

## PEWAUKEE MAKES HISTORY



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Pewaukee's boys basketball team celebrates after beating Whitnall 71-54 to win its third consecutive WIAA Division 2 state title Saturday at the Kohl Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Pewaukee senior Milan Momcilovic (right) and junior teammate Nick Janowski embrace in the closing moments of the WIAA Division 2 Boys State Basketball Tournament championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.

### Pirates down Whitnall for third straight D2 title

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MADISON — Twice was nice.

But three is history.

Riding the efforts of all-everything senior wing Milan Momcilovic and outstanding junior guard Nick Janowski, Pewaukee became the first Division 2 boys basketball program to win three consecutive state titles with a 71-54 victory over Whitnall on Saturday at the WIAA State Boys Basketball Tournament.

It was an iconic performance from the 6-foot-8 Momcilovic, who leaves Pewaukee as an all-time great. He dazzled the Kohl Center crowd with 29 points and nine rebounds, only sitting for the final 20 seconds with the game well in hand as he left to a rousing ovation.

"They were in a zone most

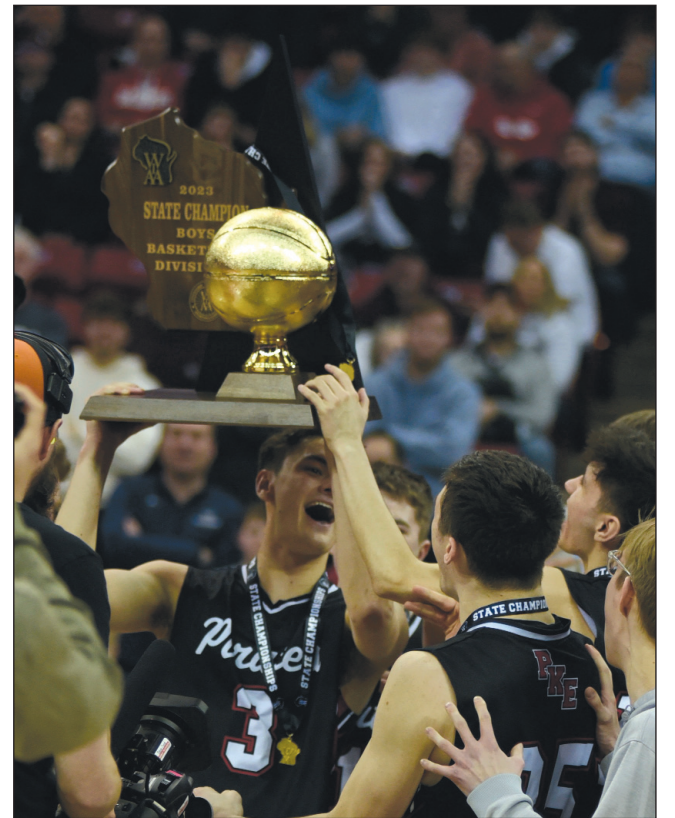
of the second half, and their zone kind of broke down and I kind of took over," Momcilovic said. "I knew it was my time. I kind of started feeling myself. So I just took over and when I took over the game was about over."

One day after he essentially saved their season against Nicolet in the state semifinals, the Pirates once again leaned on Momcilovic when the going got tough. Pewaukee, which led for nearly the duration of the game, was able to pull away from its Woodland Conference foes with a crucial 10-0 run in the second half, with all those points coming courtesy of Momcilovic.

Janowski, now part of three championship teams in three years at Pewaukee, added 20 points, eight assists and six rebounds.

"I knew we had so much talent coming up when I was

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Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Pewaukee's boys basketball team holds up the gold ball after defeating Whitnall for the WIAA Division 2 state championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.



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Pewaukee junior guard Nick Janowski shoots a 3 with Whitnall sophomore guard Jack Lutz closing out during the WIAA Division 2 Boys State Basketball Tournament championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Pewaukee sophomore guard Isaiah Robinson goes past Whitnall sophomore guard Myles Herro during the WIAA Division 2 Boys State Basketball Tournament championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Pewaukee junior guard Nick Janowski celebrates after scoring through contact as senior teammate Milan Momcilovic looks on during the WIAA Division 2 Boys State Basketball Tournament championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.



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Pewaukee coach David Burkemper smiles as junior guard Nick Janowski walks off the court near the end of the WIAA Division 2 Boys State Basketball Tournament championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.

## Pirates

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in fourth, fifth grade," Janowski said. "Just to see it all come together like that, it's just a dedication to our work ethic. It really is. We're there for each other as teammates and it just made us one of the best to ever do it as a team."

Only nine boys basketball programs from the state in all have ever achieved a three-peat, with Stevens Point being the last to do it from 2015-17.

"Winning a championship is not easy. It's special," Pewaukee coach David Burkemper said. "Winning three in a row is amazing."

"For me personally, it's about the journey. Just the everyday interactions ... and knowing that you accomplished the end goal of what you set out to do, I think gives me a lot of self-confidence. I also know it's gonna give these guys a lot of self-confidence going forward in whatever they do."

Burkemper admitted that self-confidence may have been lacking a bit on Friday when the Pirates barely escaped against the Knights, whose potential game-winning shot at the buzzer fell short. But the top-seeded Pirates (27-3) followed a similar script to their first two state titles.

"The first game you always feel the nerves,"

Burkemper said. "I'll be honest — I felt nerves yesterday. I thought it affected my coaching of the kids and especially our newer guys. I didn't take that pressure off them. I think I maybe amplified it and I thought getting past yesterday allowed those guys to take a deep breath."

"When you play with these two guys, it makes everything easier."

Those two guys flanking Burkemper at the post-game press conference, of course, were Momcilovic and Janowski. But it was one of those newer guys that Burkemper eluded to that put Pewaukee up for good, as 5-8 sophomore guard Karson Osterman, who finished with 11 points, knocked down a 3 with 7 minutes, 26 seconds left in the first half to make it 22-19.

The Pirates led by as many as eight in the opening half and settled for a 37-32 lead at the break. Both teams shot at an uber-efficient clip over the first 18 minutes. Fourth-seeded Whitnall (25-4) shot 63.6% from the field, while Pewaukee connected on 8 of 13 attempts from beyond the arc.

"I thought they played a fantastic first half, put us on our heels just a little bit," Burkemper said of Whitnall. "But I thought the guys made a great adjustment at halftime just to be a little bit more patient against the zone."

Nearly four minutes

passed without a point being scored in the second half, with Momcilovic ending that drought at the 14:03 mark. In all, the Falcons were held scoreless for over five minutes.

"The second half I feel like Pewaukee made some adjustments," Whitnall coach Travis Riesop said. "They kind of packed the lane on us, dared us to make some jump shots, and unfortunately it just seemed like there was a lid on (the basket) for the first six or seven minutes."

"It's hard to get momentum back against a team like Pewaukee."

Especially with Momcilovic in the fold. After senior guard Austin Herro pulled Whitnall within 47-43 on a layup with 9:48 to go, Momcilovic immediately countered with one of his three triples. He'd then score on a putback, convert a pair of free throws and bury another trey to suddenly make it 57-43 with 7:44 remaining.

The Pewaukee lead never dropped below 12 from there and grew as high as 19.

"Pewaukee is a great basketball team," Riesop said. "They shot 50% from 3 and made 11 threes. It's hard to win a basketball game when a team does that."

Sophomore guard Jack Lutz led the Falcons with 17 points, while Herro added 11. After Whitnall went 4 of 7 from 3 in the first half, it made just one try from dis-

tance after halftime. Meanwhile, the Pirates shot at least 50% both from the floor and 3-point range for the second straight year, also doing so in last year's state final against La Crosse Central.

"We pushed the pace a little bit better than we did yesterday, and then we allowed our skill to take over," Burkemper said.

Momcilovic, who credited Burkemper for setting the tone every day in practice and during the offseason to help keep the Pirates hungry for gold, closed his high school career with 1,919 points — by far the best mark in team history.

Of course, Janowski may have something to say about that record next season. Not only that, but a possible fourth consecutive state title will be another carrot that dangles in front of the 6-3 lefty sharpshooter. Only two boys basketball teams in state history have won at least four straight — Dominican (5, 2012-16) and Randolph (4, 2002-05).

"Yeah, we're gonna win a fourth," Janowski said as Burkemper chuckled at his ever-confident guard. "I want to win a fourth. I have so much confidence in this team. Last year we lost some guys and it's gonna be a lot more difficult, obviously, because Milan's ridiculous. But we just find a way to win every year. So I have no doubt that we'll do it again next year."



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Pewaukee sophomore guard Karson Osterman puts up a 3 against Whitnall sophomore guard Myles Herro during the WIAA Division 2 Boys State Basketball Tournament championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Pewaukee senior wing Milan Momcilovic drives down the lane against Whitnall sophomore guard Myles Herro during the WIAA Division 2 Boys State Basketball Tournament championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Freeman Staff

Pewaukee sophomore wing Luka Momcilovic shoots a 3 during the WIAA Division 2 Boys State Basketball Tournament championship Saturday at the Kohl Center.