

Blazers ready defense of state championship

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

What makes the Livonia Ladywood volleyball team tick?

Coach Tom Teeters can provide all the answers as his team prepares this week for Saturday's state Class A finals at Kalamazoo Central High School.

The defending state-champion Blazers (46-5) will meet fourth-time state champion Portage Northern (62-12) beginning at 1 p.m.

The other semifinal pits Rochester Adams (44-2) vs. Harper Woods Regina (36-9-2) at 2:30 p.m. The finals begin at 5:30 p.m. (Tickets are \$4 for both Class A and D sessions.)

Portage Northern, Adams and Regina have all beaten Ladywood this season, but after the Blazers avenged two previous defeats this year by whipping Temperance-Bedford last week in the regional final at Wayne Memorial, any of the four teams have a legitimate shot at the title, according to the Ladywood coach.

"WE WENT three games against Portage in the Essexville Tournament in mid-January, but in reality we caught them napping in one game, they blew us out in other two games," said Teeters, who also led Schoolcraft College to the National Junior College Athletic Association crown last November. "Portage has good size and a lot of power hitters... a lot of 5-foot-9, 5-10 type of girls."

"This is one of Jack's (coach Magelssen) better teams. They're more consistent. They're not as flashy."

It took awhile for Teeters to synchronize his team, but the Blazers have moved through the state tournament like clockwork.

While Portage was eliminating No. 1 ranked East Kentwood on Saturday, Ladywood was ousting No. 2 Bedford.

"We graduated seven seniors last year," Teeters said. "We had a whole different lineup. Not a single

but 5-9 junior Karl Domanski has emerged in that role.

"Karl likes the setter's role," said the Ladywood coach. "She takes the responsibility aggressively."

The Blazers have their share of role players including two sophomores, Kelli Haeger and Rebecca Willey, both of whom jumped from the freshman team to the varsity in only one year.

THEY HAVE BECOME the team's unsung players along with, 5-6 senior Dana Domanski, 5-7 junior Peggy Knittel, 5-4 junior Janice Konczal and 5-7 senior Katie Farkas.

"Their roles are very important, not in scoring, but they have to play consistently for us to win," Teeters said. "We have such a young team. We have two sophomores starting, but we're to the point where we use Rebecca in key hitting positions. And last week, Kelli's play was the key to us winning the regional."

"Janice is a very hard worker. She has great concentration and has come a long way. She's helped us cover the middle and it gives us a third pair of hands."

Teeters said he has coached "25 or so teams," but this group has carved its own identity.

"This is the best serving team I've had," he said. "We have more options, things we can go to that we may be lacking during a particular time in the match."

There is no secret to the Blazers' improvement. The team has matured and stayed away from injuries during tournament play.

"The kids have been real positive," he said. "There hasn't been word about going (on vacation) to Hilton Head (a resort in South Carolina). I know we want it (the title) bad, that's for sure. No matter what happens, I'll be proud of this group."

The countdown to the state finals has begun.

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"We went three games against Portage in the Essexville Tournament in mid-January, but in reality we caught them napping in one game; they blew us out in the other two games. Portage has good size and a lot of power hitters."

— Tom Teeters
Ladywood volleyball coach

person played the same position. "I knew we'd improve. It was a matter of time before we would end up in what positions."

ALL THE PARTS appear to be in place for another run at the state crown.

The team's undisputed leader is 5-10 senior Sarah Adzima, who is bound next fall for Western Michigan University.

"She shares the limelight well with her teammates," Teeters said. "They like the way she handles herself on and off the court."

Adzima is the team's top middle blocker, but 5-7 senior Stacey Girard is probably the team's most aggressive hitter.

"She's added some new touches to her game like dinking," Teeters said. "But Stacey's the type of hitter who either gets it blocked or she makes the hands on the other side red. She's our first server and a very strong passer."

When it comes to setting, Teeters thought Adzima would fill the void,

Ladywood trips Bedford

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

Livonia Ladywood's volleyball team proved again Saturday they still have that "killer instinct," defeating Temperance-Bedford for the Class A regional championship at Wayne Memorial, 15-8, 9-15, 15-5.

The defending state champions, now 43-5 overall, advance to the state semifinals against the Lansing State regional champion this Saturday at Kalamazoo Central High School (time to be determined).

Coach Tom Teeters called the win over No. 2-ranked Bedford (45-5) "an upset."

"They had already beaten us twice this year," said Teeters, who also led Schoolcraft College last November to the National Junior College Athletic Association crown. "But it was not to their advantage to play us a third time. I thought we could upset them, but we had to play well."

THE BLAZERS came through in flying colors, but first had to win their regional semifinal and they won it impressively, slamming Dearborn Edsel Ford (15-0, 15-1).

In the other semifinal, Bedford was extended to three games by host Wayne (15-11, 8-15, 15-9).

In the final, Ladywood kept Bedford's big hitters in check and took advantage by dinking and dumping shots in between the Mules' defense.

Karl Domanski's left-handed dump clinched the match.

The shot was typical of the way Ladywood kept its opponent off-balance.

"We scored on that shot most of the time," said Teeters.

Meanwhile, Bedford also had trouble receiving serves and dealing with the Blazers' top hitter, senior Sarah Adzima, who got Ladywood off to a 4-0 lead in the third and decisive game after Bedford had evened things at 1-1.

"The only thing they (Bedford) changed was that they used a single blocker instead of double-teaming Sarah," said the Ladywood coach. "I was certainly surprised and that

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helped. The key this time was that they didn't block as much, while we received and served better."

"WHEN WE PLAYED them before they shut me down," said Adzima, the 5-foot-10 standout. "But without being blocked, we were able to score more from the middle. I think we played better against them because this meant a lot more."

Adzima, who has signed with Western Michigan University, is looking forward to her trip to Kalamazoo.

"It means everything because Kalamazoo is a volleyball town," she said. "We're going to do it."

There were several heroes Saturday for the Blazers, but one of those who stood out was 5-8 sophomore Kelli Haeger.

"She made some fantastic, key saves that nobody else could get to," said Teeters. "Kelli just played out of her mind. Some of our lesser experienced players came through and that's why we won."

Teeters said his club is peaking at the right time.

"They've never gotten tired of volleyball and I've never heard any complaints," he said. "They want to finish strong."

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Tecumseh eliminates Spartans

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

Redford Bishop Borgess won't be making a return trip to the state Class B volleyball finals this season. On Saturday, Tecumseh (47-8) annihilated the Spartans (16-9) in the regional championship match at Dearborn High School, 15-7, 20-18.

Last year the Spartans reached the state Class B finals before losing to Sturgis. They appeared confident and ready again in 1989, but something was missing as the Indians pulled out the match behind the timely hitting of sophomore Erin Chase.

"She (Chase) is going to be very good," said Borgess coach Jerry Abraham. "I thought we had a real good scrimmage on Thursday (against Livonia Ladywood and Harper Woods Regina) and a good week of practice. But you've got to play your best against a good team and we didn't get the job done today."

The warning signals cropped up earlier in the day when Borgess struggled to beat Madison Heights Madison (11-15, 15-9, 15-8). In the other semifinal, Tecumseh ousted Monroe St. Mary Catholic Central (15-11, 15-14).

"WE DIDN'T PLAY well all day long," said Abraham. "We were very tentative and cautious. When we hit, we scored."

The hitting of senior Tanisha Stokes and the all-around play of senior Melissa Mars kept Borgess in the match.

The Spartans had game point twice in the second game, but couldn't get over the top.

"We had an opportunity to get back in it and missed some serves," said the Borgess coach. "We didn't attack enough and we served poorly. And we had been serving pretty well all year long."

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