

# Championship SEND-OFF

## Trio of seniors cap off legendary careers with a State Title

As the clock counted down and the student section chanted "I believe that we just won," seniors Maya McDermott, Kendall Nead and Maddie Mock had finally done what they had fallen just short in the past three years. A state championship.

Johnston came out hot. Firing on all cylinders against a Waukee squad who had just beaten its two state tournament opponents by an average margin of 31.5 points, the Dragons jumped out to a 24-14 lead at the end of the first quarter. Many in the crowd were shocked, but Nead said this was eerily similar to the first meeting between the two teams.

"The first quarter was very similar to the last time we played them (Waukee)," Nead said. "Jilek (coach Chad) told us how we don't want them to battle back and get all the way to us, which they actually did, which is when we had to fight back."

The younger Waukee team did fire right back. Led by dynamite scorer Katie Dinnebler, Waukee outscored the Dragons 34-23 over the second and third quarters to take a one point lead into the fourth quarter. That was when the senior-laden Dragons, conducted by point guard McDermott, took over.

"We went hard in practice, talked on defense and played as a team," UNI commit McDermott said. "That's what made the difference."

Sophomore Anna Gossling, McDermott's "shooter", had 10 fourth-quarter points. Nead was unstoppable all game down low scoring 21 points. Mock had 11 rebounds, including four in the fourth quarter. All led by dynamic point guard McDermott who trusted her teammates in the biggest moments. She had nine assists.

With the final seconds ticking down, the girls went crazy on the court after knowing they had just won a title so many others were so close to.

"It was surreal," McDermott said. "Something I'll never forget."

"I can't stop smiling," Nead said in an interview after the game.

"These girls deserve it more than anybody," Jilek said.



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Senior Maya McDermott hoists up the trophy in front of the deafening Dragon Nation. McDermott will go down as one of the greats to ever play high school basketball in the state. She holds Johnston career records in points (1615), PPG (16.8), assists (437), steals (196), made FG (587), threes made (212), state tournament points and threes made (136 and 8), and eight state games played alongside her fellow seniors Mock and Nead. Single season-wise she holds the records for threes made (70 in '19-'20 and also holds 2 and 3), 3P% (45.8 in '19-'20), and assists (139 in '18-'19). Finally she holds single game records in threes made (7 vs multiple teams), assists (15 vs Ames), points in a state tournament game (30 vs SEP), and most importantly to her, she brought a state championship to Johnston. Photo by: Cameron DeRoos



Senior Kendall Nead fights through traffic in a 75-71 win over S. E. Polk in the State Quarterfinals. The Wisconsin-Milwaukee signee was unstoppable in this game, scoring 24 points while pulling down five rebounds and shooting 50% from the field. Nead was named First team All-Conference, All-District, and All-State. She was also named to the All Tournament team for 5A alongside fellow teammate Maya McDermott. Nead set the single season record for field goals made in her senior season with 205. Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti



Fighting through junior All-State guard Katie Dinnebie's foul is senior Maddie Mock. Mock gritted through a sprained ankle suffered in the substate final, yet she showed grit and played 81.25% of the minutes at the state tournament to help lead Johnston to their first state championship in girls' basketball. The Western Illinois signee was a four-year varsity player, starting her final three years. Mock leaves Johnston as one of the all time greats, holding the all time records in games played (100), wins (86), rebounds in the State Tournament (61), rebounds in a game (21 vs SEP), and is tied alongside fellow seniors Maya McDermott and Kendall Nead in State Tournament games played (8). Photo by: Cameron DeRoos

Senior Maya McDermott drives past a Waukee defender in the state championship game. While McDermott was known as someone who could score at will, she took a different approach in her final high school game. The UNI commit dished out nine assists, had two steals, blocked four shots despite being the smallest on the court, and when it mattered most McDermott made clutch shots at the end to put the game away and go out a state champion.

Probing the zone defense is sophomore Zoey Buchanan. Buchanan was the sixth man on the team, being the first person off the bench and giving the starting guards a break when needed. Her best game of the year was against Mason City where she scored 14 points on 57% shooting. Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti



Sophomore Anna Gossling shoots over the outstretched arms of a Iowa City High defender in a 71-61 win in the State Semifinals. Gossling came into state averaging 9.2 PPG, but stepped up her game in a major way when the lights shined the brightest. At the state tournament she averaged 15.7 PPG while shooting an astonishing 62% (fifth at the state tournament). Not only did she up her scoring, but against S.E. Polk Gossling made the three that put Johnston ahead for good after trailing by as much as six. Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti

Junior Kinsey Jilek drives past Iowa City High star Ashley Joens in the state semi-finals. The daughter of head coach Chad Jilek, Kinsey started nearly every game. She finished fourth on the team in rebounds.

Driving to the basket is freshman Molly Noelck in a 71-61 win over Iowa City High. While Noelck's numbers may not have signaled someone who contributed a lot, she had two of the most memorable moments of the State Championship season. First, in a game against Dowling Catholic and their top five in the nation recruit Caitlin Clark, Noelck gathered a rebound and shot a mid-range at the buzzer to break the tie and win the game for Johnston 72-70. Then against IC High, the offense was sputtering and the key players were struggling. Then, Noelck came in and buried three straight threes to help spark the offense. Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti



Emerging through the smoke is senior Maddie Mock. Mock was a key cog in her four years on varsity tallying over 500 rebounds in her career.

## RECORD BLOCK

- vs #2\* North Polk W 74-64
  - @ #5 WDM Valley W 74-40
  - vs #4 Cedar Falls (at Coe College) L 57-58
  - vs DSM North W 73-32
  - @ #6 Waukee W 67-57
  - vs #13 Ankeny Centennial W 47-44
  - vs DSM East W 71-25
  - vs #3 Dowling Catholic W 72-70
  - vs #8 Urbandale W 62-43
  - vs Sioux City East W 61-59
  - @ #9\*\* Mason City W 76-52
  - vs DSM Roosevelt W 68-50
  - @ #10 Ankeny Centennial W 62-57 OT
  - vs Ankeny W 70-60
  - @ #3 Dowling Catholic L 57-75
  - vs #12 Ames W 64-50
  - @ #9 Urbandale W 62-45
  - vs DSM Lincoln W 81-57
  - @ #13 Ames W 66-54
  - @ #5 Southeast Polk W 79-70
  - @ Ankeny W 76-38
  - vs Marshalltown (Substate Semi-Final) W 65-19
  - vs #15 Council Bluffs Abraham Lincoln (Substate Final) W 66-45
  - vs #6 Southeast Polk (State Quarterfinal) W 75-71
  - vs #2 Iowa City High (State Semi-Final) W 71-61
  - vs #1 Waukee (State Championship) W 69-65
- \*Denotes 3A Ranking  
\*\*Denotes 4A Rankings  
(All rankings courtesy of IGHSAU)

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