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Villager's annual Starting Five announced

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Now that both the boys and girls basketball seasons are wrapped up, I figured it was time to take a look at the seasons that were and dole out the *The Villager's* prestigious end-of-season awards.

In keeping with the tradition that my predecessor Mike Taylor began for *The Villager's* sports section last year, I will name the local players that I think would best make up an all-star team in our second annual Starting Five.

As Mike said last year, the plan, in theory, is for the Starting Five from *The Villager's* coverage area to play other all-star teams. That would be why you won't see a team of five power forwards taking the the court in this hypothetical scenario.

Coincidentally, I will be continuing another tradition that Mike laid out in having three guards and two forwards on both the boys and girls squads. Settling on the five players that would make up both teams was no easy task, especially considering I'm more familiar with the local boys teams, but after careful research I have decided who would be taking the floor for my all-star basketball teams.

Girls Starting Five

Starting out on the girls team will be the point guard for four-time district champion College Park, sophomore **Lexxus Ward**. While still developing as a scorer, Ward contributed offensively for the Lady Cavaliers with more than eight points per game on 41 percent field goal shooting. Ward really impacted the game running the point and on the defensive end, dishing out more than five assists per game while nabbing five steals a game.

Playing the shooting guard position will be The Woodlands junior **Kaitlyn Westfall**. Second on the team in scoring for the District 14-5A runners-up, Westfall proved to be one of the most difficult players in the district to guard.

Manning the last guard spot will be College Park senior **Priyanka Duvvuru**. While Duvvuru didn't dominate on the stat sheet, her importance to the Lady Cavaliers as a senior leader this season can't be denied. Duvvuru was unable to play in College Park's loss to Cy Falls in the area round of the playoffs, and one of the first things that coach Kip Anderson said after the game was how playing without her affected the team.

The first forward spot will held by The Woodlands sophomore **Anna Strickland**. The 6-foot-1 sophomore was a model of consistency for the Lady Highlanders — being one of their top scorers in most games. And since she is only a sophomore, expect Strickland to dominate the district over the next two years.

College Park's **Megan Shafer** will round out the girls' Starting Five this year. Leading the Lady Cavaliers in scoring and rebounds this year, the junior also nabbed more than three steals a game. What ultimately gave Shafer the nod over other forwards that I was considering was that she also led the Lady Cavs in 3-point shooting this season, which is impressive for a player that predominantly plays in the post.

Boys Starting Five

After the girls' Starting Five featured only one senior, the boys' squad is made up of four seniors and one junior. Choosing the three guards for the boys' Starting Five wasn't difficult at all, as each player in this trio led their respective teams in scoring.

Running one of the guard position for the guys will be the sole underclassman on the team, The Woodlands' **Wes Cole**. With the ability to single-handedly take over games with a deadly 3-point shot, the Highlanders looked to Cole when they needed a shot in the arm and their offense was sluggish. Capable of leaving a defender in the dust, Cole's quickness also proved beneficial on the defensive end as he finished second on the Highlanders in steals.

The second guard spot on the boys' Starting Five will go to College Park senior **James Allen**. Allen led the

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Cavalier offense with more than 12 points per game on 51 percent shooting. One of the quickest players in the district, Allen was capable of snagging the ball away at any time and proved to be a more than effective rebounder despite being only 5-foot-10.

Oak Ridge senior **Alonzo Jefferson** will man the last guard spot on my Starting Five because of his ability to score in the paint and finish around the rim. When Jefferson got hot and took the ball to the hoop, a defender's best bet was to foul him — because otherwise he was going to score. Coming through in the clutch on numerous occasions, like he did against Klein Forest in a bi-district playoff win, also helps put him among the district's top guards.

The Woodlands senior **Justin Nelson** will be taking the first forward spot on this squad. Although Nelson was second in scoring and rebounding for The Woodlands, while also leading the team in blocks, I feel that his greatest contribution to the Highlanders was in the energy he brought to the court. One of the best defenders in the district, Nelson could guard the perimeter or he could smack away an opponent's shot in the paint.

The final spot on the boys' Starting Five is going to Oak Ridge senior forward **Scott Bastian**. At times unguardable, Bastian was probably the district's best post-up player this season. While Oak Ridge was inconsistent at times, Bastian's production never wavered.

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