUP AGAINST TACOMA BAPTIST

The Rangers, fresh off an amazing football season, advanced to the State 1B Tournament for the first time since 2005. They'll be hitting the road with a No. 13 seed and playing No. 12 Tacoma Baptist in the regional round of the State 1B Basketball Tournament today at Rogers High School in Puyallup.

For 15-8 Selkirk, there have been no easy gimmies in the loaded 1B leagues across Eastern Washington. After advancing to the district title game for the first time since 1973 against Odessa, they thought that might earn them a higher seed. This also happened during football season when a one-loss season netted them a low seed and a first-round state matchup against an All-Century Odessa football squad.

"We are underrated and hoping to prove the rankings wrong by going out and playing hard on Saturday to get the win," Selkirk basketball player and former Chewelah resident Jay Link said.

Selkirk started the basketball season 5-1 and then hit a stretch in their schedule where they played higher classification teams and dropped three matchups. They righted the ship by winning five of the next six games and late in the season they posted a four-game winning streak as well to finish tied with Cusick at the top of the NE 1B North standings thanks to a 12-3 league record.

"We have grown tremendously and have gotten to an elite level to compete with what I believe anyone in the state," Link said. "We can game plan and match up with anyone we encounter."

The Rangers average 57 points per game, while Tacoma Baptist averages about 58 points per game, which could equate to a high-flying regional matchup.

"My team has been watching film on them all week to prepare," Link said. "They like to penetrate and kick out to the open man on the elbow to shoot threes. They shoot a lot of threes."

Link added that the Crusaders like to run a 2-2-1 press and then drop back into a 2-3 zone which is to the Rangers' advantage since they have good shooters and match up well against a zone defense.

"Everyone has their role and knows it very well," Link said.

All-league player Ryan Zimmerman leads the team well with his ability to single out any defender and share the ball to any open teammates, while Zech Curran is a lock down defender and plays the passing lane really well, also taking the ball to the hole with force.

Fellow all-league player Justin Krabbenhoft has a really nice jumper from mid-range and goes hard for the rebounds, while Steven Davis plays really hard in the post and uses his strength to throw guys around for positioning to score and rebound. Then there is Link.

"I like to spread the court and knock down threes, while also taking it to the hoop when a defender over plays me," Link said.

The engine of the team lies within Luke Couch who is always hustling for balls and always gives his all when out on the court.

"He is a quick defender with a lot of energy," Link said. Ty Taylor also rolls up the sleeves and is always talking on defense and hyping players up, Link added, which shows great leadership.

"He also fills into our point guard position well by pushing the ball up the court," Link said.

Tipoff is at 4 p.m. today, and if Selkirk wins, they'll be appearing at the Spokane Arena in a loaded 1B field that is sure to see a lot of great games.

FOOTBALL STATE CHAMP ONALASKA TAKES ON ST. GEORGE'S ON THE HARDWOOD

(Jordan Nailon of the Centralia Chronicle and Longview Daily News wrote this story)

The Onalaska Loggers of the hardwood are the only boys team from Lewis County standing after placing third in the District 4 2B Tournament. Chewelah fans may recognize Onalaska and Lewis County as being football hotbeds, but this time around it's the NE 2B League team that looks like the powerhouse going into regionals.

After tying for third place in the Central 2B League the boys from Onalaska were able to finish third in the district tournament and enter the Regional tournament with a number seven seed. They will face the highly-regarded St. George's Dragons on Saturday at 2 p.m. at Mt. Spokane.

The Dragons, who won the NE 2B North outright and reside in North Spokane, won't be making a big drive, while the Loggers will be charging over the mountains to play a game for seeding purposes.

Onalaska suffered a stilted start to their season following a long run to a state title on the gridiron, and started to find their groove somewhere near the end of January.

"For sure we're playing our best ball right now. I think we've won nine of our last ten games," said Onalaska coach Wayne Nelson. "We had 14 games in January and Alex (Frazier) missed most of those. Then when he came back it took us a little while to get our rotation back but somewhere along the line we started playing with a lot more emotion. Our confidence has grown."

Still, Nelson believes his team will have their hands full with St. George's, and team that went 19-4 overall and 10-0 in NE 2B North League play.

"They are big. They've got about three kids who are 6'6" or 6'5". One of their guards is 6'3" and a good shooter. Their 5'9" guard can also dunk the ball, and that's a nice skill to have. We certainly don't have that skill," noted Nelson.

Nelson added that St. George's has lost to No. 1-ranked Liberty twice this season but lamented that he hadn't been able to learn much else early in the week.

The Loggers will rely on the ability of Carter Whitehead to facilitate the offense from the point guard spot as well as the inside presence of Kayden Allison. Onalaska will also need help from shooters like Danny Dalsted, Ashton Haight, and Cade Lawrence to keep the opposing defense honest.

Nelson believes the championship pedigree of his charges has carried over from the football field to the basketball court to help carry his team through a harried league schedule and then a district slate that included three straight loser-out contests.

"I think it helped quite a bit. As a matter of fact I was counting on our football experience to help our basketball team. One thing we were lacking was confidence coming into the year and playing in big games," Nelson said. "By nature our football guys are really not afraid of anybody. They are not intimidated by people."

Winners of the RPI top-8 teams in the 2B tournament will get a first round bye, while the losers will have to play a first-round matchup against the winners of the RPI bottom-8-ranked team regional matchups.

The state tournament brackets for both the 1B and 2B state tournaments will be drastically different after this weekend, and NE Washington fans are hoping they will have a few local teams to cheer on down at the Spokane Arena.

THE INDEPENDENT

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