

# Hoffman's injury setback for Raiders

By Dan O'Meara  
staff writer

It was bad enough that graduation had decimated the ranks of North Farmington's varsity basketball team.

But, just three days into pre-season practice last month, the Raiders were dealt a bigger blow when point guard Matt Hoffman suffered an ankle injury.

The 5-foot-10 junior was the catalyst on the team that captured the Western Lakes Activities Association title with a Cinderella finish last March, and his sophomore performance landed him on the all-league team.

Hoffman sustained a severe sprain with some ligament damage when a teammate stepped on his foot as he drove the lane, and an early assessment placed him on the sideline for 2-3 weeks.

An extended absence would be a major setback for a young team looking for leadership and a steady influence on the court.

**HOFFMAN, WHO** averaged 16 points, six assists and four steals from his point guard position, was North's emotional leader a year ago despite the fact he was an underclassman.

"We knew that position was taken, and we didn't have to worry about it," coach Tom Negoshian said. "Matt gave us that knowledge and leadership on the floor."

Negoshian added the Raiders, 9-12 last year, aren't about "to crawl up and hide in a hole" without Hoffman. The other side of the situation is that Negoshian has been able to work with other players and build depth at that spot.

Eric Carlson, a 6-5 junior, is the only other returning player, and the Raiders were without any seniors until Joe Sturtz and Jack Herberholz came out for the team.

"It so happens both are 5-10 guards and can help fill the void left by Hoffman's injury. Sturtz has distinguished himself in football and baseball, but he hasn't played basketball since he was a fresh-

man. Herberholz sat out last year after transferring from Redford Catholic Central.

"(Sturtz) felt he missed the game, and he said he'd be at tryouts," Negoshian said. "The first day he was there, and he was his usual competitive self."

"**OBVIOUSLY, HE'S** a little rusty, and it's going to take him a while. He was an outstanding shooter when he was younger, and I see shades of that as he starts to get back into the groove. Vasey Hill, forwards John Shelton and Kurt Dedeck and 6-6 center Jim Ratajski. Bill Green and Andy Drake came off the bench to help at center and guard, respectively.

Along with Hoffman, they formed the nucleus of a team that overcame its underdog status to win the WLA championship in what was a traumatic and unusual season.

First, the team had to deal with the unexpected death of a teammate, Matt Leiter. Then it upset unbeaten Walpole Lake Central in the final game of the league season to qualify for the playoffs. Next, the Raiders beat the odds in four straight games to win the title.

"Sometimes, in the midst of adversity, especially for young people, you have a way of rallying," Negoshian said. "It was as if they had a purpose, and they were going to prove they could bounce back from it."

**IN ADDITION** to the two seniors and two holdovers, the 1985-86 ballclub includes a host of newcomers. Eight members of the undefeated JV team rounded out the squad.

Without Hoffman, the Raiders are even younger and more inexperienced. Thus, if North can survive the early part of the schedule without him, Negoshian believes the Raiders will be a competitive team in the latter half of the season.

"We feel good about the group we have," he said. "We know we're young, and that's just part of it."

"It reminds me of (former all-star) Rick An-

derson's sophomore year. We were doing a lot of teaching."

Negoshian expects much effort and his team to work at improving, too. Youth won't be an excuse for lack of success.

"**I TOLD THE KIDS:** 'Our expectation is that you play hard,'" he said. "An old coach said: 'When the apple ceases to ripen, it rots.' When we stop improving, we're getting worse."

Also vying for time at guard will be 5-9 junior John Lowe and 6-1 junior Jamie Stewart. Sturtz and Brian Temple, 5-11 junior, can play either guard or forward.

North has two big men, though both are on the lean side, in the 185-pound Carlson and 6-8, 180-pound Matt Wandell, who grew two inches in the last year. Negoshian has toyed with the idea of playing both simultaneously.

"If we don't play them both, we become a very small team," he said. "But we worry about ourselves defensively with two big kids out there."

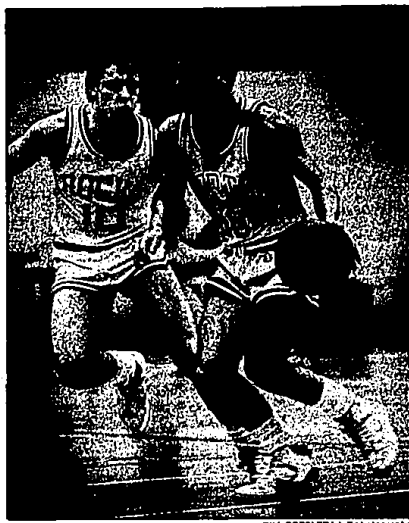
The Raiders have a quartet of forward prospects, including 6-3 sophomore Chris White, who excelled as a wide receiver in football.

**TEMPLE WAS** the leading scorer on the JV squad, and 6-2 Eric Dettler, 6-3 Mike Collins and 6-2 Mike Smith, all juniors, are the other forwards. Negoshian was undecided last week whether he would keep 6-5 sophomore Bill Chwalk on the varsity or allow him added playing time on the JV.

Despite an overall lack of height, Negoshian doesn't anticipate great problems with rebounding since player position can compensate for the former.

"Dettler is a very physical kid and so is Temple," he said. "You know how physical Sturtz is, and White is a good leaper."

"We might end up being a better running team than we were last year," Negoshian said. "But we might have trouble with continuity being so young. That's where we miss Matt, because he's the point guard and sets the tone."



North suffered a major setback when Matt Hoffman, who averaged 16 points last year, injured an ankle in practice.

# Emphasis shifts to hoop at Harrison

By Dan O'Meara  
staff writer

For the five starters on Farmington's basketball team, there won't be any time for R&B between fall and winter seasons.

They were still playing football Saturday night, helping the Hawks with the Class B championship in the Potlatch Silverdome and complete a 13-0 season.

But two days after the successful conclusion to that campaign, Mill Coleman, Chad Burgess, Bryan Wauldron, Jason Lichtman, Marcus Mack and a sixth grader turned eager, Steve Hill, had to shift gears and begin preparations for Friday's basketball opener.

Coach Mike Teachman faced the same situation last year, and it's something he anticipated would happen. The Hawks are no doubt behind other teams at this point, but Teachman sees a positive side to it, also.

"Mentally, it puts us ahead of other teams because I've been able to coach and work intensely with the other players, which I wouldn't get to do otherwise," he said.

**THE OTHERS** have been preparing for a state championship. So, mentally, they're right on top of it.

"(The football players) may not be sharp," he added, "but they're good athletes and know what to do when they step on the court."

Teachman knew the athletes who made Harrison a great football team would also make the Hawks a contender in basketball, and he planned for the late start. The team played 22 games in two leagues last summer.

In addition, Teachman has spent the last week with his bench, and the Hawks held their own in a scrimmage with Milford Lake-Land.

"That was a pretty upbeat thing to see," Teachman said. "Knowing they can step in and fill some roles will make it easier on the first group."

And the Hawks will put an extremely talented group on the court for each game.

**HARRISON RETURNS** three starters — Wauldron, Burgess and Lichtman — from a team that was 14-8 overall and second in the Western Division at 10-4. Plus, Coleman and Mack, who step into starting roles this year, were among the first people off the bench.

Height won't be an asset since the Hawks have no starter taller than 6-foot-2. But team speed and shooting ability will be, and fans can expect to see Harrison play an up-tempo style.

"Essentially, we'll start four guards and a forward," Teachman said. "We're going to try and push the ball up the floor, that's for sure."

The Hawks are deep in talent among true guards. Lichtman and Coleman will start in the backcourt, and the first player off the bench will be 5-foot-8 senior Adam Lowy, "our Dennis Rodman," according to Teachman, who is just as high on his sixth man as he is any of the starters.

"Everyone we played last summer was amazed that we had three good guards," he said. "I should start six players."

"In a normal year, I'd be happy to have any one of them, and here I have three."

**LACK OF SIZE** up front shouldn't be a problem for the Hawks since Mack, Burgess and Wauldron — all of whom are 6-foot-2, 170-pound ath-

letic clones — are excellent jumpers with the ability to sink dual jump shots.

But they will have to be mindful of the need to rebound because of the height deficiency, Teachman said. Burgess also averaged 9% rebounds and Wauldron eight.

"If that's an assumed part of the game, we're going to have trouble," he said. "We saw that last summer."

"But, if I can only have one, give me quickness. When you have 6-2 guys who play above the rim, maybe that's better than having 6-5 guys who don't."

Harrison can bring 6-5 senior Steve Hempel off the bench for added height, and Hill, a 6-3, 200-pound junior, didn't play last year but was a dominating player as a freshman.

Plus, the Hawks have seniors Andy Morris and Marc Eldridge in reserve. And, yes, they're 6-2 forwards, also.

**COLEMAN**, who averaged 20 points for the Albion JV two years ago, could surprise a lot of people this year, he added. While quarterbacking the football team, Coleman suffered a sprained thumb in the '87 state championship game, and that stunted his progress in basketball.

"It didn't stop hurting him until February," Teachman said. "I think everyone is going to see a different player right there."

"He wasn't healthy last year. Actually, it hurt him to do ball-handling drills."

Wauldron scored 14 points per game, Lichtman 10%, Mack 8% and Coleman seven. Lichtman rates as the top 3-point shooter, making nearly half of his 91 attempts a year ago.

"Any one of those five and Lowy off the bench could hit 20 in any game," Teachman said. "I hope to have five to six averaging in double figures."

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"I've got more 6-foot-2 guys than there are in the United States," Teachman quipped.

**DEFENSE REMAINS** an open question. That's where former starters Jill Hill (center) and Jason McDowell (guard) will be missed the most. Hill, the older brother of Steve, excelled at inside defense while leaving the scoring to Wauldron and Burgess.

"That's the thing. Who do we have back there who's going to be the communicator, calling out the cutters and blocking people off the boards?" Teachman said. "That's the void we have to fill."

Wauldron will get that assignment, and the fact he played safety in football throughout the fall will help in his role as the deep man on the press, Teachman added.

Finally, and not surprisingly with the talent it returns, Harrison is mentioned as a pre-season contender in the Western Lakes Activities Association.

"We've got to face the music," Teachman said. "We are a good basketball team, and teams will be shooting for us. That means every Tuesday and Friday we'll have to be ready to put it on the line."

"It's more fun knowing you've got a good team going in than hoping and wishing you had a good team," he added.

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