

Prep netters warm up for season

By TOM BAER

The winter of '78 is finally over. That's what the calendar says, anyway.

Now that the snow has melted — or has been shoveled away — from the area tennis courts, it's time to take a look at the prep tennis teams at Southfield-Lathrup and Southfield High. The two teams open by playing each other on April 7 at Southfield.

"I can see that April 7 will come too soon," said Lathrup coach Ed Waits. "The weather has been so lousy that we haven't had much of a chance to see our kids play."

Waits would probably settle for a replay of last season. The Chargers compiled a perfect 16-0 record in dual meets, qualified their entire team for the state tournament, finishing in a fourth-place tie with Birmingham Brother Rice.

Along the way, Lathrup won its third-straight Metro Suburban Association tennis championship. "We're always happy about that because the MSA is a

darn tough tennis league," Waits said. Some good players from last year have graduated, but Waits has six returnees. Senior Jon Frank, who made the semifinals of the state meet last spring, is back. Senior Pete McKnight, who is better known for his play on Lathrup's basketball team, was at No. 1 doubles last season. Seniors Ron Volles and Dan Lipnik played at No. 2 doubles last year. The other experienced players are senior Brad Kovan and sophomore Bruce Segal, who played at No. 3 doubles as a freshman last year.

LATHRUP ALSO has some good young players. Some of them are junior Howard Handler, sophomores Brian Salesian and Dave Lublin, and freshmen Ken Frank and Scott Kall. "We're going to have tremendous balance this year," Waits said. "They all seem to be about dead even in terms of ability. It's just a question of whether we have enough strength on top to do the job."

Lathrup opens its MSA season April 21 at home against Troy Athens.

"I don't know much about the other teams yet, but I think the league is going to be as strong as ever," Waits said. "There probably won't be any super-dominant team. Birmingham Groves is always good. Bloomfield Hills Lahser has just about everybody back, and they were comers last year."

Lathrup also has some tough non-league meets. On the schedule: Livonia Stevenson, Brother Rice, Farmington Harrison and Ann Arbor Pioneer.

At Southfield High, coach Dale Freeman has just two players back from last year's team, which compiled an 8-4 overall record and finished second behind Birmingham Seaholm in the Southeastern Michigan Association.

"We're going to be real young without many seniors," Freeman said. "Hopefully, we'll have some good underclassmen. I haven't seen any of

them play yet because of the weather."

THE TWO RETURNERS are juniors Dennis Tom and Steve Cohen. Tom played at No. 4 singles last year, and Cohen played doubles. Jeff Tomlinson, a sophomore, could be tough this year, according to Freeman.

Southfield begins its Southeastern Michigan Association season April 13 at home against Royal Oak Kimball. Southfield will play each SMA team twice.

Southfield's schedule includes non-league meets with some tough area teams: Lahser, Oak Park, Detroit Catholic Central, Groves and Bloomfield Hills Andover.

Southfield will host the SMA conference meet May 23. Matches will be played at the school's courts and at the Southfield Civic Center.

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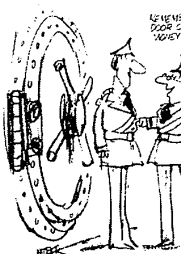
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