



ALL-COUNTY BOYS BASKETBALL

Player of the Year JJ ADDISON

FREDERICK JUNIOR GUARD/FORWARD
■ Frederick County's most electrifying player lived up to the hype and heightened expectations in his second season with the Cadets. Addison led the region in scoring (24 points per game) and put up jaw-dropping stat lines night after night. He also averaged 7.3 rebounds per game playing as a versatile wing.

■ Addison was one of two returning starters from Frederick's 2024 Class 4A state championship team, along with point guard Emonte Hill Jr., and became a key leader with plentiful turnover elsewhere in the lineup. The junior rounded into a complete player on both ends of the floor, helping the Cadets recover from a 3-7 start and lifting them to their third consecutive state tournament.

■ He played his best when the lights were brightest, including a mammoth 32-point, 16-rebound double-double in a regional final victory over arch-rival Thomas Johnson.

■ Addison is drawing some interest from Division I colleges.



FIRST TEAM

CHASE BEARD JUNIOR POINT GUARD MIDDLETOWN

■ The sharpshooter helped the Knights return to the Class 2A state semifinals despite turning over much of its squad. Beard was one of the few holdovers, and he flourished as an outside scoring threat (16.2 points, 6.2 rebounds, 3.7 assists).



EZERE BOWIE SENIOR CENTER THOMAS JOHNSON

■ One of two players in the county to average a double-double, few teams could contain Bowie. He notched 16.1 points and 10 rebounds per game, giving the Patriots a domineering inside presence as they returned to the Class 4A West region final.



KEVIN BUKULA SENIOR GUARD TUSCARORA

■ In his only year with the Titans, Bukula led the biggest turnaround by any county team this season. His 17.4 points per game ranked second in the region among public school players, and he also averaged 5.9 rebounds and 2.6 steals.



EMONTE HILL JR. SENIOR POINT GUARD FREDERICK

■ Few set the tempo better than Hill, who helped bring the Cadets to their third straight state tourney. The Shippensburg commit became more of a scorer this season (12 points per game) while dishing a county-high seven assists per game.



DYLAN HODGSON SENIOR FORWARD LINGANORE

■ Hodgson was a handful around the basket as one of two players in the county to average a double-double. His 11.8 rebounds per game led the area's public school players, while he also averaged 15.1 points, 2.5 assists and two blocks.



SEAN PYLES SENIOR GUARD URBANA

■ Pyles filled the basket at a moment's notice and was particularly lethal from deep. The McDaniel commit averaged 16 points per game while averaging 5 rebounds, 3 assists and 2.5 steals as the Hawks were one of the county's top teams.



ALEX RODRIGUEZ JUNIOR GUARD/FORWARD OAKDALE

■ He was the Bears' focal point, becoming one of their leaders as they went through a transition season. Rodriguez made an all-around impact, as his 16.3 points per game ranked near the top of the county. He also grabbed 6.9 rebounds per game.



AARON SHOFFNER JUNIOR FORWARD ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC PREP

■ It was another fine season for Shoffner, who played inside and out to give the Vikings a three-level scoring option. His average of 18 points and six rebounds ranked highly in the county, while he shot 39.6% from 3-point range.



SECOND TEAM

Pos.	Name	School	Grade
G/F	KEANU BOREN	MSD	SENIOR
F	SAM COOPER	TUSCARORA	SOPH.
PG	BRANDON DONALDSON	LINGANORE	SENIOR
F	KEEGAN MARCERON	OAKDALE	JUNIOR
PG	DIEGO ORELLANA	URBANA	SENIOR
F	BRITTIN POFFENBARGER	MIDDLETOWN	JUNIOR
PG	AJ SPENCER	TJ	JUNIOR
G	CHRISTIAN WALKER	SJCP	JUNIOR
G	DYLAN WHITE	WALKERSVILLE	SENIOR

HONORABLE MENTION

Brunswick — Aaron Birney, Mark Cooke
Catoctin — Logan Williams
Frederick — Osborne Ehana, Elijah Palmer
Frederick Christian Academy — Jude Annor, Cohen Wade
Frederick Warriors — Matthan Brandenburg
Linganore — Cory Clark
Maryland School for the Deaf — Tahoe Herzig-Wilcox, Jayden Orsi-Pedersen, Zeke Ortiz
Middletown — Will Akingbade, Trevor Beard, Mason Whipp
New Life — Jack Socash
Oakdale — Christian Rivera, Harrison Tisdale
St. John's Catholic Prep — Ryan Hankins, Mamadou Sako
Thomas Johnson — Jake Bumgardner, Cristian Contreras, Jakari Means
Tuscarora — Mitchell Curtis
Urbana — Mason Johnson, Keith Mazinga, Tristan Thompson
Walkersville — Trevor Pfeil, James Stier

Resilient Gators rely on defense, playmakers to overtake Cougars for title

By JIM VERTUNO
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Dribbles bounced off hips, no-look passes went to no one and Florida's best player couldn't make a basket.

And when the Gators' bench was assessed a technical foul early in the second half, a frustrating night appeared to be hitting its low point.

But then the resilient Gators got going as they fought back from a 12-point deficit in the second half to beat Houston 65-63 in the NCAA title game for the school's third national championship.

A blocked 3-pointer by Thomas Haugh led to his spinning layup, a three-point play and screaming fist pump. Walter Clayton Jr., scoreless in the first half, tied the game three times in the second half.

"I got a little emotional. My team needed a spark," Haugh said of his play that helped the Gators get with-in 45-42 with about 12 minutes left.

"This group," he added, "is just gritty."

Gritty enough for four come-backs in this NCAA Tournament.

The Gators created their own version of Houston's suffocating defense that had stifled them for so much of the first half. The Cougars committed four turnovers in the final 1:21.

As Houston looked for the winning 3-pointer in the final seconds, Clayton forced Emanuel Sharp to abandon the shot. Sharp had to let the ball go, creating a mad scramble as Florida's 6-foot-11 Alex Condon fully extended, diving to the floor to get it.

The Gators had looked completely out of sync in the first half.



Florida's Walter Clayton Jr. and Micah Handlogten celebrate after beating Houston for the national title Monday.

Nothing was working for Clayton, who had scored 30 and 34 points, respectively, in the previous two games to carry his team to the final. That meant other players had to step up.

"We have 20 minutes. Let's set the tone!" Will Richard told his Florida teammates in a huddle just outside the locker room at halftime.

Clayton said coach Todd Golden never seemed worried about his first-half struggles.

"Coach didn't say anything. We

understand it's a team sport, it's not all about just one guy. Multiple guys stepped up," the star guard said.

Richard had kept Florida in the game with four first-half 3-pointers. Condon, who finished with 12 points and seven rebounds, did the work on the defensive end, teaming up with Haugh, Rueben Chinyelu and Micah Handgloten to hold Houston's muscular J'Wan Roberts to eight points on 3-of-13 shooting.

Richard even gathered the team together after the technical foul to

calm things down.

Clayton eventually delivered the biggest moments in the rally as he tied the game three times, the first two on spinning layups for three-point plays and the last with a contested 3-pointer.

"We bounce back," said Gators guard Alijah Martin, whose free throws with 46 seconds left gave Florida the lead.

"We've been doing it all year, but now we did it on the biggest stage."

Chinyelu celebrated with a cigar — still wrapped in plastic — in the

AT A GLANCE

THE AP MEN'S TOP 25 (FINAL)

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, and total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and previous ranking.

	Record	Pts	Prv
1. Florida (61)	36-4	1525	3
2. Houston	35-5	1464	2
3. Duke	35-4	1402	1
4. Auburn	32-6	1343	4
5. Tennessee	30-8	1220	6
6. Alabama	28-9	1198	7
7. Michigan St.	30-7	1188	8
8. Texas Tech	28-9	1140	9
9. Maryland	27-9	923	11
10. Michigan	27-10	873	14
11. St. John's	31-5	862	5
12. Kentucky	24-12	744	18
13. BYU	26-10	712	17
14. Purdue	24-12	704	22
15. Arizona	24-13	639	21
16. Wisconsin	27-10	542	13
17. Iowa St.	25-10	512	15
18. Mississippi	24-12	424	-
19. Texas A&M	23-11	358	19
20. Arkansas	22-14	321	-
21. Louisville	27-8	309	10
22. Clemson	27-7	265	12
23. Gonzaga	26-9	250	24
24. Saint Mary's	29-6	186	20
25. Memphis	29-6	137	16

Others receiving votes: Drake 122, Oregon 105, Illinois 80, UConn 76, Creighton 60, Colorado St. 49, UCLA 36, McNeese St. 17, Missouri 16, New Mexico 10, UC San Diego 6, Kansas 5, Marquette 2.

Florida locker room. Golden was heading to the postgame press conference when someone asked how many texts he'd received after the victory.

He peeked at his phone: "There's 6,994. Wait ... 6,995," he laughed as they kept pouring in.

Golden said he didn't have to give a fiery speech at halftime after the early turnovers and poor shots.

"We just needed to kind of calm down," he said. "It's kind of embedded in their DNA. ... They just found a way to win the ballgame."