

Sports

Chris McCosky, Brad Emons editor/591-2312



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Time to go back to work

By now, the holiday hangovers should be subsiding. That hanging-over your belt, well, it'll take a little while for that to go away. Too much food, too much relaxation, too much holiday cheer and not enough high school sports — that's what the holiday break is all about from at least this subjective perspective.



Chris McCosky

Finally, it's 1984 and time to get back to life's realities. Like high school sports.

The winter seasons now begin in earnest. Basketball, volleyball, swimming, wrestling and gymnastic squads begin their trek toward either a title or obscurity. Everything played prior to the new year, for these teams, can be classified as preseason.

NOW WE play for keeps. And there are some key issues to be answered in 1984.

Will it be Plymouth Salem or Livonia Stevenson in the Western Lakes hoop chase? Or will a third contingent, perhaps a Plymouth Canton, Farmington Harrison, Livonia Churchill or Northville, emerge as a Cinderella contender?

Can anyone topple the top-ranked Salem tankers? Stevenson? What about in the Northwest Suburban League? — can anyone out North Farmington?

Speaking of the Raiders, a volleyball championship appears easily within their reach. With the likes of potential all-star Amy Austin, along with the Koziak sisters (Patti and Mary), Linda Rennard, Donna Kojarevich, Brooks Landback, Lalma Sabw and the list goes on and on — coach Sandy Lubienicki has a strong, strong unit. The question is, how far can they go? And can anybody beat Stevenson's spikers in the Western Lakes? Farmington thinks they have a shot. They can prove it Monday, Jan. 9. That's when the two square off in the Falcons' gym.

WHILE WE'RE looking for teams to give Stevenson a volleyball battle, let's not overlook the Rocks from Salem. Coach Jeanne Martin says her team is down this year — coaches Tom Moshimer (football) and Fred Thomann (girls basketball) said much the same of their Rock teams. Both had out-

standing seasons from their "down" teams.

The biggest question mark is in wrestling. It seems more than ever, the Western Lakes and Northwest Suburban mat crowns are up for grabs. If you are looking for a team to beat in the W.L.A.A., how about Plymouth Canton? Dan Chrenko's boys are 3-0 in league play. Tim Collins, who wrestles at 138 pounds, has not been beaten yet this season (going into the Canton Invitational) and might be the best wrestler at that weight in the region.

Locally, Farmington Harrison, Plymouth Canton and Farmington High School could be factors in gymnastics. Right now, it is too early to tell. Canton's Linda Beale is likely to be one of the area's most exciting performers.

The winter months may be long and cold, but inside the area's gyms and pools the action is going to be hot and heavy.

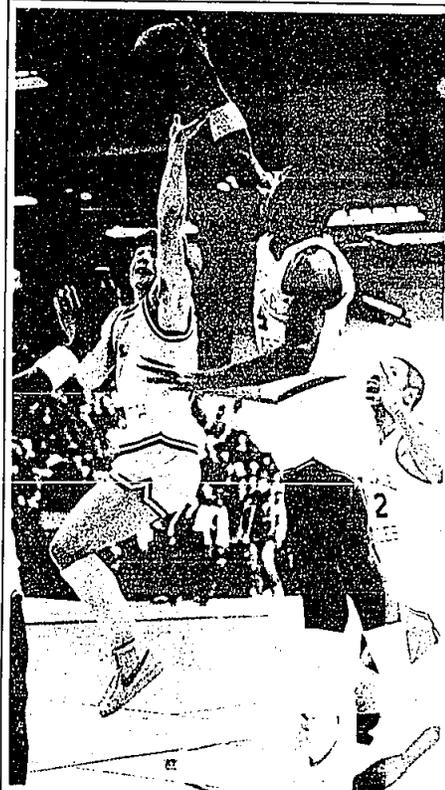
It all resumes tonight. Basketball is on tap. Canton is at Redford Union and Plymouth Christian travels to Temple Christian. Wednesday is volleyball and gymnastics day. Northville's spikers will travel to Farmington, while Harrison will trek west to Salem. Harrison's gymnasts will host Hartland.

A FULL schedule of events is planned for Thursday. Volleyball: Canton at Walled Lake Central. Swimming: Canton at North Farmington, Thurston at Salem. Gymnastics: Clarenceville at Farmington, North Farmington at Ann Arbor Pioneer. Wrestling: Walled Lake Central at Farmington, Canton at Harrison, Salem at Walled Lake Western.

Friday, besides one Grasse Pointe North at Harrison gymnastic meet, is basketball night. Farmington travels to Walled Lake Central, North hosts Livonia Franklin. Harrison goes to Livonia Churchill, Canton hosts Livonia Bentley, and Plymouth Christian is home to play Huron Valley Christian.

But the game of the week, the showdown, will be played Friday night. Salem travels to Stevenson in a battle of the two W.L.A.A. cage powers. Get your tickets and seats early.

The holidays are gone, at last. Now it's time to have some real fun.



Rick Pennala, North Farmington guard, suffers a bit of rejection at the hand of Ferndale's Darrain Carter.

Rebirth 1984 offers renewed hope for cage squads

By Chris McCosky staff writer

Will the real North Farmington basketball team please stand up — and stay standing.

The Raiders (1-8) clearly demonstrated what has plagued them throughout this young season during last week's Ferndale Holiday tournament inconsistency.

In the first round, the Raiders outplayed the highly touted, undefeated host team only to fall in the final seconds, 55-54. North had a shot to win the game in the final seconds, but sophomore Rick Anderson, whose jumper with 25 seconds left had put North temporarily ahead, missed from 20-feet out.

But the Raiders played an outstanding ballgame.

IT WAS QUITE a different story the next night. North played horribly, losing to Birmingham Groves 64-48 in the consolation round of the tourney. Despite playing poorly, North was in the game until the final quarter when Groves put the Raiders away with a 22-5 spurt.

Steve Bambach and Bob Chawilk scored 12 points apiece for the Raiders. Rob Atwin scored 22 for Groves.

North's inconsistency is cause for major concern for coach Tom Negoshian.

"I'm afraid we are on a roll going the wrong way," he said. "The kids are looking over their shoulders a little bit expecting the worst to happen."

Negoshian said the biggest problem facing his team is that they often play to the level of their opponent, instead of playing their own game.

"IF WE ARE playing a top-notch team, then we play a good game. If not, then we let down," Negoshian said.

Of North's six losses this year, one was by four points to Garden City, one was in overtime to Walled Lake Central, and two were by one point to Thurston and Ferndale.

"We are going to have a team

meeting. The captains want to meet with the team and see if we can't get it together. We still have two-thirds of the season left," Negoshian said.

The month of January could be a renaissance for North. The Raiders are 0-2 in Northwest Suburban League play, but have four league contests scheduled in January.

"We felt at the start of the year, if we could get out of January in good shape, we could make a run at it," Negoshian said.

It's a new year. There's new hope.

FARMINGTON HARRISON is also a team with renewed hope. After getting absolutely blown away in its first two encounters, against North Farmington and Plymouth Salem, the Hawks have won two straight.

Ironically, coach Mike Teachman feels the Hawks' turnaround came during the 29-point drubbing administered by the Rocks.

"We set goals for the Salem game," Teachman said. "We wanted to keep them under 85 points, and we did. We felt the game was a rallying point for our team. We really felt that it was a 10-point ballgame. The team felt the referees took a lot away from them. They played real hard, but the shots didn't fall. They didn't fall because we were getting laced up."

Another thing happened after the Rock loss that might have spurred the Hawks. Guard Brian Hickey, the floor leader, returned to full-time duty after an illness. Hickey seems to be the stabilizing ingredient in the Hawk lineup.

Whatever, the Hawks won their last two games before the holiday break and are, for the first time in a long time, feeling optimistic.

"I think they understand now that if they play hard and smart, they'll win some games," said Teachman.

FARMINGTON HIGH'S coach Richard Roy spent his holiday break out of town. He left feeling very good about his basketball team.

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Area ripe in hockey talent

By Rich Swanson staff writer

Intense recruiting is the name of the game in any successful sports program, and college hockey is no exception.

The Great Lakes Invitational hockey tournament, held last week at Joe Louis Arena, featured some of the most highly recruited players in the Midwest and Canada, including many that were plucked right out of the Detroit area's own hotbed of talent.

Of the 107 players who were on the rosters of the four teams that played in the tournament (Michigan State, University of Michigan, Northern Michigan, Michigan Tech), 24 were recruited from the metropolitan Detroit area. And of those, almost all were products of the Great Lakes Junior Hockey League.

THE WOLVERINES had by far the largest number on their squad (13), followed by Michigan State (7), Michigan Tech (3) and Northern Michigan (1). Junior A hockey has always been highly respected by college scouts looking to add strength to their clubs, but never before has the league had such impact on Michigan's NCAA Division I college hockey programs.

"What we do is recruit kids that we believe can play Division I hockey,"

hockey

Michigan State coach Ron Mason said just before his team took the ice against Northern Michigan Thursday. "We have been very successful recruiting in the Detroit area, especially from the Junior A teams. It has become a stepping stone to Division I hockey."

Spartans' senior defenseman Jeff Easley (Detroit Junior Wings), sophomore left wing Mike Donnelly (Waterford Lakers) and freshman defenseman Don McSweeney (Redford Royals) are local examples of players who have made a successful transition from Junior A to college hockey.

"I CAN'T SAY enough about these players," Mason said. "They have done a super job for us. As far as I'm concerned, the best players in the Detroit area are as good as the best players anywhere else."

Recruiting in college hockey, like other sports, can be brutal and frustrating at times, but competing in a tournament like the Great Lakes Invitational can do nothing but help a coach land a talented player.

"The Great Lakes tournament is the best in the country," Mason said. "The kids that are playing midget and Junior A hockey are watching, and it will mean a lot to them when it's time for them to make a decision. The tournament is a real thrill for them, especially when they know that some day they can be a part of it."

The top college prospects get anywhere from eight to 10 offers to play Division I hockey, Mason said.

"It's not as bad as recruiting in basketball or football," he said, "but it's getting harder and harder all the time."

BECAUSE NCAA rules limit the number of scholarships a college team can give to players (20 over a four-year period), a coach has to be sure to make the right decisions in his recruiting.

"We watch the kids as much as possible and try to find the ones that we can develop and fit into our program," Mason said. "Over the years, we have been very successful."

Since only 20 can receive scholar-

ships, coaches have to rely on walk-ons to pick up the slack, as in the case of Donnelly.

McSweeney — recently drafted in the eighth round by the National Hockey League's Buffalo Sabres — received offers from six schools, including Michigan, Ferris State, Lake Superior, Brown and Yale.

But he chose Michigan State, even though the Spartans only offered him a partial (½) ride.

"MICHIGAN OFFERED me a full ride, and I had pretty much decided to go there," he said. "But I decided to go to Michigan State even though it cost me money. I just thought I would enjoy it more here."

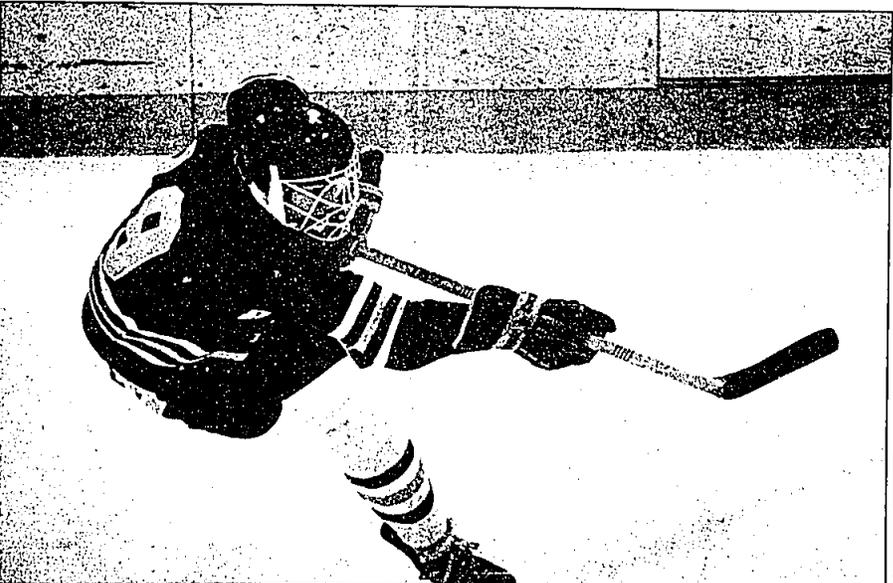
Donnelly also almost went to Michigan, but when his high school grades didn't arrive on time, he was forced to change his mind.

"It was the best decision I ever made," he said.

The defending Great Lakes champion Spartans beat Northern Michigan, 5-1 before more than 18,900 screaming fans in the opening round of the tournament and met Michigan Tech in the championship final Friday.

Michigan Tech advanced by beating Michigan in overtime, 5-4.

The Wolverines could have used some of the players they lost in the "recruiting wars."



Paul Kobylarz, a native of Livonia, fires a shot in Michigan's overtime win against Michigan Tech in the first round of the Great Lakes Invitational hockey tournament Thursday night.

DAN DEAN/staff photographer