



Top 10 sports stories of 1999

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2. SLUH cross country

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3. Gateway Tech hoops

While the Gateway Tech Jaguars didn't exactly put on a show for the state-wide television audience tuned in for their the Class 4A Championship game with the St. Joseph's Academy Angels March 13th, they got the job done.

Sparked by guards Tara Harris and Diana Hill the Jaguars outscored the Angels 15-4 in the second quarter and then cruised to a 38-25 victory and their second state title in the last three years.

"All season long, everybody has said that you have the talent to beat anybody you step up against," Gateway Tech's Tiana Ford said after the game. "But mentally we weren't prepared yet. Once we came together, I knew we could be state champions again."

Gateway had plenty of tournament experience and finished the season 22-6 in the 1998-99 campaign and went 28-0 during the 1996-97 season.

"It's almost like this was part of our schedule," Gateway coach Sherman Curtis.

Harris' emergence as a go-to player and the play of Hill, Ford and Erica Coleman helped the Jaguars get back on top in '99.

"(Harris') transformation from a point guard to more of a scorer and rebounder was really a good transition for her."

"I'm more confident this time around," Harris said. "This year it was just another tournament."

4. St. Mary's soccer

While the head coach was new and the system may have been a bit different, it was business as usual for the Dragons on the soccer field this fall. St. Mary's beat Whitfield 4-0 in the

Class 1A-3A Championship Nov. 13.

"The first one is the most exciting because you've never been her," first-year St. Mary's coach Steve Schad said. "I was a freshman coach at DeSmet and I got to share in some of their experiences but it's different when you're running the show."

Senior Joe Barnowski got the Dragons on the board in the championship game and they never looked back. Vince Vitale scored twice and Guinn added another as the Dragons clinched their third title in the last four years.

"The key is always putting the right players in the right places and creating an atmosphere where they can get along and gel and succeed," Schad said. "We were lucky enough to do that."

Kevin Simpson and Kevin McDaniel provided the scoring punch for the Dragons and Jeff Sackman stepped up his play in between the pipes.

Barowski teamed with Austin Loeffler in the midfield to form what Schad called "the guts of the team."

5. Cor Jesu softball

The Chargers rode a 21-game winning streak into the Class 4A state championship game against Blue Springs, but the streak ended there in a 2-1 loss.

"We didn't win the game but it was a great year," Cor Jesu senior Katy Mueller said. "I'm thankful we made it this far."

As it turned out the loss in the title game also marked the end of another streak, Marianne Haberstroh's streak as head coach.

"It's fun to win, but I still wouldn't trade my ballteam and



St. Mary's junior Kevin Simpson (left) had plenty to celebrate this fall as the Dragons won the Class 1A-3A title for the second time in four years. Cor Jesu senior Alana Beseau (above, 25) led the charge this year as her squad finished second at the Class 4A state softball tournament in October. Oakville's Scott Barker (below, on left) dominated opponents on his way to the 160-pound title in February.



the fun I've had and the experience I've had this year with these 13 young ladies jelling the way they did for 10 state championships," Haberstroh said.

Sophomore standout Melissa Van Velkinburgh dominated hitters during the season and even had a perfect game in an 8-0 quarterfinal win over Nerinx Hall to lift the Chargers.

After a slow 5-3 start senior Alana Beseau also gave her squad a lift. It didn't come in the form of a game-winning hit or a run-saving defensive play. It came in the form of a letter that stressed the importance of their commitment to each other and their coaches.

"When we came back the next day, it was like having a new team," Haberstroh said.

The leadership of Beseau, and fellow seniors Mueller, Rachel Raterman and Katie Kiefer were key to the Chargers' success and team chemistry.

"This is the most special team I've coached in 27 years and I'm proud to be their coach," Haberstroh said. "I've never had 13 players become such a unit and totally get along. It's been an incredible thing."

6. Sullivan & Dierberg

The Lutheran South senior doubles team of Lindsay Sullivan and Emily Dierberg had an emotional weekend in late October at the Cooper Tennis Complex. Sullivan had her 18th birthday and celebrated in style as she helped the Lancers to a third place finish as a team and then won the Class 1A-3A doubles championship with her classmate.

"To be a senior and win state is the ultimate thrill," Sullivan said after the win. "What a way to end it. I was so happy that I wanted to cry."

During the championship match Sullivan appeared to shed a tear or two as it looked like the match was slipping away. Notre Dame de Sion's Ashley Filberth and Callan Smith took the first set 6-2 and led in the second set 4-2.

"I gave her a big hug and told her that she could do it," said Dierberg, who Lutheran South coach Paula Gyllenberg calls the "Mama Bear" of the duo. "I saw her crying and I knew we had to change things quickly."

She did and the Lancers won the match 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 to become the first Lutheran South tennis champions in school history.

"Emily is the setter and Lindsay is the hitter," Gyllenberg said. "I'm just thrilled for them. They beat a

very good team to win it."

7. Rob Droege

Before the Lindbergh graduate even stepped foot onto the University of Missouri campus as a freshman football player, Droege already had found memories of Columbia.

In February Droege earned a 14-4 major decision over Blue Springs' James Jack to win the Class 4A heavyweight title at the Hearnes Center. Just a couple of weeks earlier Droege, a second team All-American lineman, announced that he would spend his college days at Mizzou.

"This is my new home, and I just won here," Droege said after the match. "It was just great to have a chance to show them I'm ready. I want to work my butt off for the team."

After placing fifth last year at the 275-pound class, Droege finished his senior year a perfect 34-0. Droege considered not wrestling at all his final year to prepare for the rigors of Division One football.

"I thought that this could be my season," Droege said. "I felt I could win (the title)."

Droege's coach Mike Slyman also knew it could be his year. "With the tools he has, I just knew he was going to have a good season," Slyman said. Droege redshirted his freshman year at Mizzou.

8. SLUH football

The Jr. Billikens pulled one of the biggest upsets of the season to get to the Class 5A semifinals. A 34-17 win over highly touted Pattonville concluded a five game win streak over Suburban North squads and gave SLUH a semifinal berth.

Behind the aerial attack of quarterback Mark Kornfeld, who broke several school passing records, the Jr. Billikens marched through one of the toughest districts (McCluer, McCluer North and Hazelwood Central) in the state. Then in the sectionals they slipped by Hazelwood East to meet Pattonville in the quarterfinals.

"We may not have won the Metro Catholic Conference but we feel that we've won the Suburban North," said SLUH coach Gary Kornfeld.

The Jr. Billikens dream season fell apart as Mehlville, the eventual state champions, handed SLUH a 19-14 defeat in the semifinals.

9. Nikki Thole

After rewriting much of the Lindbergh soccer record books, Thole has continued at the col-

lege level by writing much of the University of Missouri's.

Thole already owns the school's all-time record for career goals and points. As a junior this year she set a single-season scoring mark with 23 goals this year and became the first All-American selection for Missouri.

"She's a very unique player where you don't have to talk about motivating her," Mizzou soccer coach Bryan Blitz said. "We don't set goals for her or really have set expectations because she always exceeds our expectations."

This year Thole, and the Tigers, enjoyed their finest year as they cracked the top 20 and made it to the NCAA Tournament for the first time ever.

"It's a pretty good feeling because the program is only in its fourth year," Thole said about helping to build a program. "I think it's neat to be a part of something like establishing a good name for the school's soccer program."

10. Scott Barker

Oakville wrestling coach Rocky Streb best summed up Barker's performance in the championship match in February.

"That was one of the greatest spankings I've ever seen in the finals," Streb said. "There was nothing I needed to do other than sit and watch."

Barker, then a junior, took a 13-1 lead after one period. He eventually won the Class 4A 160-pound match by technical fall, 16-1.

A wrestler since he was 4 years old, Barker has competed in several large-scale tournaments. He has wrestled at the U.S. Nationals in Fargo, N.D. where he came was just one match away from placing.

To Barker, the atmosphere at the Hearnes Center is nothing he hasn't seen before.

"(The state tournament) is almost like a dual meet to me," Barker said.

As a sophomore he finished second in the 145-pound class. He finished the season 46-1 and said that he knew almost from the beginning of the season that he was destined to win the title.

"I've been wrestling for a long time," Barker said. "I'll celebrate if I win nationals."

The Tigers finished second in state as a team with 137.5 points which would have been good enough to win 14 of the last 18 state titles. But Blue Springs finished first with 148 points.



Lutheran South seniors Emily Dierberg, left and Lindsay Sullivan finished their careers in style in late October as they won the Class 1A-3A doubles championship to capture the school's first state tennis title.

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