

HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY

By Ross Forman

The brackets were released in late-January for the annual Illinois State Championships.

Yes, we officially are now on the skate to State, also known as the Road To The United Center.

Let's start in the top-tiered Red Division, where New Trier Green grabbed the No. 1-seed and now await the winner of Crystal Lake South-Glenbrook South. I'm guessing the Trevians will trounce the Titans, 7-1.

Loyola Gold stands in the No. 2 ranking, and faces the winner of Neuqua Valley-York. I'm guessing the Ramblers will defeat Neuqua Valley, 6-2.

Glenbrook North is the No. 3 seed, followed by Providence Catholic and Benet. Naperville Central is No. 6, followed by Stevenson, Highland Park, Sandburg and St. Rita to round out the Top 10.

I'll be shocked if the Trevians aren't skating for the state championship. The question is, who will their opponent be? There are so many potentially great match-ups in the bottom half of the bracket, including Loyola-Stevenson, Naperville Central-Glenbrook North. That said, I'm predicting it will be New Trier Green vs. Glenbrook North for the title.

In the White Division, Loyola Maroon is the No. 1-seed, while New Trier White is the No. 2, followed by Marist, St. Patrick and Warren.

The Ramblers will be tough to beat, though Warren might surprise a few.

The Combined Division has Rockford at No. 1, followed by Lincoln Way, Maine Township, Waubonsie Valley and BG/H/W.

I can see a great game in the elite eight between the BG/H/W Stampede and Waubonsie Valley, and think the Stampede will snag a 5-4 win, with John Cappuccitti netting the game-winning goal with less than a minute to play in regulation-time.

I wonder if the crystal-ball is clear.

Rockford will make it back to the state finals, and this time oppose Maine Township.

For the Girls championship, look for a state finals battle between arch-rivals New Trier and Loyola, the No. 1 and No. 2-seeded teams, respectively. My dark horse in the Girls Division is the Latin School of Chicago.

The Stevenson JV defeated Glenbrook North in late-January, but can the Patriots do it again? The Spartans grabbed the No. 1-seed, while the Patriots are No. 3. Providence Catholic is No. 2.

Rockford earned the No. 1 seed in the JV Combined Division, while Plainfield is No. 2. But, I think Waubonsie Valley, the No. 3 seed, has the best chance of knocking Rockford off its post.

PREDICTED WINNERS:

RED DIVISION: New Trier Green

WHITE DIVISION: Loyola Maroon

COMBINED DIVISION: Rockford

GIRLS: Loyola

JV: Providence Catholic

JV COMBINED: Waubonsie Valley