

State Tournament

The first state tournament sponsored by the Iowa Girls' High School Athletic Union was held at Hampton in 1926. Twenty-three tournaments have been held since then and the 1950 meeting will mark the Silver Anniversary of the holding of the colorful event under the auspices of the Union. Few sporting events in Iowa history can match in growth and popularity this dazzling spectacle.

The five matches held between 1926 and 1930 inclusive were not much unlike those that had just preceded them. They were held in small towns with limited tournament facilities and in an era when dirt and gravel roads still prevailed. Hampton won the round robin final (which incidentally was held at Hampton) by defeating Mystic 57 to 27. The won and lost record for the top teams at the end of the 1926 tournament was as follows: Hampton won 3 and lost 0; Audubon won 2 and lost 1; Ida Grove won 1 and lost 2; and Mystic won 0 and lost 3. The following year Newhall beat Sioux Center 38 to 37 for the championship. Ida Grove won in 1928 and 1929; Perry beat Ida Grove in the 1930 finals by a score of 26 to 18.

The next tournament in Des Moines, following Audubon's win over Ottumwa in 1921, came in

1931. Bert McGrane, nationally known sports writer for the Des Moines *Register* and *Tribune*, was employed as manager. L. C. (Clarence) Kurtz, Jr., capital city hardware merchant, immediately took an interest in the girls' fortunes, and he and McGrane have taken an active part since that time. In 1950, Bert McGrane still manages the get-together, and Kurtz serves as chairman of the Des Moines committee.

That 1931 tournament was a gala affair. It was the first time the finals had been staged in a field house or gymnasium with large seating capacity. In fact, the Drake field house was so "adequate" that the 2,500 people who saw the Thursday night session, and the 3,000 who came to the Saturday finals, were almost lost in the grandstand seats.

Most of those 1931 teams appeared in uniforms with quarter-length sleeves and bloomers. Avoca, coached by O. H. Rutenbeck, probably pioneered the modern suit at this conclave. The Avoca girls wore sleeveless, form-fitting, wool jerseys with straight shorts — the latter not as abbreviated as those worn today. Whitemore also showed the trend of the times. Its striped knit blouses were a breakaway, but they paired with old style bloomers and long stockings. After one game the girls discarded the stockings. The Lamont girls wore stylish, 2½-inch webbed belts with their outfits.

The pre-tourney favorite chosen by the Des Moines *Register* and *Tribune* was Audubon. But

Bert McGrane expressed his doubts after watching Avoca's first contest. "Avoca loomed as a powerful combination in its 27-9 victory over Lamont, and the fans were inclined to favor Avoca for a place in the finals. The ability of Kathleen Ferguson and Della Brammann, co-captains of the Avoca team, to out-maneuver the Lamont guards, was a big factor in the Avoca victory Thursday."

Avoca came out of the second round with flying colors, taking the measure of strong Aplington, 28-23. Frank Brody, another Des Moines sports writer, wrote: "Avoca . . . plays a cool and calculated type of game. Its offense is very methodical and it works block plays in fine style."

But a dark horse was making itself known. Centerville beat Whittemore (with its famed Langerman twins, Geneva and Josephine, making their first appearance in state tourney play) after Whittemore had upset favored Audubon, 13-10. "Centerville has shown the most fight during the tournament," Brody wrote, "the entire team risking arm and limb to drive after loose balls. Nothing seems impossible for these misses from downstate."

Similar to the tournaments of today, those of yesteryear sometimes were hampered — especially from a crowd standpoint — by the weather. Attendance at the semi-finals and finals in 1931 was cut by a heavy snowstorm that blew out of the northwest and caused cancellation of special trains

that had been arranged to come from Centerville, via Albia, to Des Moines, and from Avoca to Des Moines. Many Avoca fans, undaunted, battled snowdrifts all day Saturday in an effort to reach Des Moines for the finals. For Avoca did get to the finals, along with Centerville.

That was one of the tussles of the century. At the end of the first quarter, the score was 3-all. At the half, Avoca led, 9 to 6, and increased the margin during the third quarter to 14 to 10. Then Centerville came on. A substitute forward named Agnesson entered the game in the fourth period, and promptly scored two baskets to tie up the ball game. A free throw put Centerville ahead for the second time that night (they had scored first). Down to the wire, the two teams came. Thirty seconds to go! Then Centerville committed a foul. Della Brammann stepped up to the free throw line, and coolly and calmly dropped in the point that tied things again at 15 to 15. That's the way the game ended.

In the overtime, each team fouled — and missed the free throw. Then Brammann turned up again, this time with a deadly pass to Ferguson, driving in — even in those days. Ferguson scored, neatly.

Centerville never had a chance after that. Avoca's center court intercepted or broke up attempt after attempt of the Centerville guards to get the ball into the forecourt. Anna Kuhr, Avoca side-center, was outstanding — as she had been



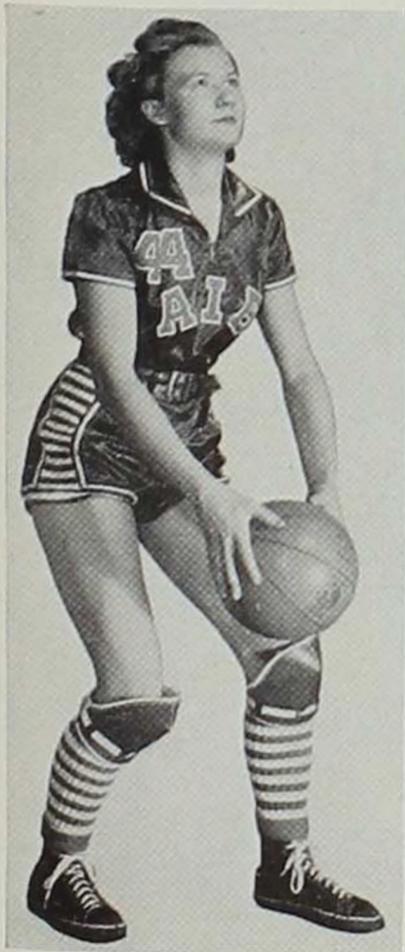
Verdelle Schuneman
Steamboat Rock



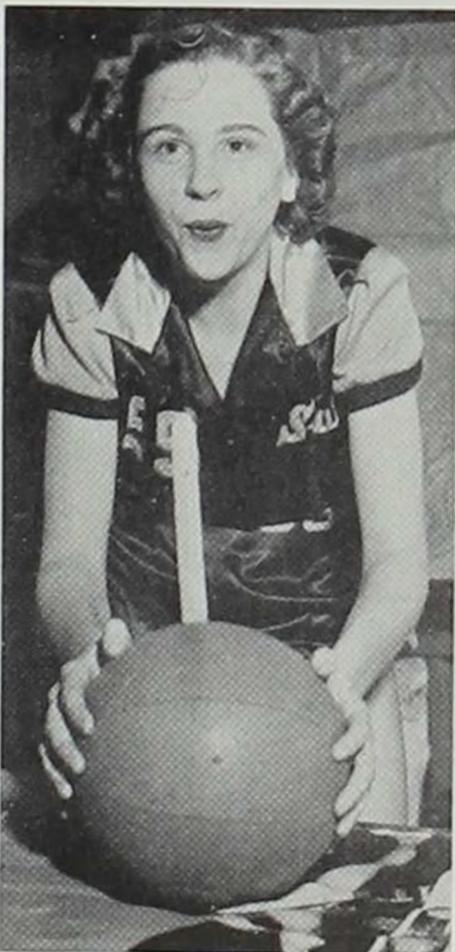
Arlys Van Langen
Kamrar



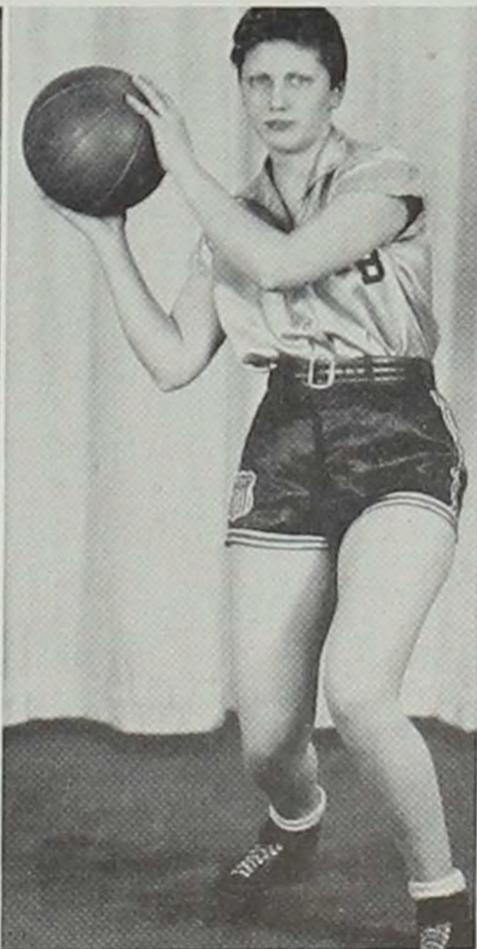
Helen Corrick
Keswick



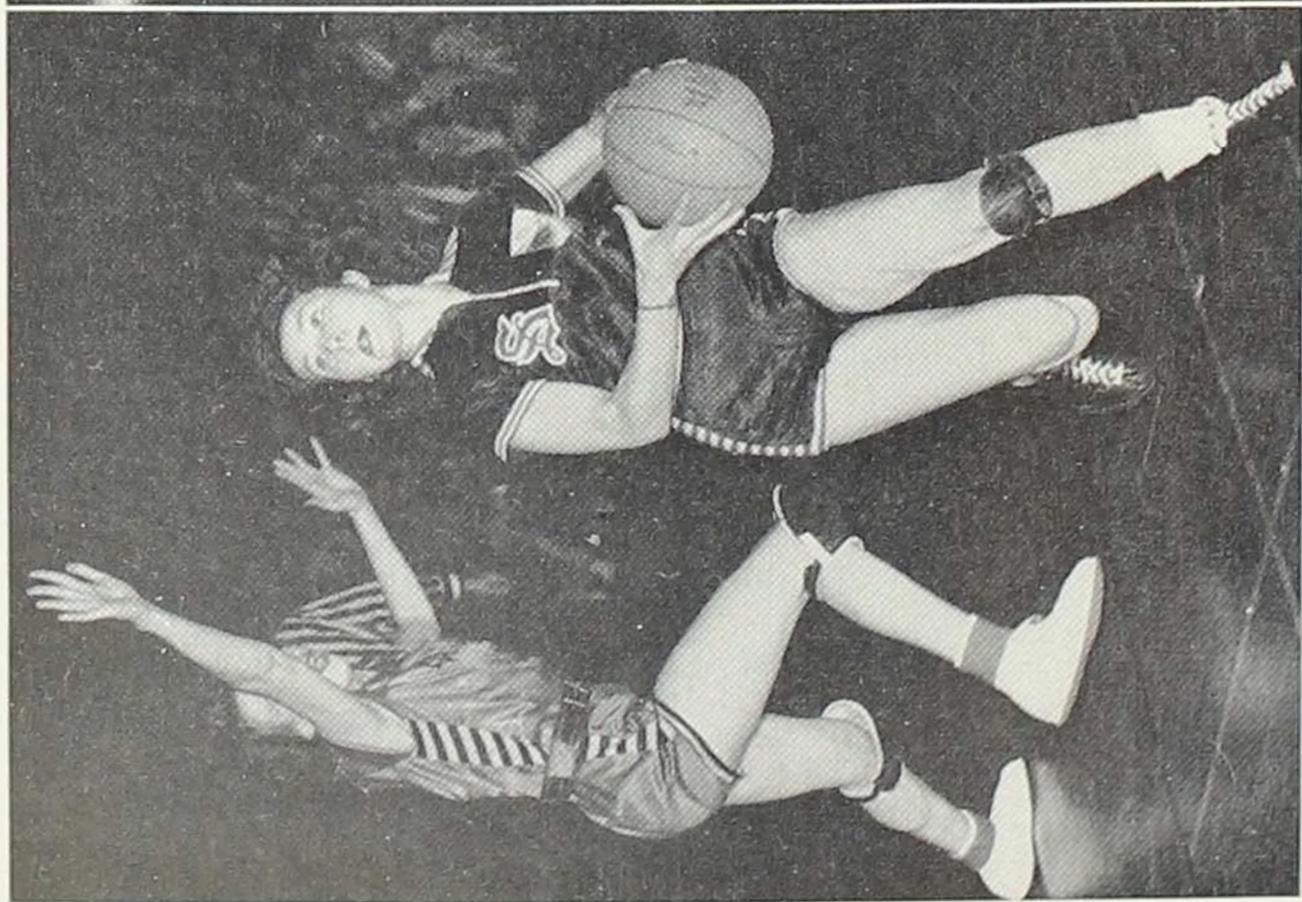
Lorraine Phillips
Hartley



Margaret Middents
Slater



Mildred Moore
Hillsboro



SHIRLEY JARMAN SHOOT'S
Seymour v. Coon Rapids (1945)



FRANCES PETERSON SHOOT'S
Rippey v. Waukee at District Meet

all season. When the ball did get through, Margaret Plahn, Avoca guard, clamped down so hard that the Centerville forwards couldn't get off a shot.

Plahn is a good example of Avoca's spirit. After Avoca's first game in the tournament, Margaret received word of her grandmother's death at Anita. She left Des Moines immediately to attend the funeral; then hurried back to her team. She left Anita Saturday morning at 8:30, and for nearly nine hours bucked snowdrifts in an automobile, arriving in Des Moines at 5 P. M., ready to play. Although her coach refused to permit her to play the entire game because of the strain it would be on a tired girl, Margaret did get in long enough to help clinch the championship.

Avoca won, 17 to 15. The team triumphed over such Centerville standouts as Bentzinger, a forward, and Randolph, a guard. Three of the Avoca girls made the *Register's* all-tourney team, and a fourth, Margaret Olsen, guard, was added in the *Tribune's* selection. Here is the *Register's* pick:

Forward.....	Kathleen Ferguson, Avoca
Forward.....	Della Brammann, Avoca
Side Center.....	Anna Kuhr, Avoca
Jumping Center..	Geneva Langerman, Whittemore
Guard.....	Claudia Groteluschen, Audubon
Guard.....	Pauline Randolph, Centerville

After the excitement of victory had died down

a bit, the Avoca fans who had so valiantly battled the snowdrifts to support their team, came up with a noble idea to commemorate the event. They selected one of the snow shovels used to whip the Dallas County highways, decorated it with the school colors of blue and white, and presented it to the champions, properly emblazoned with the words, "Champs, 1931."

State tournament crowds continued to be disappointing until 1934, when Valley Junction (now West Des Moines) earned its way to the classic. The following year Johnston Station, a virtual suburb of Des Moines, won the right to compete. From that year the crowds have shown an increase gratifying to girls' basketball fans. The 1949 tourney played to capacity houses throughout the eight sessions. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights saw late comers being turned away.

Since 1926 a total of 129 different schools have competed in the girls' state basketball championship tournaments. These schools have been represented by 271 teams and 3,252 players have seen action. While some schools seem to be perennial visitors to the state tournament, Iowans from sixty-six counties have watched their sextets battle their way into the state championship tournament. Seymour has sent 11 teams to the tournament, Wellsburg 10, Centerville 9, Waterville and Wiota 8, and Mallard 7. Clutier, Coon Rapids, Hansell, and Steamboat Rock have made 6 trips

to the tournament, while Audubon, Numa, Ida Grove, Olin, and West Bend have been represented by 5 tournament teams.

County, sectional, and district battles are always very competitive — and many fine teams are left behind. Thus, in 1933, Hillsboro, Cincinnati, and Laurel were tied at the end of their district round robin at Richland. The coaches refused to let the elimination contest go further and agreed to draw to see which school should represent the district in the state finals. Hillsboro won the draw and placed second in the state finals — losing to Hampton 33 to 22. It was in this contest that Geneva Langerman scored all 33 points for victorious Hampton. It is interesting to speculate as to whether Cincinnati or Laurel would have done as well as or better than Hillsboro and won the title.

It is one thing to make the tournament; it is another to reach the championship finals. For example, Waterville has sent 8 teams to the state tournament and never won the championship. The girls from Allamakee County did get into the finals twice — losing to Hansell 59 to 20 in the most lopsided championship score, and getting nosed out by Guthrie Center in 1937 by a score of 30 to 26. Mallard has gone to the tournament 7 times and never won, although it did reach the finals in 1941 when it lost to Numa 43 to 39. Parkersburg, on the other hand, has been to the tournament only once (1932) when it won the cham-

pionship. Parkersburg beat Centerville that year 40 to 18, with the aid of the brilliant Langerman twins, whose family had moved from Whittemore to Parkersburg before settling in their senior year at Hampton. Six teams — Centerville, Hampton, Ida Grove, Wellsburg, West Bend, and Wiota — have won the championship twice since 1926.

The Des Moines *Register* and the Des Moines *Tribune* were the first major newspapers to recognize girls' basketball as a big sport in Iowa. For eleven years Jack North has selected a girls' all-state team, in addition to his boys' football and basketball groups.

In 1946 the Iowa Daily Press Association, whose newspapers throughout the state had gradually increased their coverage of girls' basketball, began to select all-state teams. Of late years as many as nine radio stations have covered part or all of the play. Probably the pioneer announcer of the sport is Gene Shumate of KSO, while Brad Wilson of the *Register* wrote tournament stories when, in his own words, he suffered from loneliness while covering the affair from the east balcony of the Drake field house. At present with the enlarged facilities at the Des Moines university, even standing room is at a premium for the final games.

In 1934, sixteen teams were brought to the finals. With the exception of 1943 — the strictest gas rationing war year — this practice has contin-

ued. Only eight teams were allowed in 1943.

Excellent officiating has marked tournament play. Henry Hasbrouck, then director of the Y. M. C. A. in Des Moines, was one of the first officials who refereed the games alone. Later four officials were brought in; in 1945 eight were selected. Since then, a bench of officials has been added. Referees who are veterans of state tournaments are M. M. Rogers of Lytton (now superintendent at Sumner), Melvin Walker of Ottumwa, and Ben Beckerman of Des Moines. Walker is officiating his eighth consecutive state classic in 1950 — a tournament record.

The transitions through which the state tournament has gone since its beginning have been many and varied. The attendance has jumped from around 3,000 for all games in 1926 to 40,000 in 1949. Spectators saw the advent of two-court ball in 1935, the season climaxed by Centerville's first championship. Throughout the years there has been a constant re-designing of uniforms, to insure more freedom — and the glamorizing of them. During O. E. Lester's coaching career (Hillsboro, Van Meter, Hartley, and Oakland), Mrs. Lester has made nine sets of suits for his various teams, initiating the midriff style while at Hartley. Hollywood has nothing on Iowa girls' basketball.

The game has developed from a contest where girls posed and shot, to a contest replete with fast-breaking forwards who can lay the ball in the bas-

ket with their eyes shut — the development brought about by the rule, passed in 1941, permitting guards to tie up the ball when an opponent is in the act of shooting.

In retrospect, the game has developed from one of almost stationary players, to one with the accent on short, fast passes, thence to domination by agile pivot posters, and the defensive guarders of the pivot posters. Passing before the eyes of state tournament supporters have been the baseball passes and double screens of Wiota; the improvement in shooting eyes from 1934, when Anna Meyer of Aplington won the scoring championship with 90 points, to the 1948 mark of Arlys Van Langen of Kamrar, who pounded the hoop for a record of 142. The day of the low-scoring forwards is past. Currently girls are vying to beat the record hung up a year ago by Helen Corrick of Keswick — 1,323 points in a single season, 3,271 in a three-year career. Then, too, these supporters have seen the methodical sagacity of the Slater team and the tenacity of Seymour.

The buildup to the state tournament attracts more interest; now fans find it difficult to get seats at the sectional tournaments, and it has been found necessary to hold the district meets in large towns, in order to provide for the crowds.

Running the gauntlet in this tournament that has mushroomed into one of the foremost spectator sports in Iowa have been a veritable galaxy of

girl basketball stars. Instead of Ardella Knoop of Clutier, expert basketeer, we have an entire army of Knoops of Clutier. It is as if Ardella, by her adeptness, epitomizes a development in the game. In the same fields, we see parades of poised Rosses and Etjens of Wellsburg, Armstrongs of Wiota, Randolphs of Centerville, Menckes of Hartley, Tometichs of Numa, Moores of Hillsboro, Gearharts of West Bend, Killingers of Wales-Lincoln, Jarmans of Seymour on down to the present-day stars on parade that resemble the Dorothy Welps and the Arlys Van Langens of Kamrar and the Mona Van Steenbergens of Prairie City.

It is this type of Iowa girl — clean, healthy, vibrant, sportsmanlike, that has on three different occasions faced the champions of Texas. Fine coaching and excellent team play have allowed the teams representing the Hawkeye State to win two out of three games from the girls from the Lone Star State. In 1948, the Mesquite girls came up from Dallas County and played Kamrar, losing by a score of 36 to 33 before 7,200 rabid fans — the largest crowd ever to jam the Drake field house.

In 1949 the Seagoville, Texas, team came up from Dallas County to play Wellsburg two games, one at Des Moines and the other at the Waterloo Civic Auditorium. Seagoville won the first game 39 to 35, playing under Texas rules. The next night, at Waterloo, Wellsburg tri-

umphed by a score of 35 to 19. Many fans hope the series will be continued with the winner of the Iowa High School Girls' Basket Ball Union tournament facing the champions of Texas, or perhaps some other state champion.

It is a far cry from the day when girls' basketball was first played at Dubuque, Ottumwa, or Davenport. The growth in popularity during the next half-century may be equally great, but it is doubtful if the future champions will eclipse those of our own day.

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