

Preseason over, now we play for keeps

By C.J. Rieck
staff writer

The "preseason" is over. Not that the contests prior to the holiday break didn't count. But for most coaches, that's the time to test your team's members, evaluate them, prepare them for the league season.

With the season's first phase completed, what are Oakland University's chances in the various upcoming campaigns? Here's a capsule look at three Pioneer teams and what to expect in the next two months. Women's swimming and wrestling will be examined in Monday's editions.

MEN'S BASKETBALL
So far, so good? How about better than expected?

That might be a more accurate assessment of OU's men's team, who have won six of eight games going into this weekend's Sacred Heart Holiday Classic in Bridgeport, Conn.

Included among those wins was a 70-69 triumph over Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) rival Hillsdale, which got the Pioneers started off on the right foot in conference play.

And that could be very important by season's end. OU, runner-up, was picked to finish sixth in the GLIAC, a prediction that looks hoaky.

So far, the Pioneers have won with offense. Their defense has been adequate, allowing 74.3 points per game and limiting opponents to .467 percent on field goal attempts.

Their offense has made the difference. OU is scoring over 83 points per game and hitting better than 55 percent of their floor shots. Through the season's first four games, OU was the second-best shooting team in the NCAA Division II.

SPARKING THAT OFFENSE are seniors Mike Mohr (19.5 points), a 6-8 senior forward, and Chris Howze (9.1

analysis

points), a 6-5 sophomore swingman. Harriet Davis (15.1) has been invaluable coming off the bench, and Craig Mitchell (12.5) has proven a valuable asset.

While the offense has clicked, the Pioneers' rebounding hasn't. In a loss to Northern Michigan last week they had just 18 rebounds. Before the season got underway, OU coach Lee Frederick said that rebounding would be a deciding factor in winning the GLIAC.

OU must improve on the boards if it harbors serious title hopes. In five of eight games, the leading OU rebounder failed to reach double figures. Frederick hopes that Walt Dixon, a 6-7 transfer from University of Detroit who became eligible for the Northern contest, will help.

He should. And he'll get every chance, according to Frederick, who said Dixon will play 30 minutes a game when the conference season starts up again. The two freshmen front-court players from Surinam — Jenny Vrij and Jeffery Strass — have talent but need refining to become heavy contributors.

If Dixon can play the middle, it will free Mohr up on the outside. And he's the key in OU's offense.

The Pioneers are a few rebounds away from a shot at the GLIAC championship.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
While things look good for OU's men's basketball team, the women have struggled.

Already the Lady Pioneers have lost more games than they did all last season, struggling with a 3-3 mark. While the GLIAC schedule won't make it any easier, OU should improve.

One reason is the coach, Sue Kruszewski, a proven success. She predicted hard times in the early going for her young squad, but decided to stick with the inexperienced lineup to get it ready for the GLIAC campaign. And her team so far is unbeaten in conference play, thanks to an 82-82 thumping of Hillsdale.

What the Lady Pioneers need is a lesson in what the men's team does so well: shooting accurately. Brenda McLean, the only returning starter, is scoring 17.6 points per game and has seemingly adjusted well to her new position at power forward.

Kim Nash, who took over for McLean at center, was in a shooting slump (30 percent from the floor) until a 28-point effort against Michigan State. The rest of the lineup — guards Maria Reynolds and Kim McCarthy and forward Anya Williams — have been equally inconsistent.

That inconsistency is what Kruszewski wants to eliminate — before the start of the GLIAC schedule.

Horror! OU's men's swimmers lost not one, but two dual meets in a single day!

Fear not, Pioneer swim loyalists. For OU's tankers are as strong as ever. Nay, stronger.

The pair of losses occurred a week ago in Fort Pierce, Fla. The team is currently training down south, and

training very hard: morning and night workouts, totaling 8,000 yards a day.

Coach Pete Hovland was unconcerned about the losses to University of Tampa and Indian River JC, which may have been no more than exhibitions. When a team is in heavy training, the swimmers are often tired and their times reflect it. This training will pay off when the team is tapered and rested.

That will be in March, when the NCAA Division II championships roll around.

If OU isn't the favorite to win the national title, there is none. The Pioneers were narrowly beaten for the title a year ago by California State-Northridge, and OU is stronger this year.

Tracy Huth, a consistently outstanding and versatile swimmer, leads the OU list of national champions. Huth holds national records in the 200-yard and 400-yard individual medleys.

But there's much more. Returning All-Americans Mike Schmidt, Jeff Cotton, Darin Abbass, Alan Faust and Craig Chappell make the Pioneers a powerhouse.

Add to that list Mike McCloskey and Matt Croghan, a pair of transfer students whose times would have scored at last year's nationals, and the makings of a dynasty are all in evidence.

The only problem thus far for OU? McCloskey suffered a broken leg. But he continues to train with a special cast and figures to be in good shape come March.

And so do the Pioneers.

O&E bowling tourney is here

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

Practice time is over. Young bowlers from across western Wayne County will take to the firing line.

Livonia VFW Post 3941, Pro Am Bowling & Trophy Sales and the Observer Newspapers are co-sponsoring the second Open Junior Bowling Tournament for boys and girls ages 8-17.

The event began this morning and

continues through Friday at Livonia's Wonderland Lanes, 28455 Plymouth Road, located between Middlebelt and Inkster.

"We have about 110 bowlers and that's not too bad — we get a lot of responses from the newspaper," said Ernie Jones of the VFW and chairman of the event. "We had about 70 entries for a Livonia-only tournament last year."

THE TOURNAMENT attracted bowlers from Livonia, Plymouth-Canton, Westland, Garden City, Farmington-Hills and Redford.

Jones, along with Harold Stobb, Walter Cox and Joe Charnawski, founded the event and made it a part of a VFW community project.

Trophies, donated by Pro-Am through the help of Ken Kosick, will be awarded to the top three finishers in each of the following age brackets: A,

15-17 years; B, 13-14; C, 11-12; and D, 8-10. Flight winners will be honored in a ceremony next month at the Post 3941 Hall.

Non-league bowlers will use the following blind handicap averages: A, boys (150) and girls (135); B, boys (125) and girls (115); C, boys (110) and girls (100); D, boys (90) and girls (80).

Wonderland Lanes has been very cooperative. "Jones said, 'We're using the automatic scorers and that helps.'"

Top talent in holiday tourneys

Some of the state's top basketball talent will be on display tonight in the CKLW Holiday Classic at U-D's Calhoun Hall.

The tournament starts at 6 p.m. with Redford Bishop Episcopal and Sterling Heights Stevenson (7-1). The second game pits Class C power Detroit DePores (3-0) against Southgate Aquinas (4-0) at 8.

The consolation and championship games are scheduled for 6 and 8 p.m. respectively, on Friday. Tickets are \$3 per person each night.

Borgess is led by 6-foot-4 forward Gary Dickman, who scored 28 points and grabbed 17 in rebounds in a 58-54 overtime loss last week to Dearborn Divine Child. He is complemented by the Gregory brothers, Joe and Chuck, a pair of quick guards.

basketball

Stevenson, a Class A quarterfinalist from a year ago, is led by 6-foot-3 junior Jeff McCool, rated one of the top shooters in Michigan.

DePores is led by junior point-guard Reggie Smith. He comes into the game with a 34-point-per-game scoring average, including a 41-point effort in the Raiders' season opener.

SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE is also involved in a highly competitive holiday tournament, which begins tonight at Highland Park Community College.

Schoolcraft (5-6) meets Muskegon in the opener at 6 p.m. followed by the Highland Park-Oakland CC match-up at 8:30.

The consolation and final is scheduled for 6 and 8:30 p.m. on Friday.

Highland Park, coached by Glenn Donahue, is sporting at 14-1 record and holds down the No. 14 spot in the latest national junior college ratings. Vernon Carr, a 6-6 forward, leads the Parker attack. He is a freshman who

originally signed with Northern Illinois, while making All-State honors at Detroit Cady High School.

The Parkers also have a pair of slick guards in Mark Hunter (An Arbor Huron) and Lenith Cotton (Benton Harbor). Vince Ford, a 6-9 player out of Lincoln Park, holds down the center slot.

Schoolcraft, meanwhile, boasts the nation's leading scorer, 6-1 Carlos Briggs, out of Detroit. Benedictine Briggs is averaging 39 points per game.

HE SHOULD be getting more help with the arrival of transfers James Orr and Eric Stokes, both of whom recently became eligible.

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Coaches clinic

The seventh annual Great Lakes High School football coaching clinic will take place Friday and Saturday, Jan. 6-7, at Sterling Heights Stevenson High School.

The clinic is designed for high school, junior high and youth league football coaches.

On hand to direct the clinic will be Bob Leahy of the Michigan Panthers, Steve Furness of Michigan State, George Ihler of Saginaw Valley State, and Ron Labadie of Adair. Also on hand will be area high school coaches Chuck Skinner of Birmingham Senolm, Gary Cook of Bishop Borgess, and Bill Rankin of Birmingham Groves.

The sessions run from 8 to 11 p.m. on Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. The fee for both days is \$20.

Reservations should be mailed to: Great Lakes Coaches Football Clinic, P.O. Box 631, Sterling Heights 48078. Call Rick Bye at 268-4700 for more information.

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