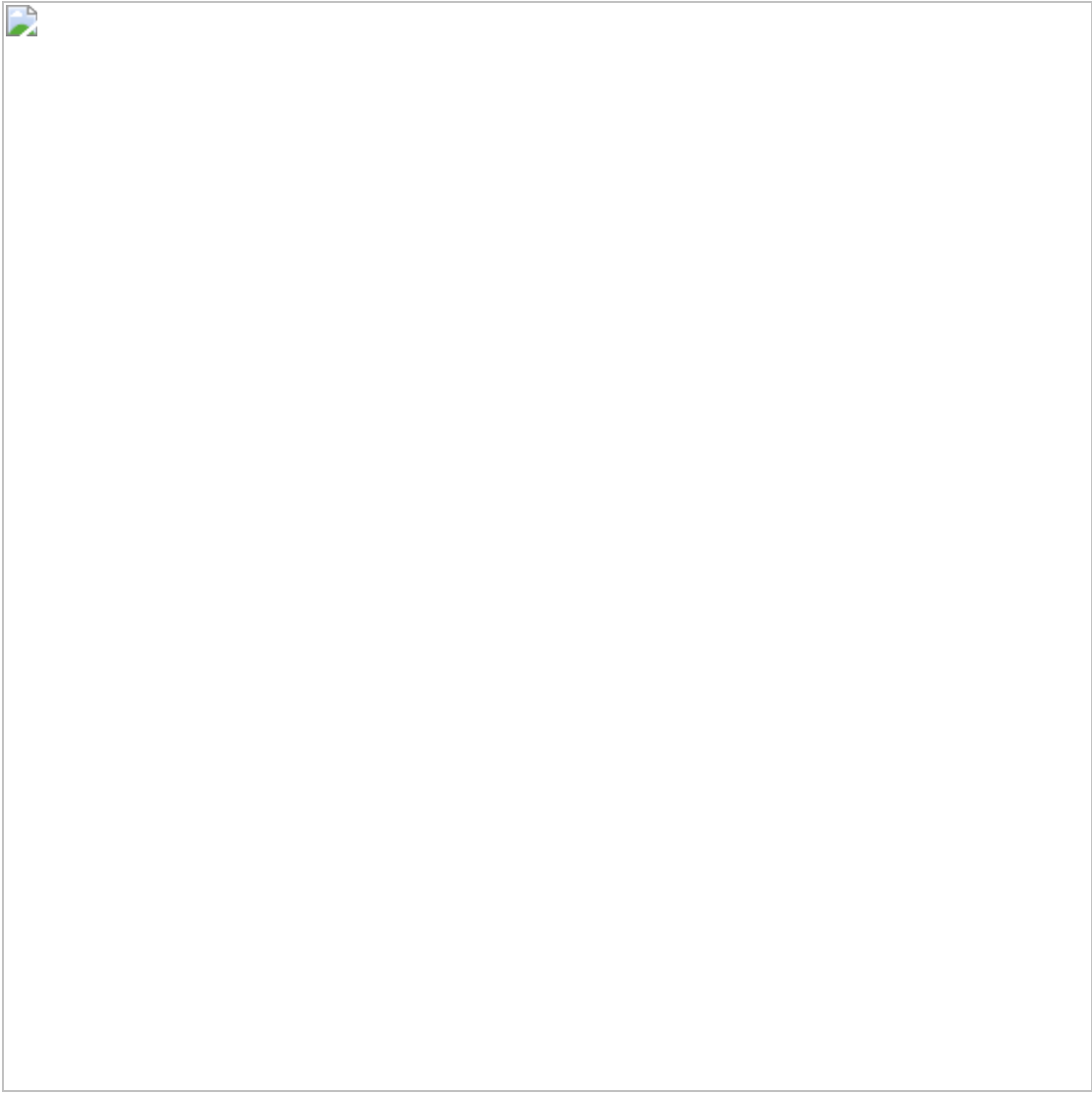


Minnesota high school boys basketball champion Dawson-Boyd



Dawson-Boyd defeats Cherry 81-74, wins Class 1A boys basketball state championship

It's been a while since Dawson-Boyd was last at the state tournament.

Thirty-four years, to be exact.

The school's raucous cheering section knew that fact well. On Saturday, they cheered on the Blackjacks as they defeated reigning champion Cherry 81-74 to claim the Class 1A state title, the program's first.

"It's a little town's dream come true," junior Gunner Liebl said. "It felt like the whole town of Dawson was here."

During the medal ceremony, leading scorer Brayson Boike visibly mouthed "wow" while looking towards the crowd.

"All that hard work, it finally paid off," Boike said after the game when asked about what was going through his head at that moment. "We got what we wanted."

Dawson-Boyd (30-3) led for most of the game, but Cherry (31-2) never stopped battling. The Blackjacks' lead briefly expanded to double digits a few times, but the Tigers were on their heels.



Did they ever feel comfortable in those double-digit moments?

"Not really, no," said Blackjacks coach Cory Larson, who was a player on Dawson-Boyd's last tournament team in 1991. "You know their backs are pushed all the way against the wall. So it's like, let's fight and fight and fight."

Both teams were relying heavily on their starters. The Dawson-Boyd bench contributed three points while Cherry's contributed zero. Fighting exhaustion, the Blackjacks starters delivered.

Boike led the way — as he had most of the tournament — with 29 points. Liebl added 20 points, Drew Hjelmeland had 17 points and Carson Stratmoen finished with 12 points.

Against a tough Cherry defense, three pointers were a stronghold for Dawson-Boyd. The Blackjacks went 10-for-19 from the three-point arc, with three of them from Stratmoen in a three-minute stretch that helped them turn the tides on a second-half Cherry surge.

“Those threes were huge,” Larson said. “[Stratmoen] is a shooter. Sometimes he doesn’t realize where the actual three point line is. He’s typically about four or five feet behind it.”

Cherry was held to 18% from three-point range on Saturday. Noah Sundquist led the Tigers with 21 points. Isaiah Asuma added 19 points while cousin Noah Asuma had 18 points.
