

December 16, 2016

MBSW

Mountain Brook Sports Writers

STEEL CITY INVITATIONAL RETURNS



The prestigious “Steel City Invitational” high school basketball tournament returns to the Pete Hanna Center at Samford University on Tuesday December 20th. The 3 day event is in its 4th year and is hosted by Mountain Brook High School and Knight Eady Sports Group. The tournament sponsor is MedCenter Mazda.

This year’s tournament features 4 #1 ranked teams in their classification and some of the state’s best players as well. With 12 boys teams and an elite girls showcase, every matchup will be exciting.

Having been around the tournament and seeing many of the teams and players firsthand on multiple accounts, I decided to breakdown the schedule and preview players and the tournament as a whole.

SCHEDULE:

Tuesday December 20:

9:00 A.M. Parker vs Paul Bryant

Parker began this season 4-0, including a 70-69 win over Huffman. As a 5A team that was a big win over a strong 7A team. But how will they fare against the Paul

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Bryant Stampede? Bryant enters with a signature win over Gadsden City in their season opener. With it being the 1st game, look to see which team starts out strongly. Parker can be dangerous if they get some momentum. The winner will play Huffman on Tuesday at 3:00 P.M in the 2nd round.

10:30 A.M. Ramsay vs Sacred Heart

A highly anticipated matchup between back to back 1A state champion, Sacred Heart, and the Ramsay Rams. Don't let the Rams 6-7 record fool you, all losses are by an average of 3.5 points (2 games were in OT). This season, they have proved already that a 15+ second half point deficit is easy to overcome. For the Cardinals, be on the lookout for



Kevious Nolan. The Samford signee will be playing on his future home court and has lots of experience in this tournament. The battle tested Ramsay Rams feature *Kobe McClain, Justin Wiley, Brandon Houston* and more. The winner will play Auburn High School on Tuesday at 4:30 P.M. in the 2nd round.

12:00 P.M. Vestavia vs Lanett

Vestavia enters this year's field under new head coach, Patrick Davis. To date, the Rebels have not played on a neutral court. However 2A #4 Lanett is traveling over 2 hours. Will that be a problem for the defending 2A State Champion? Lanett caught everyone's attention last year when they won head coach *Richard Carter* his 1st state championship as a head coach along with the 1st state championship in program



history. The Panthers celebrated with on court backflips. Will the Lanett Panthers be flipping to the second round or will the home town Vestavia Hills rebels prevail? The winner will play Mountain Brook on Tuesday at 6:00 P.M. in the 2nd round.

1:30 P.M. Pelham vs Hale County

Herb Jones and *Alex Reese*. These 2 players make up a big portion of Coach Avery Johnson's top 5 2017 recruiting

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class. This is surely a matchup you don't want to miss. Reese was recently named Birmingham Tipoff Club Player of the Week for December 12th 2016. His Pelham Panthers are #1 in 6A while *Herb Jones'* squad is #1 in 4A. Whether or not you are a Crimson Tide fan, this game is a must see with two #1 teams in the state. The winner will play Homewood on Tuesday night at 7:30 P.M. in the 2nd round.



3:00 P.M. Parker/Paul Bryant vs Huffman

Junior guard *Myreon Jones* leads the 9-1 Huffman Vikings into the tournament. Whoever wins between Parker and Paul Bryant will need to quickly recover and be ready to bring it because Huffman (7A #6) will be ready. If the Vikings face Parker, they will try to avenge their only November loss as they fell to the Thundering Herd, 70-69.

4:30 P.M. Ramsay/Sacred Heart vs Auburn



Mississippi State signee and high-flying forward, *Garrison Brooks*, is ready to prove he and Auburn have what it takes to win the tournament. Either Sacred Heart or Ramsay would be a worthy opponent for Auburn. Ramsay would make for a great matchup in the paint while Sacred Heart would force Auburn to play up-tempo.

6:00 P.M. Vestavia/Lanett vs Mountain Brook

Red hot Mountain Brook enters the tournament as possibly the best team in the state. Sophomore standout, *Trendon Watford*, said "last year was a fun and exciting tournament. This year we will possibly face some of the best teams and try to win the championship so it should be a really fun tournament." Vestavia did not schedule Mountain Brook after the 2 teams were relocated to different areas



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so this could possibly be the only Mountain Brook vs Vestavia matchup we see for awhile. Lanett on the other hand, would give the Spartans all they can handle. Mountain Brook is undefeated and looks to continue the best start in school history at 6:00.

7:30 P.M. Pelham/Hale County vs Homewood

Underdog no more. Homewood came out last year and turned heads and when they defeated John Petty and J.O. Johnson to win the whole tournament. That Patriot squad went on to win the 6A state championship and made its mark in school history. Senior *Luke Touliatos* leads the Patriots along with junior forward, *Trey Jemison*. *Justin Allison* of Pelham along with *Alex Reese* would be a very entertaining matchup versus Touliatos and Jemison. But if Hale County wins their first game, Homewood will have its hands full with 6'7 shooting guard, *Herb Jones*.

***This is a preview of the 1st and 2nd round games. 3rd round games and consolation are TBD

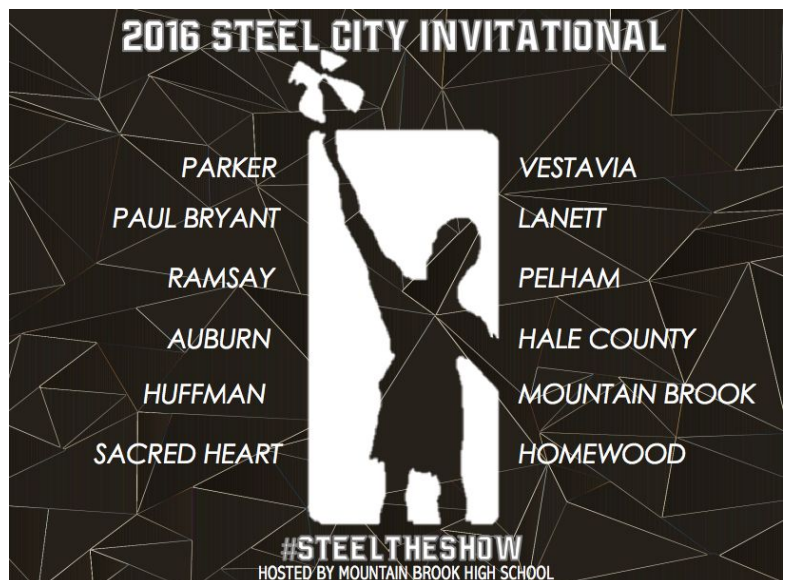
Wednesday December 21:

3:00 P.M. 6A Homewood girls vs 5A Wenonah girls:

A dream matchup for high school girls basketball returns to the Steel City Invitational as the Lady Patriots and Lady Dragons face off in the "2016 Girls Showcase." Wenonah has won the last 3 5A state titles while Homewood has appeared in the last 2 6A state championships, winning it back in 2015. 2 of the state's top teams square off Wednesday afternoon and you do not want to miss it.

William's Watchlist - PLAYERS TO WATCH

Myreon Jones-Huffman
Justin Wiley-Ramsay
Kevion Nolan-Sacred Heart
Diante Wood-Sacred Heart
Garrison Brooks-Auburn
Trendon Watford-Mountain Brook
Alex Reese-Pelham
Justin Allison-Pelham



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Herb Jones-Hale County
Luke Touliatos-Homewood
Trey Jemison-Homewood

I hope to see you December 20-22 at Samford University for this exciting tournament. Great basketball during every game and multiple D-1 players on the floor at all times. It is VERY well run and an overall a great experience. So no matter your team, come out and witness first class high school basketball Tuesday through Thursday at Samford University in the 4th annual "Steel City Invitational."

-William Galloway

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Pictures:

<http://www.villagelivingonline.com/sports/shooting-for-the-stars1122/>

http://www.al.com/sports/index.ssf/2016/10/alex_reese_pelham_alabama.html

<http://www.hoopseen.com/news/player/201610/herb-jones-stays-home-chooses-alabama>

<http://www.scout.com/player/194332-garrison-brooks>

https://twitter.com/1k_023