

It's Glenn vs. Rice in 'A' semifinal

Rockets overcome early-season doubts

By Brad Emons
staff writer

"I thought we had a better team last year. We went 18-8 last year, which isn't bad, but we got knocked out of the (pre) district by (Farmington) Harrison. I can't explain it. They just jelled. Maybe they realized we didn't have a lot of talent and they just pulled together."

— Norm Hoenes
Glenn coach

Norm Hoenes has been made a believer, but there was a time when he had his doubts about his Westland John Glenn baseball team.

The Glenn coach was very pessimistic even before the season started. But with a team on the threshold of a state Class A championship, Hoenes has become a convert.

Glenn, sporting a 26-2 overall record, is only two steps away from the coveted title. Its next test is 5:30 p.m. Friday against Birmingham Brother Rice (22-14) in a state semifinal game at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

"I thought we had a better team last year," admitted Hoenes, the 20-year veteran coach. "We went 18-8 last year, which isn't bad, but we got knocked out of the (pre) district by (Farmington) Harrison."

Glenn watched last year from the sidelines as Harrison advanced to the state semifinals. Even though Glenn had a top-notch pitcher returning in Steve Irwin, the Rockets' coach had little hope for his 1986 team.

"I THOUGHT with Irwin we'd win about half of the time he pitched," Hoenes said. "We also had lost a couple of people, Tony Boles and Billy Barber, before the season even started. We had only 38 try out for the varsity and JV teams."

Boles, the All-State football player, left the team during pre-season drills, while Barber, figured to be the Rockets' No. 2 pitcher behind Irwin, was declared ineligible for academic reasons.

Hoenes admitted, "we're using a couple of players that were on our original cut list."

"I can't explain it," said the Glenn coach. "They just jelled."

"Maybe they realized we didn't have a lot of talent and they just pulled together."

This Glenn team, however, is not without talent. About half of Glenn's current roster play for the Westland Mantis team that beat Puerto Rico

last summer for the national title. Irwin, the 6-foot, 219-pound right-hander, has been nothing short of devastating this season. The hard-throwing Glenn ace, bound for Eastern Michigan University, throws an effective curveball and slider. He is 10-0 with an 8.58 earned run average and has 122 strikeouts in 65 innings.

BUT THE BIG surprise for the Rockets is Clint Straub, a confident sophomore with a 6-0 record (including four saves) and a .327 batting average. When he doesn't pitch, Straub can play second, third or catch.

"I really didn't know much about him," Hoenes said. "He comes across cocky. The other players weren't sure about him, but now they're sure because he can back it up."

Straub is one of six Glenn players hitting over .300. The others include shortstop Rick Tavermina (.389), catcher Mike Hammonree (.361), center fielder Chuck Hammonree (.361), Irwin (.342) and designated hitter Shawn Wilson (.306).

"The difference this year from last year is that we're making runs," Hoenes said.

Wilson bats for Pat Pettit, who plays second base. Senior Mike Wells, ticketed for bench play before the season started, has emerged as a



BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Steve Irwin celebrates with his John Glenn teammates after ousting Canton in the regionals last weekend. The Rockets play Brother Rice in the semifinals Friday in Kalamazoo.

steady glove at first. Seniors Jim Kenyon, the right fielder, and Tom Rogala, the left fielder, round out the starting lineup.

THE GLENN OUTFIELD has been sharp defensively, particularly Kenyon in right.

"He's batting around .250, but he's worth .800," Hoenes said. "He's our spiritual leader. We couldn't replace him."

Even though Glenn got off to a 5-0 start, Hoenes wasn't completely sold on his club.

"We won, but we had some breaks in those games," Hoenes said. "But then we had five tough games right in a row and I said to myself, 'This is where we're really going to find out how good we are.'"

Glenn won all five, including a double-header sweep of Wolverine A

Conference co-champion Wayne Memorial. The Rockets went on to win the grueling 12-school Western Lakes Activities Association (WLAA), and then beat Redford Bishop Borgess (8-1), Wayne (10-1), Garden City (6-2), Plymouth Canton (2-1) and Monroe (17-1) in state tourney play.

"We could have folded, but we didn't," Hoenes said. "When they get behind, they don't panic. That's why I'm really proud of them."

HOENES SAID that whatever happens from here "is all gravy."

"Nobody paid attention to us all year," he said. "We weren't ranked until the last week of the season."

Glenn and Rice play at 5:30 p.m. The other semifinal game pits Ypsilanti against Flint Central at 5:30 p.m.

The winners will face off at 5:30 p.m. Saturday at WMU.

Timko holds key to Warriors' fortunes

By Marly Budnor
staff writer

Ren Kalczyński is one baseball coach who continually stresses "team concept" over individual stardom.

However, he does admit Rice's baseball season has taken on a rather curious course centered around outfielder John Timko.

The Warriors won 15 of their first 18 games and impressed enough people to be ranked the state's No. 1 Class A team with Timko battling lead-off. Rice even was challenging Bishop Gallagher and Catholic Central in the Catholic League baseball race.

Then Timko suffered a broken foot in a freak accident while taking his outfield position during a league game against Redford Bishop Borgess. He missed 12 games.

With Timko out of the line-up, Rice lost 10 of its next 12 games. Its league record collapsed from 8-2 to 9-11. As the regular-season ended they were completely overlooked by the pollsters.

But, Timko returned five games ago and the Warriors have not lost since.

In fact, Brother Rice (22-14) will play in the state Class A semifinal baseball game at 5:30 p.m. Friday at Western Michigan University against the state's No. 3-ranked Westland John Glenn (26-2) Rockets. The winner advances to the state championship game at 5:30 p.m. Saturday at the same site.

KALCZYNSKI is hoping Timko can lead Brother Rice to two more victories and its first ever Class A state baseball championship.

"I've never seen a non-pitcher have an effect on a team like John Timko has had on our team," said Kalczyński, Rice's baseball coach four years ago.

"I saw (Frank) Tanana play with Catholic Central and he was like a man among boys. He had a great impact on their team. But, then again he was a pitcher. John is like that with us. We're 20-4 overall with him."

John just seems to make up better," he said. "The other kids seem to be more confident of their abilities with him in the lineup."

Rice, with Timko back at his familiar lead-off position, has had an interesting state tournament.

In the district two weekends ago at Memorial Field in Royal Oak, Rice scored 18 runs on 29 hits in its best offensive flurry of the season (the Warriors ended the regular season with a 203 team-batting average). Brother Rice defeated Troy, 8-1, then took Ferndale for the district title, 10-8.

However, in the regionals last weekend at Grosse Pointe North, Rice found a new way to win. The Warriors didn't outslug their foes (they were actually outslugged in the two games by 12-10 margin) like they did at the districts, but relied on some steady pitching and clutch hitting.

RICE UPSET Grosse Pointe South in the regional semifinal game, 7-1, as Timko hit a grand slam to insure the victory. Then, in the championship game, Rice's Chris Sullivan and Tom Groux clouted home runs in a 4-1 triumph over Fraser for its first ever regional title.

"This is a team with character," said Kalczyński. "It just seems like everybody is contributing right now and that's what has gotten us this far into the state tournament."

(Joe) Arends had a big home run in the regional tournament and (Jeff) Calcestrera had three hits and drove in some key runs. Sullivan got that big home run at the regional.

"The kids have just become united. We could have folded up under all the adverse circumstances we've had this year. But, they just never gave up. Everybody is picking up the slack up and down the line-up."

Timko leads the Warriors with a .395 batting average, including four home runs and 29 RBI in only 24 games. Arends has seven hits in his last four tournament games.

Dave Gerraghty (shortstop), Craig Dunne (right field), Mark Bush (designated hitter) and Chris Alexander (first base) are Rice's other starters.

Junior Steve Schutz (10-2) will be the starting pitcher Friday against Glenn's undefeated senior Steve Irwin (10-0). Schutz has won four of Rice's five state-tournament games (including a pre-district win over Berkeley). Schutz has allowed just one home run this season and has a stellar 1.65 earned-run average.

sports shorts

GOLF LINKS QUALIFIERS

Kathy Herford of Farmington Hills is one of 15 golfers who will represent Michigan at the 1986 U.S. Women's Public Links Championship to be held Wednesday through Sunday, June 18-22, at Stevens Point, Wis.

Herford qualified for the national meet by placing second at a regional qualifying tournament at the Faulkwood Shores Golf Club in Howell. Herford shot an 80 to advance to the national tournament for the first time after five attempts.

Lynne Thompson of Farmington Hills was another area qualifier. She shot a 93 at the Hidden Valley Golf Club in Gaylord.

There were 36 qualifying sites across the country and Michigan has the most individual qualifiers of any state.

HOBBLEY CAGE CAMP

Billy Ray Hobbley, a member of the world famous Harlem Globetrotters, will conduct a basketball camp June 30 through July 4 at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills.

The daily basketball sessions begin 8 a.m. and end at 3 p.m. and registration will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis. There is a \$75 registration fee for daily transcripts and a \$165 fee for borders (which includes meals and hotel accommodations at the Holiday Inn).

Professional guest speakers will include Earl Cureton of the Detroit Pistons, Perry Watson, basketball coach at Detroit Southwestern High School and Alvin "Bo" Dukes of the Detroit Spirits. Registration deadline is June 25.

For information, call the Oakland Community College Athletic Depart-

ment (471-7599) or Marvin N. Miles (389-2700).

COACHES WANTED

The Bloomfield Hills School District is taking applications for a number of head coaching positions for the 1986-87 school year.

There are four head coaching positions open at Andover High School including boys basketball and ice hockey and girls gymnastics and volleyball. At neighboring Lahser, openings are available in boys wrestling and girls gymnastics.

Potential candidates may call Bloomfield Schools Athletic Director Norman Quinn at 540-9800.

Also, at Reeper High School — a private school in Bloomfield Hills — there is an opening for a girls soccer coach. Candidates can call the school's athletic department at 642-1500.

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