

For immediate release
February 22, 2005

Contact info: Dan Highland 309-287-4104
Dave Oloffson 309-763-1588

A Classic Elite Eight gears up for the weekend

Bloomington, IL - The IHSA March Madness® kicks off on Friday in the form of the Class A girls' basketball tournament, but there will definitely be a feel of December in the air. Four of the Elite Eight teams playing this weekend at Redbird Arena will return to Bloomington-Normal Dec. 27-30, 2005 as participants in the 27th State Farm Holiday Classic.

The most competitive field in the four-field, 64-team 2005 State Farm Holiday Classic remains the Class A girls' bracket, which will feature Chicago John Hope, Kankakee Bishop McNamara, Rock Island Alleman and Sterling Newman Central Catholic. All four of these teams will be playing this weekend for a state championship at Illinois State University's Redbird Arena, which is also one of the venues used by the State Farm Holiday Classic.

Overall, the 2005 Holiday Classic Girls' A field will feature 10 teams that won Regional championships this year, with six of them advancing to the Sweet Sixteen. Sectional champions Bloomington Central Catholic and St. Joe-Ogden will join other state-ranked powers Rochester, Olney East Richland and Camp Point Central. The rest of the 2005 field features Normal U-High, Tolono Unity, CPCI, Stanford Olympia, Taylor Ridge Rockridge, Orion and Monmouth/Roseville.

"Over the years we have been fortunate to field some of the best girls' basketball teams in Illinois," said Classic vice-president Dave Oloffson. "But this coming year could truly be billed as a December state tournament with the incredible number of elite teams playing from across the state."

Also featured in next year's tournament will be nine underclassmen just selected to one of the 2004-05 Associated Press All-State teams. Those players include: Brittany Johnson (Olney East Richland), Precious Gaddis (Chicago John Hope), Jocelyn Mellen (Sterling Newman), Jennifer Juergens (Kankakee Bishop McNamara), Latear Eason (Chicago John Hope), Ashley Runck (St. Joe-Ogden), Aubrey Parsons (Sterling Newman), Heidi McKean (CPCI), and Taylor Bennett (Kankakee Bishop McNamara).

The entire 64-team field of the State Farm Holiday Classic will be announced within the next month. For more tournament information, visit the official Web site at www.theclassic.org.