

2009 STOP-DWI Holiday Classic
Day 1 – December 28th, 2009
By Ryan Connolly

Game 1

Regional Division I

Johnson City High School (<i>Johnson City, NY</i>).....	58
Vestal High School (<i>Vestal, NY</i>).....	54

Opening day of the 2009 STOP-DWI Holiday Classic got underway Monday morning with Regional Division I action pitting the Golden Bears of Vestal High School and the Wildcats of Johnson City. Vestal is coming off a 3rd Place finish at last years Holiday Classic, knocking off local rival Union-Endicott High in the Third Place game after falling to Norwich in a first round heartbreaker, 53-52. They are led by 6'8" senior, Josh Bailey and classmates, Adam Smith and Gabe Pickett. The Wildcats are making their third appearance in the Holiday Classic, their last coming in 2003 in which they took home 3rd Place honors in Regional Division I. They feature a pair of STAC All-Central Division players, Troy Robinson (13ppg) and Ronald Teekasingh (13ppg).

The first half was a display of sloppy basketball as the two teams combined for 19 turnovers and 25 fouls. However, neither team took advantage of their time at the line; Vestal shooting 41.2% and Johnson City making good on only 47.1% Vestal jumped out front early using an 11-0 run spanning 5:20 of the first quarter. Bailey attacked in the paint, finding himself at the line nine times, but converting on only four of them. Johnson City stormed back in the second quarter as Troy Robinson came alive with eight points. At quarters end, Johnson City held a four point lead, 28-24. Vestal's Adam Smith led all scorers with nine points, and Bailey topped all rebounders in the half with eight.

Johnson City stretched its lead early in the second half, getting steady point production from a cast of Wildcats. At the midway point of the 3rd quarter, they had spread the gap to nine. However, a big three from Dan Kerns and a three-point-play from Colin Gerner with the quarter winding down cut the lead back down to four, 45-41. Vestal made it a one possession ball game as Bailey finished a tough bucket underneath with just over a minute to play, however, that was as close as it would get. Vestal was forced to foul down the stretch and Johnson City converted, pulling away and putting themselves in the Regional Division I Championship, 58-54.

Robinson added 11 more in the second half to lead all scorers in the game with 19. Gerner was tops for the Bears with 15, and Picked up a double-double on 12 points and 10 rebounds.

Vestal falls to the 3rd Place game and will play Seton Catholic on Tuesday, December 29th at 9:30am. Johnson City will face Norwich in the Regional Division I Championship game on Wednesday, December 30th at 7:30pm.

Game 2

National Division

Landstown High School (<i>Landstown, VA</i>).....	55
South Laurel High School (<i>London, KY</i>).....	56

National Division play at the 2009 STOP-DWI Holiday Classic tipped off with newcomer South Laurel High School taking on the Eagles of Landstown High. South Laurel features second team All-State senior Matt St. John (21ppg and 11rpg) and second team All-Region selection Matt Watkins (11ppg). Landstown is making its second appearance in the Holiday Classic – the first coming in 2005 when a Percy Harvin (Minnesota Vikings rookie wide receiver) led Eagles team fell short of the title, falling to Taft High School in the Championship game, 60-52. They are led by a trio of seniors who averaged double digit points last season, Reggie Williams (10ppg), Julian Norfleet (11ppg) and Darryl Woodmore (12ppg).

Turnovers were the story for the Cardinal of South Laurel in the first half, committing 15, all within the first quarter and a half of play. Landstown took advantage of the miscues and used their athleticism to get to rim and create open jumpshots on the break. Shortly into the second quarter, the Eagles held an 11 point lead, 21-10. South Laurel calmed down shortly thereafter and fundamental ball movement created open buckets in the paint, and at the end of the half, they found themselves down only two, 25-23. St. John led all scorers with 10 points, and Williams and Woodmore collected nine and eight respectively to lead Landstown in the half.

In the second stanza, it was a back and forth scoring battle, as the game saw seven lead changes in the half, the biggest coming with only 4.5 seconds to play. Clinging to a 55-54 lead with 43 seconds remaining, Landstown coughed it up trying to break the Cardinal press, giving South Laurel a golden opportunity to take the final lead of the game. Watkins missed on a runner in the lane, but the rebound deflected off a Landstown player and out of bounds giving the Cardinals another shot at the win, this time, with just over 11 seconds to play. On the ensuing inbound, senior Josh Karr went to rim, and was fouled sending him to the line for two with 4.5 showing on the scoreboard. Karr stepped up and knocked down both for the Cardinals, giving them the lead, 56-55, one that would last until the final horn.

South Laurel made the necessary adjustments at half, shooting a solid 64.7% from the field in the second half, let primarily by St. John, who finished with a game high 19, with teammate Watkins pitching in 16 of his own. Williams and Norfleet were best for the Eagles with 15 a piece, and Woodmore tacked on 14 in the game as well.

Landstown moves to the consolation bracket and will play Our Lady of Good Counsel on Tuesday, December 29th at 1:00pm. South Laurel moves on in the winners bracket and will face Boys and Girls on Tuesday December 29th at 7:30pm.

Game 3

National Division

Villa Angela St. Joseph High School (<i>Cleveland, OH</i>).....	45
Christ the King High School (<i>Middle Village, NY</i>).....	65

Game three of the 2009 STOP-DWI Holiday Classic featured National Division play between the two-time defending champions Christ the King High out of New York City, and the Vikings from Villa Angela St. Joseph. In his first year as coach, Joe Arbitello sends junior guard Corey Edwards, 6'7" senior Dominykas Milka and 6'4" senior Maurice Barrow, amongst other talents, to the floor for the Royals. Seniors Jeff Albert, Jermaine Williams, and 6'7" freshman phenom Demonte Flannigan head the Viking charge into the 2009 Holiday Classic.

The first quarter played even as the two teams traded mini runs to the tune of a 14-13 Christ the King advantage at quarters end. As the horn sounded to start the second quarter, the wheels began to fall off for the Vikings of Villa Angela. They netted only five points in the quarter, three of them coming off a deep shot by Sidney Weeks with just seconds remaining in the half. Heading into the break, Christ the King had complete control of the contest, 34-18. Barrow led all scorers in the first half with 12 points on 6-10 shooting.

Villa Angela failed to find inspiration or an answer for Christ the King in the locker room at half. The lead grew to the 26 by the end of the third quarter, and the Royal reserves wouldn't relinquish in the fourth as Christ the King rolled into the quarterfinals with a 65-45 win. Barrow's 14 were best for the Royals in the contest and Devin Carter of Villa Angela led all scorers with 15 points. In only 19 minutes, Flannigan picked up a game high 13 rebounds.

Villa Angela falls to the consolation bracket and will play Binghamton on Tuesday, December 29th at 2:45pm. Christ the King faces King's Fork on Tuesday, December 29th at 9:15pm.

Game 4

Regional Division I

Seton Catholic Central (<i>Binghamton, NY</i>).....	53
Norwich High School (<i>Norwich, NY</i>).....	63

The evening session of the 2009 STOP-DWI Holiday Classic got underway with Regional Division I action between local rivals Seton Catholic and Norwich. The Saints have been a mainstay in the Holiday Classic for the past five years, claiming two Regional Division I titles during that time span. The most recent came in last year's tournament as they toppled none other than the Purple Tornado of Norwich, 64-57. They are led by seniors Bob Garbade, Joe Martin and sophomore Tom Torto. The Purple Tornado will look to seniors Derek Hughes, Richie Bonnie and 2008 Regional Division I All-Star Josh Borfitz to lead Norwich to their first title since 2001.

In the first half, Norwich rode the hot hand of Borfitz who made good on three three-pointers in the first quarter alone, and tacked on another as the half came to an end. Seton Catholic and Tom Torto used a pair of 9-2 runs at the end of each quarter to stay even with Borfitz and the Purple Tornado. Borfitz finished perfect from the field, including a 4-4 effort from beyond the arc in the first half to lead all scorers with 16 points. Torto was tops for the Saints in the half with nine. Borfitz and his effort from three-point land was the difference in the half, and Norwich went to locker room with a seven point cushion, 35-28.

Norwich pulled away early in the second half, going on a 9-4 run of their own, stretching the lead to double figures for the first time in the contest, 44-32. Once again, Seton relied on the short offensive burst to pull back into the game, and this time they roared all the way back within one, 52-51, with four minutes to play. However, it was short lived as Borfitz delivered the dagger – his fifth three of the night, and Norwich pulled away down the stretch, cruising to the win, 63-53.

Borfitz was nearly perfect on the night, hitting for a game high 23 points on 8-10 shooting from the field and 5-6 from beyond the arc. Bonnie added 14 of his own and senior guard Casey Edwards tossed in 13 in the winning effort. For Seton, Garbade was best with 14, and Torto, who was in foul trouble for most of the second half, had 12 points.

Seton Catholic falls to the 3rd Place game and will face Vestal on Tuesday, December 29th at 9:30am. Norwich moves to the Regional Division I Championship game and will play Johnson City on Wednesday, December 30th at 7:30pm.

Game 5

National Division

Our Lady of Good Counsel (<i>Olney, MD</i>).....	50
Boys and Girls High School (<i>Brooklyn, NY</i>).....	51

Play continued on day one with National Division play between a pair of one-time champions in Boys and Girls of New York City, and Our Lady of good Counsel of Maryland. Each team has cashed in during their lone trips to Binghamton, and will look to do the same this year. The Kangaroos of Boys and Girls are led by junior Michael Taylor (19ppg and 7rpg), a highly touted guard ranked in the top 10 in NYHOOPS. For Good Counsel, they feature Princeton commit, 6'5" senior Ben Hazel, and classmates Devon Wright-Nelson (8ppg) and Rodney Glasgow (10ppg).

Across the board, Boys and Girls features one of the most athletic teams to play in the STOP-DWI Holiday Classic and they were prepared to show it off early in the game. They pushed the tempo, jumping out to an early 14-4 lead at the end of the first quarter and creating doubt that Good Counsel could keep up for a full 48 minutes. Hazel and Co. would not be denied, however, as Hazel knocked down two quick three's to start the second stanza, and the Falcons were back within a possession. Boys and Girls distanced themselves through the remainder of the quarter, but heading into the break, Good Counsel was still in the ball game, 26-19. Hazel had a half high nine points, and Leroy Isler led the 'Roos with eight. Taylor had only seven points despite attempting 12 field goals in the first half.

Boys and Girls came out flat to start the second half, opening the door for Good Counsel to take their first lead of the game. The Falcons took full advantage and at the 2:43 mark, Hazel rattled home another three, this time pushing Good Counsel out in front 32-30. Heading into the fourth quarter, Good Counsel held on to a three point lead, 37-34. As most shooters do, Taylor continued to fire at will in the second half, hoping to find his rhythm and a spark for the Boys and Girls offense, but, came up empty on both accounts. Luckily for the 'Roos, it did not deter him, and he knocked down the biggest bucket of the tournament so far with 4.8 seconds remaining while down two. After a missed attempt at a 1-and-1 with 20.3 seconds, Taylor worked his way up the left wing, took the pass from Antoine Slaughter and with a hand in his face, finally made good on a jumper pushing the 'Roos into the winners bracket of the 2009 Holiday Classic with a 51-50 victory.

Isler led all scorers with 16 points, also picking up six boards, and Taylor finished with twelve. For Good Counsel, Hazel finished with 13 and Jemel Sessoms added 10 in the losing effort.

Good Counsel falls to the consolation bracket and will play Landstown on Tuesday, December 29th at 1:00pm. Boys and Girls advances to the quarterfinals and will play South Laurel on Tuesday, December 29th at 7:30pm.

Game 6

National Division

King's Fork High School (<i>Suffolk, VA</i>).....	65
Binghamton High School (<i>Binghamton, NY</i>).....	30

The final game of day 1 at the 2009 STOP-DWI Holiday Classic pitted the host Patriots from Binghamton High against the Bulldogs from King's Fork High School. After 17 years as host and participant in the National Division, the Pats are still in search of that elusive title. In 2009, they will look to three-year starter David Kellar (10ppg) and fellow senior Kyle Lovett-Pitts. The Bulldogs return six players from a team that won the Virginia AAA State Championship and finished ranked #34 in the nation by ESPN. Davante Gardner (16ppg and 8rpg) heads the charge for King's Fork along with senior Jay Copeland (11ppg). Both received All-Southern District and All-City honors for their efforts in last years campaign.

As the game progressed early in the first quarter, it was apparent that the devastating size advantage was going to hurt the Patriots throughout the contest, as 6'0" Kellar was attempting to body the 6'9" Gardner down in the paint. Kellar had no such luck and neither did any of his Patriot teammates, as the King's Fork offense took off and never looked back, going on a 21-2 run. At the other end of the floor, Binghamton simply could not muster the fire power to keep it close and amidst the alley-oop dunks and two handed slams at the hands of Gardner and Copeland, Binghamton suffered one of its worse losses during its tenure in the Holiday Classic, falling 65-30. Gardner and Copeland had game highs in both points and rebounds collecting 17 & six and 16 & 8 respectively. Lovett-Pitts was best for Binghamton with eight.

Binghamton falls to the consolation bracket and will Villa Angela on Tuesday, December 29th at 2:45pm. King's Fork moves on to the quarterfinals and will play Christ the King on Tuesday, December 29th at 9:15pm.