

2021-22 West Region Tournament Notes

Feb. 17-19, Bismarck VFW Sports Center, Bismarck, N.D.



Drop the puck: The West Region Boys' Hockey Tournament returns to its traditional format with three games in three days at one venue (Bismarck VFW Sports Center). As you may recall due to the COVID pandemic and a decision to limit large crowds in one setting, the first two days of 2021 tournament play were at the site of the higher seed. The final three games were held in Minot.

This year's postseason got underway with two play-in contests on Monday, Feb. 14. (7) Bottineau-Rugby and (9) Mandan posted wins. Four quarterfinals are on Thursday, Feb. 17. Loser-out and semifinals will be held on Feb. 18 with two state qualifiers and the championship to be played on Feb. 19.

Fit to be tied: There were many competitive games throughout the season, but two teams clearly emerged as the best in the WDA. Jamestown and Minot shared the WDA regular season title with 47 points and collectively won 28 league games in regulation. For Jamestown, it was its first league title since 1995. For Minot, it was its third in a row. The pair are also the only WDA teams to finish with winning records. The teams' split its two meetings, but Jamestown earned the top seed based on goal differential in head-to-head meetings. The Blue Jays have played in just one region tournament final. That was the first year of the tournament (1995). Minot, meanwhile, has been a regular in the tournament final but has not won it since 2005-06.

Free hockey: Competitive balance was on display throughout the season. Eleven times during the WDA regular season did a game need overtime or a shootout to decide a winner.

New kid on the block: Bismarck Legacy is in its inaugural season and what a debut for the Sabers. After a slow start which saw just one victory in its first five games, Legacy finished third in the WDA and is in the mix for a state tournament berth. It posted a 3-1 record against its Bismarck rivals (BHS and Century).

Keep an eye on the underdogs: The last time all four top seeds qualified for the ND State Tournament was 2017. Last year, No. 5 Williston and No. 6 Bottineau-Rugby qualified for the state tournament. Just twice since 2010-11 has the top four seeds advanced to state in the same season.

Streak on the line: Bismarck Century currently has the longest streak of WDA teams for consecutive state tournament appearances at 15. The Patriots enter this week's regional as the No. 6 seed, so it will need an upset along the way to make it 16-straight trips to state.

Icings: Bismarck Century has reached the regional title in each of the past four seasons...The last time a team other than Bismarck High, Century or Minot has played in the region title was Williston (2007-08)...The WDA's record against EDC teams was just 4-25...The ND State Tournament was held

West Region Hockey Tournament

Monday, Feb. 14

Play-in

(9) Mandan 5, (8) Dickinson 2

(7) Bottineau-Rugby 8,

(10) Hazen-Beulah 2

Thursday, Feb. 17

Quarterfinals

(1) Jamestown vs. (9) Mandan, 11 am

(4) Bismarck High vs. (5) Williston, 1:15 pm

(2) Minot vs. (7) Bottineau-Rugby, 5 pm

(3) Legacy vs. (6) Century, 7:15 pm

Friday, Feb. 18

Loser-out

11 am and 1:15 pm

Semifinals

5 pm and 7:15 pm

Saturday, Feb. 19

State qualifiers

11 am and 1:15 pm

Championship

3:30 pm

2021-22 WDA Standings

Team	Conf.	Points
Jamestown ^A	15-2-1-0	47
Minot	13-1-0-2	47
Legacy	9-6-2-1	32
Bismarck	8-7-0-2	29
Williston	7-8-3-0	27
Century	6-7-1-3	26
Bottineau-R	8-8-0-1	25
Dickinson	5-9-2-2	21
Mandan	4-12-2-0	16
Hazen-Beu.	0-15-0-0	0

Teams earned 3 points for a regulation win; 2 points for an OT/Shootout win; 1 point for an OT/Shootout loss. Some teams only played an opponent once. In those cases, games were worth 6 points in the standings instead of 3.
^AHeld tie-break

Feb. 24-26 in Fargo...The last W. Region team to qualify for state in its first year of existence was Bismarck High in 1973-74

Team Notes

#1 Jamestown (15-2-1-0 WDA; Coach: Matt Stockert): It's been a banner season for the Blue Jays. They won their first conference title since 1994-95. Don't think for a minute the top seed is satisfied with just that. Jamestown has its sights on other goals. A pair can be accomplished this week in Bismarck. The squad will look to punch its ticket to the state tournament for the first time since 2019-20 and get to its first West Region title game since winning the crown in 1995.

A strong showing this week will help rid the memory of last year's postseason which was a disappointment. The Blue Jays were the No. 3 seed and expected to not only be a favorite to qualify for the state tournament, but challenge for a region title. Instead, it was upset at home by two lower-seeded teams. One word that comes to mind to describe the Blue Jays is explosive. Jamestown has scored six or more goals in a contest eight times and its offense has given WDA opponents fits all season. Jamestown is averaging 4.6 goals per game.

The team has the top scorer in the state in junior Nolan Nenow. Senior Hunter Nelson is in the top 10. Nine players have 10 or more points and four have 20 or more.

While the offense has been dominant, don't discount the 'Jays ability to thwart the opposition defensively. They have posted six shutouts and held opponents to one or less goal nine times. Senior goalie Brode Hillstrom is among the state leaders in wins, goals against average and save percentage. The team is coming into the postseason winners of its last 11 against conference foes. Its last regulation loss against a WDA team came on Dec. 18 at Minot.

Stat Leaders: Points: Nolan Nenow, 54; Goals: Nolan Nenow, 27; Assists: Nenow 27; Goalie Wins: Brode Hillstrom, 13; GAA: Hillstrom, 1.94; Save Pct: Hillstrom, 92.4

#2 Minot (12-1-2-1 WDA; Co-coaches: Jason Bennett/John Grubb):

Will this be the season the Magicians hoist a West Region Tournament trophy? Minot's last region crown came in 2005-06. There have been some close calls since then, but this may be one of the best opportunities for the program to earn a title. Minot has won or shared the last three WDA regular season crowns. This season, the Magi shared it with Jamestown. The teams' split its two meetings, but the Blue Jays earned the No. 1 seed based on goal differential in the two meetings. Nevertheless, Minot enters the postseason riding a seven-game win streak and possessing a potent offense.

It has netted five or more goals in its last six contests. Aside from Jamestown, no WDA team has the scoring prowess as Minot. Six players have 20 or more points. Three players are in double figures in goals led by freshman Mackley Morelli (16). Senior Jayden Luck has 14 tallies and led the team in scoring (30 points) for a second year in a row.

Yet it may be the Magi's team defense that is most impressive. Consider this: In 21 games the Magi have allowed two or less goals on 12 occasions. While it took some time for the offense to hit full stride, the defensive play has been there since the start.

A big reason has been senior goalie Noah Conklin. From a backup last year, he's stepped into the starter's role and has been solid. His goals against average is 2.50 and would be a better if you throw out a few non-conference games against Minnesota competition in December.

Fifteen conference wins in 18 games is impressive, but perhaps one of the squad's regular season highlights came in a Jan. 8 loss. Minot took EDC champion Fargo Davies to overtime before falling, 3-2. Perhaps Minot will get another crack at the Eagles. To do that, the squad will first need to advance out of the region tournament. Nothing is a guarantee, but the Magi will be a tough foe to tangle with this week.

Stat Leaders: Points: Jayden Luck, 30; Goals:

WDA Stat Leaders

Player	Games	Pts
N. Nenow, JAM, Jr.	20	54
A. Collings WIL, Sr.	21	43
C. Getzlaff, BOT, So	22	41
E. Siemens, BOT, Jr.	22	39
H. Nelson, JAM, Sr.	20	39

Player	Games	Gls
N. Nenow, JAM, Jr.	20	27
C. Getzlaff, BOT, So	22	24
J. Ekblad, WIL, Sr.	21	19
A. Collings WIL, Sr.	21	19
H. Nelson, JAM, Sr.	20	17

Player	Games	Ass
E. Siemens, BOT, Jr.	22	29
N. Nenow, JAM, Jr.	20	27
A. Collings WIL, Sr.	21	24
H. Nelson, JAM, Sr.	20	22
M. Olson, BOT, Sr.	22	20

Player	Games	Wins
N. Conklin, MIN, Sr.	22.0	14
B. Hillstrom, JAM, Sr.	16.5	13
M. Haugeno, WIL, Sr.	18.3	11
T. Miller, LEG, So.	20.5	10
E. Freeman, BOT, So.	21.8	10

Player	Games	GAA
B. Hillstrom, JAM, Sr.	16.5	1.94
T. Miller, LEG, So.	20.5	2.39
N. Conklin, MIN, Sr.	22.0	2.50
M. Haugeno, WIL, Sr.	18.3	2.62
C. Odegaard, CEN, Sr.	9.6	3.00

Player	Games	SV%
B. Hillstrom, JAM, Sr.	16.5	92.4
M. Haugeno, WIL, Sr.	18.3	91.3
T. Miller, LEG, So.	20.5	91.2
C. Odegaard, CEN, Sr.	9.6	90.2
B. Leingang, MAN, So.	14.1	89.6

Stats provided by Robert Gillen, ND High School Statistician
 ndhighschoolhockey.com

Mackley Morelli, 16 Assists: Jaxon Bradley, 19; Goalie Wins: Noah Conklin, 14; GAA: Conklin, 2.50; Save Pct: 89.1

#3 Bismarck Legacy (9-6-2-1 WDA; Mario Lamoureux):

A third place finish in a 10-team league isn't too shabby of a way to begin a high school program. That's what the Sabers have accomplished so far with aspirations of bigger things. Heading into its inaugural season, it was somewhat unclear where Legacy would end up. The team featured several players, who a season earlier, were playing for the Bismarck High or Century programs. It needed other younger players to step up.

It started a bit rocky with losses in four of its first five games, but the team settled into a style of play that featured strong puck pursuit and sound defensive zone coverage. Legacy plays with a lot of energy and is not afraid to finish checks or block shots. That makes it a tough team to play against.

It's been a score-by-committee approach. Six players have registered at least 12 points led by sophomore forward Marcus Butts with 26. His 16 goals is also best on the team. In addition to Butts, four other players have six or more goals, including senior defenseman Caleb Moore. The balance in scoring makes it difficult for opponents to key on one line.

Offensively, Legacy averages less than three goals a contest, but on the flip side, surrenders just three. A big reason has been the steady play of goalie Tyler Miller. The sophomore has started all but one game and is among the WDA leaders in stats. Getting an early lead was a challenge for the Sabers at the beginning of the season. In fact, it didn't score the first goal of a contest until game six. Since then, it has netted the opening goal 10 times.

The team enjoyed a season-best four-game win streak in late January-early February. That included wins over Bismarck High and Century. Its strong play down the stretch allowed it to secure the No. 3 seed.

Legacy has played its share of close games. Ten of its games have been decided by two or less goals. And in play-off hockey, close games are expected. Qualifying for the state tournament would be quite a feather in the Sabers' cap. It will require two wins this week. **Stat Leaders:** Points: Marcus Butts, 26; Goals: M. Butts, 16; Assists: Caleb Moore, 12; Easton Moos, 12 Goalie Wins: Tyler Miller, 19; GAA: Miller, 2.39; Save Pct: Hendrickson, 91.2

#4 Bismarck High (8-10-0-2 WDA; Coach: Wes Carr): The Demons were on pace for a 15-win regular season before the injury bug bit. And bit and bit and bit. No team in the WDA was impacted more from injuries than Bismarck High. A string of players were sidelined for a few games, or in some cases, the season. The big blow came in mid-January when senior captain and leading scorer Hunter Acker went down.

The injuries forced the coaching staff to juggle the forward lines and call on several JV players to step in and play extensive varsity minutes. With the new faces in the lineup it's no surprise the team struggled.

Offense has been hot and cold at times. The squad has scored five or more goals in a game four times. But has also been shutout in four games. Acker's 26 points still leads the team in scoring, despite only playing 13 games. Fellow senior Remington Richardson has 19 points, including 13 goals. Junior forward Owen Haase has 17 points. Carter Schafer has been a workhorse between the pipes. The senior goalie has played all 20 games. Schafer needs to be at his best this week.

After a 5-1 start, the Demons lost 11 of their next 14. However, that good start and a few key wins late in the season enabled them to finish fourth in the WDA for a third-straight season. Winning the 4-5 matchup is often critical to increasing a team's chances of qualifying for state. Two years ago the Demons won their quarterfinal and went on to qualify. Last year, it lost to Williston and missed out on the state tournament. One WDA stat the Demons would have preferred not to lead the league in is total penalty minutes. Discipline will be important this week as well as getting off to a good start in games. BHS showed its a much better team playing with the lead. **Stat Leaders:** Points: Hunter Acker, 26; Goals: Remington Richardson, 13; Assists: Acker, 14; Goalie Wins: Carter Schafer 8; GAA: Hendrickson, 3.54; Save Pct: Hendrick-

son, 88.3

#5 Williston (7-8-3-0 WDA; Coach: Tyler Jundt): The Coyotes' entered the season looking to build off last season's strong finish which included the program's first state tournament berth since 2009-10. There was plenty of optimism, and with good reason. The team returned several big pieces to the puzzle, including a pair of all-conference players in forward Ashton Collings and defenseman Jackson Ekblad as well as seasoned goaltender Mason Haugenoe.

However, the regular season perhaps hasn't produced the results Williston hoped for. A No. 5 seed in this year's regional only matches last year. The Coyotes did get off to a good start, winning four road games. However wins on home ice were hard to come by early in the season. The team lost its first four home contests. Offensively, Williston has some of the top scorers in the WDA. The aforementioned Collings finished with 43 points and is among the state's top point producers. Ekblad has 32, including 19 goals and logs a lot of minutes. Five others players are in double figures in scoring. Senior goaltender Mason Haugenoe improved on last year's totals of wins, GAA and save percentage.

At times this season a fast, talented and physical team has been on full display. At other times the team has been flat and surrendered leads late in games. No question Williston has the team to win a couple games at regionals this week and qualify for state. It has veterans who have been in this position before. Can they do it again? **Stat Leaders:** Points: Ashton Collings, 43 Goals: Collings, 19; Jackson Ekblad, 19; Assists: Collings, 24; Goalie Wins: Mason Haugenoe, 11; GAA: Haugenoe, 2.62; Save Pct: Haugenoe, 91.3

#6 Bismarck Century (6-7-1-3 WDA; Coach: Troy Olson): The Patriots enter the postseason in unfamiliar territory. They are used to being one of the favorites to win a region title. This season, Century is an underdog.

Since the 2010-11, the program has finished third or better in the WDA standings, so a sixth place finish is an anomaly.

The Patriots came into the season knowing it would have to find new faces to put the puck in the net. The squad graduated a lot of point producers. A slow start was expected, but just one regulation victory in the first 10 games put the squad in catch-up mode in the WDA standings. The Patriots went 6-5 over its last 11 games. A big reason for the turnaround has been tightening up its defensive game. The team is allowing just over three goals a game.

Scoring has still been a challenge. Outside a 10-1 win at Hazen-Beulah, the team has scored four goals in a game just two other times. As a result, the team is averaging just 2.4 goals per contest.

The team leader has been sophomore defenseman Max Vig. His 22 points in tops on the squad and he has logged a lot of minutes. Two other sophomores have been consistent contributors on the score sheet in forwards Kaden Roness and Hayden Ritter.

Three different netminders have seen

West Region Hockey Tournament History

Year	Championship	Tourney Site
1994-95	Jamestown 4, Century 3	Bismarck
1995-96	Century 3, Minot 2	Bismarck
1996-97	Devils Lake 2, Minot 1	Minot
1997-98	Minot 3, Bismarck High 2	Bismarck
1998-99	Bismarck High 3, Minot 1	Minot
1999-00	Minot 4, Dickinson 3 (OT)	Bismarck
2000-01	Bismarck High 8, Mandan 0	Minot
2001-02	Bismarck High 3, Minot 1	Bismarck
2002-03	Minot 1, Century 0 (2OT)	Bismarck
2003-04	Bismarck High 2, Hazen-Beulah 1	Minot
2004-05	Minot 5, Bismarck High 1	Minot
2005-06	Minot 2, Williston 1	Bismarck
2006-07	Bismarck High 2, Minot 1	Bismarck
2007-08	Bismarck High 7, Williston 4	Minot
2008-09	Bismarck High 3, Minot 1	Bismarck
2009-10	Bismarck High 5, Century 4	Minot
2010-11	Century 6, Minot 4	Bismarck
2011-12	Bismarck High 4, Century 2	Bismarck
2012-13	Century 4, Minot 2	Minot
2013-14	Bismarck High 5, Minot 2	Minot
2014-15	Century 2, Bismarck High 0	Bismarck
2015-16	Bismarck High 5, Minot 1	Minot
2016-17	Bismarck High 6, Minot 0	Bismarck
2017-18	Century 4, Bismarck High 2	Minot
2018-19	Century 2, Bismarck High 0	Minot
2019-20	Century 5, Bismarck High 2	Bismarck
2020-21	Century 4, Minot 0	Minot*
2021-22		Bismarck

Titles By Schools: Devils Lake (1); Jamestown (1); Minot (5); Century (8); Bismarck High (12)
*Final day only

action. Casey Odegaard (9 games); Kaden Jangula (7) and Luke Pengilly (5). Whether that rotation will continue in the postseason remains to be seen. Century has just one win over a team seeded above it in the region tournament (No. 5 Williston). It's going to have to get at least one more this week if it wants to extend its state tournament appearance streak to 16 seasons in a row.

Stat Leaders: Points: Maxon Vig, 22; Goals: Vig, 8; Kaden Roness, 8; Assists: Vig, 14 Goalie Wins: Casey Odegaard, 3; Luke Pengilly, 3; GAA: Pengilly, 2.40; Save Pct: Odegaard, 90.2

#7 Bottineau-Rugby (8-8-0-1 WDA; Coach: Jesse Nostdahl): The Braves' postseason began on Feb. 14 with a region play-in win over Hazen-Beulah. Two more wins are required for Bottineau-Rugby to earn back-to-back state tournament berths. The last time the program did that was 1993.

The No. 7 Braves are capable of doing it, but it will be a challenge and require at least one victory over a team seeded higher.

B-R always seems to have a gifted goal scorer on the roster and this year's no exception. Sophomore Colton Getzlaff has 24 tallies and his 41 points is top on the team and among the best in the state. Two others have 30 or more points (Ethan Siemens, 39; Matt Olson, 30). The trio will need to continue to lead the charge. Sophomore Easton Freeman has played every game in net and has given the Braves' a chance to win each night. One thing Bottineau is used to is close games. Eleven of its contests were decided by two goals or less. More will likely come this week.

Stat Leaders: Points: Colton Getzlaff, 41; Goals: Getzlaff, 24; Assists: Ethan Siemens, 29; Goalie Wins: Easton Freeman, 10; GAA: Olson, 3.44; Save Pct: 88.3

#9 Mandan (4-12-2-0 WDA; Coach: Leif Mattson): The Braves didn't exactly enter the postseason on a roll. They dropped their last six regular season games.

However a strong performance on the road against Dickinson in a Feb. 14 region play-in game propelled Mandan into the quarterfinals.

Goaltending again has been a strong suit for the squad and Bennett Leingang and Dominic Kautzmann have filled the bill at times. The sophomores have given Mandan a chance to win, and there have been some impressive victories sprinkled in the campaign. The Braves have defeated four higher seeds in regulation or OT/Shootouts (Minot, Bismarck High, Williston and Century).

Goal scoring has been problematic at times. Mandan has been held to two or less goals in 15 games. It netted just four over the last six regular games, but found the net five times in the play-in victory vs Dickinson. Two players have 15 or more points led by junior Carter Kilen's 20.

Mandan has the tall task of facing top seed Jamestown in the quarterfinals. It would take an impressive performance pull the upset. The Blue Jays outscored Mandan 12-1 in its two meetings. Win or lose, Mandan will contend with all other six teams in the region field. Mandan's last state tournament appearance came in 2018-19. **Stat Leaders:** Points: Carter Kilen, 20; Goals: Kilen, 15; Assists: Matt Haider, 12; Goalie Wins: Dominic Kautzmann, 4; GAA: Kautzmann, 3:65; Save Pct: Bennett Leingang, 89.6

News/Notes compiled by WDA SID/Executive Secretary Note: Stat leaders are provided by Robert Gillen, ND state statistician