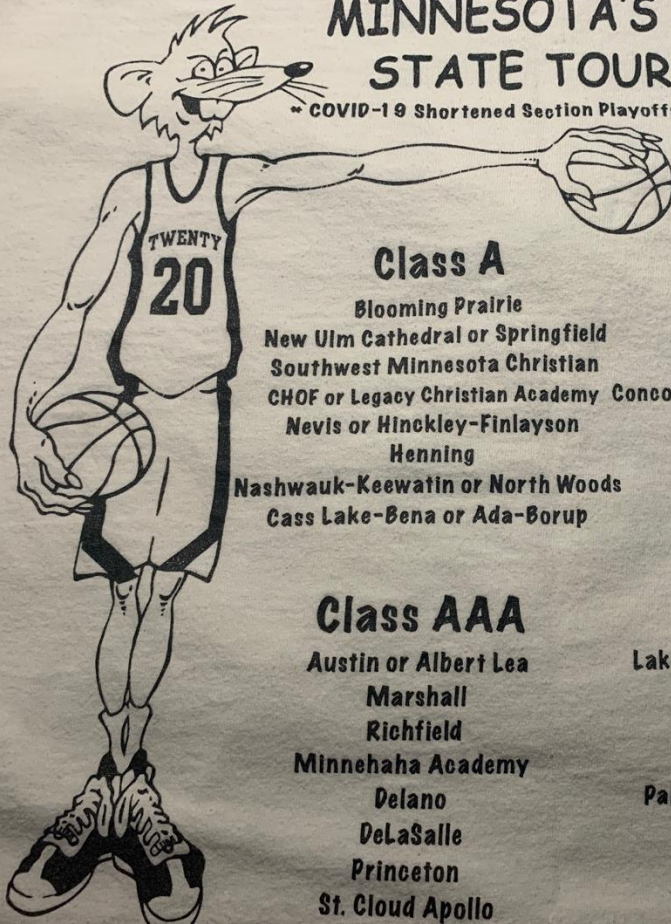


I remember that day in the second week of March 2020. I was a senior in high school at Concordia Academy in Roseville, MN at the time. In the weeks leading up to the shutdown, the fear of COVID-19 increased rapidly. At first, we all took it as a joke back in January when it was still confined to China. I was on the basketball team and we were scheduled to play in the Section Final that night against Cristo Rey with a chance to go to state, which would have been the first team since 2004. I was just having a normal day in school, then at lunch, some of my friends saw on social media that our game had been cancelled. It was easily one of my most emotion days to date. The reality of the situation set in shortly after I heard the news. I am a person that really never cries, but I couldn't help myself that day. I found the majority of my teammates in the locker room after lunch also in tears. It wasn't long before our coach had left work to come be with us in the locker room. I sat there with my head in my hands thinking over and over that all the time and effort I put in and that we put in as a team was wasted in an instant. Our team had built up to this year. We were playing our best basketball leading up to and in the playoffs. In the regular season, we split games with Cristo Rey, and they were playing well enough at the time to beat the 1 seed in our section, so there's no doubt it would have been a good game. Our coach didn't even know how to tell us that our season was over. Usually, your season ends when you lose a game in the playoffs and lost to the better team on that day, but we never got the satisfaction of knowing whether or not we would make it to state. I would have much rather played that game and lost, then have to never know the outcome at all. One of my teammates had the idea of cutting down the net in our gym, since the winning team of the Section Final would get to do that. We were sent home later that day with an announcement of the school that the following weeks would take place completely online. Little did we know that it would turn into several months, also costing us our baseball season. I was in tears on the drive home that day. When I got home, my mom was waiting for me with a big hug and tears in her eyes as well. The time my coach went to state in 2004, his team got Gym Rats t-shirts with the names of all the team that made it to state on the back of the shirt (pictured). He thought it would be a good idea if he had some made for us but leaving in all the teams whose section final games had been cancelled. My shirt and piece of the net from our gym will likely stay with me for the rest of my life and will help me remember this bizarre experience. The following months of quarantine felt like they flew right by. So much so that I remember every detail from the day like it was yesterday even though it was 8 months ago. Before I knew it, I was moving off to college and it felt like I hadn't reached that stage in life because the previous part was left incomplete.

MINNESOTA'S GYM RATS STATE TOURNAMENT

** COVID-19 Shortened Section Playoffs & State Tournament Teams



Class A

Blooming Prairie
New Ulm Cathedral or Springfield
Southwest Minnesota Christian
CHOF or Legacy Christian Academy
Nevis or Hinckley-Finlayson
Henning
Nashwauk-Keewatin or North Woods
Cass Lake-Bena or Ada-Borup

Class AA

Caledonia
Jordan or Waseca
Jackson County Central
Concordia Academy or Cristo Rey Jesuit
Minneapolis North or Blake
Melrose or Mora
Esko or Pierz
Fergus Falls or Perham

Class AAA

Austin or Albert Lea
Marshall
Richfield
Minnehaha Academy
Delano
DeLaSalle
Princeton
St. Cloud Apollo

Class AAAA

Lakeville South or Rochester Mayo
Eden Prairie or Shakopee
Eastview or Lakeville North
Cretin-Derham Hall
Park Center or Spring Lake Park
Hopkins
Cambridge-Isanti
Maple Grove