



A rags-to-riches volleyball tale



C.J. Risak

Holiday spirits
(or how to alter
your viewpoint)

HOLIDAYS ARE:

- Loaded with fun.
- Loaded with relatives.
- Fun with relatively loaded relatives.

I LIKE HOLIDAYS BECAUSE THEY ARE:

- Days off work.
- Days filled with TV sports.
- Endless days of gift giving and receiving.
- People dazed by the holiday spirit (or spirits).

I DISLIKE HOLIDAYS BECAUSE:

- They're never long enough.
- The list of bills is more than long enough.
- The "Return Gifts Here" line is too long.
- It's a long wait 'til the next holiday.

WHAT I WOULD CHANGE ABOUT HOLIDAYS:

- The length of time.
- The time of year, weatherwise.
- The short time for deadlines.
- Multiply the number times four.

WHAT I WOULDN'T CHANGE ABOUT HOLIDAYS:

- Family get-togethers.
- Friendly get-togethers.
- Epicurean get-togethers.
- A chance to get-it-together.

MY INVITATION LIST FOR A HOLIDAY PARTY:

- A car company owner.
- A dentist-turned-football-team owner.
- A football player who owns this compulsion to sign his name.
- The owner of a fountain pen and a legally binding contract.

WHAT TO TALK ABOUT AT A HOLIDAY PARTY:

- Billy Sims.
- Billy Martin.
- Billy Graham.
- Billy clubs.

WHAT I'D LIKE TO GIVE UP FOR THE NEW YEAR:

- Late night deadlines.
- Late night TV.
- Late night snacks.
- Late night trips to the store for late night snacks.

WHAT I CAN'T GIVE UP FOR THE NEW YEAR:

- Late night deadlines, because I Love My Job (ILMJ).
- Late night TV, because of late night deadlines — and ILMJ.
- Late night snacks, because of late night deadlines — and ILMJ.
- Late night trips to the store — ditto.

PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR:

- Lion champions (maybe).
- Panther champions (certainly).
- Tiger champions (hopefully).
- Detroit's champions proclaiming a Year of the Cat (if everything breaks just right).

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR:

- Catholic teams playing public school teams.
- State champions playing other states' champions.
- More teams playing in the state football playoffs.
- Less playing of girls' basketball in the courts and more playing on the courts.

WHAT WON'T HAPPEN THIS NEW YEAR:

- I predict there won't be two separate prep football tournaments.
- I predict there won't be a change in the girls' basketball season.
- I predict there won't be another Detroit contract signed by Billy Sims.
- I predict there won't be any more predictions from this sportswriter.

WHAT I WISH TO YOU FOR THE NEW YEAR:

- A prosperous New Year.
- A lucky New Year.
- A healthy, no nukes New Year.
- A Happy New Year — which you won't have unless you're prosperous, lucky and healthy (without nukes).



Amy Austin, an All-Area, all-league basketball performer, is considered one of the premier volleyball players in the state.

The North star, shown above returning a serve, is one of the Raiders' tri-captains.

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

PRIOR TO 1978, the North Farmington volleyball team had not won a game or a match in its history.

In 1978, Sandy Lubieniecki became the head coach. The Raiders won three games. Since then, the Raiders have won 72 games and lost 31. They have won two Northwest Suburban League championships, one district championship and three straight city championships.

The Raiders have gone from a joke to the premier volleyball team in the Farmington area in six years.

SO, WHAT'S Lubieniecki's secret to success?

"We set two goals at the beginning of each season," she explained. "No. 1 is to have fun. Put a couple exclamation points beside that one. Playing volleyball must be fun.

"Second, I tell each girl to strive to finish each season feeling she has improved individually. If we achieve these goals, we will have success."

Nothing to it, right?

That's what you think.

Lubieniecki's approach to volleyball is nothing like the game you see played in Michelob Light commercials. When Lubieniecki speaks of her game, words like tips, digs, ace, reception percentage, spikes and kills infiltrate her vocabulary. She talks of specialization, hitters as opposed to blockers, diggers as opposed to passers.

The game Lubieniecki teaches, all fun aside, is technical, hard-working, winning volleyball.

LAST YEAR'S squad was 25-8. They won the NSL and the mythical-but-significant Farmington City Championship. The only blemish on last year's accomplishments was an upset loss to Birmingham Groves in the state Class A district tournament.

You'll have to pardon the smile across coach L's face. Six starters from last year are back again and they have their sights firmly set on, (in order now), another city championship, another league championship and a little revenge for last season's slip-up in the districts.

"Our initial goal, of course, is to be better than our 25-8 record of last year," said coach L. "Our seniors went to the regionals as sophomores. Another goal is to get back there."

And the Raiders have the talent to do it.

Topping the talent list is Amy Austin. Lubieniecki said that coaches throughout the area consider Austin one of the best players in the state.

"She is probably one of the best all-around volleyball players in the state. She certainly is one of the hardest hitters. She's a great digger and a strong server," said coach L.

AUSTIN WAS first team all-area, all-league and all-county last year as a junior. She is North's all-time leading spiker, with 688 successful spikes, and blocker with 142. She is tops in career ace spikes (256) and digs (255). She holds five season and six school records for North.

Austin, along with Linda Rennard and Mary Kozicki, captain the Raiders. Rennard, said coach L, is the Raiders' floor general.

"She plays good fundamental volleyball and she is the director on the floor," she said.

Rennard is a little reluctant to call herself the leader — she's just trying to do her job.

"I don't want to dominate anybody," she said. "I just try to play to the best of my ability and help the team. I try to be the best I can be. If I'm not one of the six best players on the team, then I don't belong on the floor. I just try to keep everyone working together."

Mary Kozicki is another hard hitter, according to Lubieniecki. She was second team all-league last year.

MARY'S SISTER Patti was also second team all-league last year as a sophomore. Patti is an outstanding passer, destined to become North's all-time set leader. She is currently third with 944.

Lubieniecki has more strong hitters in Juniors Donna Konjarevich and Brooks Landback.

"Our team strength has always been defense," Lubieniecki said. "This year

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Linda Rennard
floor general

Holiday heartbreak for unlucky Raiders

By Rich Swenson
staff writer

It was the same old story in North Farmington's heartbreaking 55-54 loss to Ferndale Tuesday in the opening round of Ferndale's Christmas basketball tournament.

The Raiders outshot, outrebounced, outthudded and outplayed the undefeated Eagles in the contest, but couldn't score the deciding basket to give them a much-deserved upset against one of the area's top cage teams.

North Farmington with only 25 seconds left in the game, sophomore center Rick Anderson hit a short jumper to give North Farmington the lead.

Ferndale retook the lead with 11 seconds left when Darrain Carter scored after snaring a loose ball in a scramble in front of the Eagles' basket.

THE RAIDERS had one last chance to pull off the upset, but Anderson's 20-foot shot from the top of the key fell short as the buzzer sounded.

"It's another close one we lost," North Farmington coach Tom Negoshian said. "My players did everything I asked of them. I couldn't be prouder of their effort. We just couldn't make the shot when we had to."

North Farmington had problems with the physical Eagles in the first quarter, falling behind 14-10. Ferndale's press bothered North Farmington, causing numerous turnovers early in the game.

But after Negoshian called a timeout to make some offensive adjustments, the Raiders were a different team.

"We had problems with the press at first," he said, "but then we started attacking the press to score and it worked."

NORTH FARMINGTON countered with a press of its own to slow down the Eagles' fast break.

"I think our box press slowed them," Negoshian said. "We ran a match-up zone to force their guards to beat us. But they are a good ballclub — very physical."

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basketball



TOM DAER/staff photographer

North Farmington's Scott Draper goes up for two of his 12 points Tuesday night.

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