

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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