

SPORTS

C

MONDAY, MARCH 7, 1994



BRAD EMMONS

Tourney tuneup
for area hoopers

Mr. Goodwrench has opened shop in Oberlin, just in time for March Madness.

How about a little diagnostic work, for starters, from your certified auto mechanic? Open up the hood, please.

And speaking of starters, let's rev up some high school basketball information as the state boys tournament unfolds (not to be confused with manifold) tonight.

I've put in some exhausting hours handicapping each area team.

Let's go over the checklist before we turn the ignition and give it a go. (Records are through Friday).

OIL, LUBE & FILTER

Redford Catholic Central (14-4): Probably the area's most surprising team after winning the Catholic League championship. Detroit Henry Ford, with shot blocking and rebounding who Maurice Taylor, provides a major obstacle in Class A district of Southfield. The Shamrock team should keep on humming into the regional.

Plymouth Canton (14-6): Shortly after the holidays, somebody mounted a V-8 engine in this vehicle. This is another team with a lot of get up and go. Kudos should go to coach Dave Van Wagener for getting the Chiefs this far. But Salem stands in the way at Northville. But Canton, led by sharpshooter Matt Paupore, is ready to roll.

TUNE-UP

Redford Bishop Borgess (13-7): The Spartans are playing in their own garage and could get through in Class C, but Catholic League A-East West champ Orchard Lake St. Mary may be the favorite. Guard Charles Smith is a quiet, but silky smooth for Borgess. The loss of Perry Robinson (left team) won't make a difference.

FRONT-END ALIGNMENT

Plymouth Salem (17-3): When several close games throughout the week, at late season fatigue, just adversity, has the Rocks feeling a bit shaky. If healthy, senior center James Head needs to play more with the free of a Dennis Roonan if the Rocks are going to get through the Northville district.

Westland John Glenn (15-4): We know G Foot 9 Guy Rucker can shoot and rebound like a Cadillac (not Anderson), but how about getting them the ball more in post position? The Rockets have a tough road to hoe at the Romulus district with the likes of the host Eagles. Luana Franklin, Wayne Memorial of State named Bellevue in the final.

COOLING SYSTEM

Farmington (13-7): Want to drag? Check out that dual exhaust. Let's scout some tires. This is by far Observing's most hot headed group, but the tires are there if they stay together. Coach Denny Mikel's team is the favorite at Bloomfield Hills Laker. A sure trip to the regional is not out of the question.

WHEEL BALANCING

Wayne Memorial (15-5): Coach Chuck Henry has had to change the sparkplugs a few times this season. If the Zebras are firing on all pistons (not Detroit), they could challenge Bellevue and Glenn. Wayne needs to connect more on a consistent basis from the perimeter. Watch out for freshman Lorenzo Gues.

MUFFLERS & TAILPIPS

Livonia Franklin (10-10): The Patriots are capable of giving just about any Observing team a battle, but a week before a battle of team defense keeps them from putting off that bug upset. A dangerous team, however, because they can run the floor and score.

Farmington Hills (12-8): The Hawks and 12-8 in the Western Lakes playoffs, but belonged there anyway. Calvin Pruitt is a formidable post player. Farmington can't overlook this team Wednesday night. North Farmington (10-10): Another team in the wings is Birmingham Detroit County Day, which lost Gary Webster to Golden State, but signed a sensational freshman named Shane Batten.

STARTERS

Redford Thurston (16-4): Joining the Mega Conference's Blue Division did wonders for this team. The Eagles have enjoyed a banner season, but getting through the Class B district at Bloomfield Hills Augustus district is a remote. Waiting in the wings is Birmingham Detroit County Day, which lost Gary Webster to Golden State, but signed a sensational freshman named Shane Batten.

BRAKES (DRUM & DISC)

Livonia Stevenson (9-14): Believe it or not, the Spartans have a shot at reaching the Northville district final with a victory tonight against a mediocre Novi team (the winner plays Churchill). Coach Jim Kluver and assistant Tom Hovner, who have to have to reach deep into the bag of tricks to pull that off.

Livonia Churchill (14-14): The Chargers are trying to lay a foundation for the future under coach Tom Long. But the new models are not in just yet, so Churchill must use the same old parts that have lacked offensive consistency all year long.

TRANSMISSION

Redford Union (7-12): The Panthers open district play at Southfield against arguably the state's premier inside player — Maurice Taylor of Detroit Henry Ford. The Michigan scribe is the Detroit Public School League's best shot blocker since Terry Tyler. If Taylor doesn't show up, however, RU has a chance.

Garden City (8-15): Coach Greg Williamson has a monumental task ahead of him tonight against state-ranked Bellevue. Can't we bring the old timers like Rick Drazitz, Dave Jackson, Harold Slade, Jack Hayes and Dave Hies back one more time to teach this Bellevue team a real lesson?

SHOCKS

Lutheran High Westland (9-11): The Warriors won the West Division of the Metro Conference, but now they're playing against the big boys (Tuesday against host Bishop Borgess). Chris Terman, John Seneca and Jimmy Hoot can score, but can Lutheran Westland withstand the Spartans' full-court pressure.

Livonia Claremontville (10-10): Can veteran coach Rick Larson pull a Steve Fisher at tournament time? At least we know, as Bo Schemberger once said, "He's a Claremontville man." The luck of the draw pits the Trojans against Catholic League playoff champ Orchard Lake St. Mary's.

BATTERIES

Plymouth Christian Academy (9-11): The Eagles are hosting a Class C district for the first time, but over first round draw put them against state-ranked and Michigan Independent Athletic Conference champion Oakland Christian. Check out the new gym, though.



STATION LAMINA, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tough D: Aggressive defense like that played by Canton's Tadarus Rachel — the foul on Scott Menser notwithstanding — put a crimp into the Farmington offense and made the going difficult for Farmington's shooters Friday.

Farmington runner-up in WLAA



In a struggle between relative strangers — at least in terms of the Western Lakes Activities Association basketball final — a mix of determination and defense proved difficult to dislodge. Plymouth Canton had both, parlaying them into a league title.

BY C.J. RISAR

STAFF WRITER

Tadarus Rachel proudly reminded anyone standing in the vicinity of the Plymouth Canton locker room that what happened Friday night — Canton's 74-56 triumph over Farmington in the Western Lakes Activities Association championship basketball game at Northville — fulfilled his prediction of a year ago.

"I told you so," Rachel said. "I told

you on the last day of last year we'd win it."

Rachel's promise was filled with something the Chiefs lacked early this season, when they lost four of their first six games: confidence. Not that they didn't believe in themselves, or in the pressure defense coach Dave VanWagoner preached, or in their ability to rebound with bigger teams.

But it took a while for it all to

mesh. After their loss to Plymouth Salem in their WLAA opener, it did — to the tune of 12 wins in their last 14 games.

Farmington's season followed a different flow. The Falcons, normally a team scratching to reach the break-even mark, won seven of their first eight. Their most lethal weapon: quickness.

When two teams built on speed meet for the championship, something has to give. It did.

"They're too quick for us," said Farmington coach Denny Mikel. "That's the bottom line."

The end came early for Farmington — in the first two quarters, when the Falcons managed to make just 5-of-29

shots. Canton was in control, with a 37-21 advantage at the half.

Defense again paved the path to victory for the Chiefs. The Falcons simply could not find many good shots, and when they did, they couldn't convert.

"We didn't shoot the ball well, but they did a good job of not letting us shoot the ball," Mikel said. "We got in a hole early and never did get out of it. They're too good a team to get that far down to. We have no excuses. I think the better team won today."

VanWagoner called Farmington "one of the quicker teams we've played." Then he smiled and added, "But we're the quickest team in the

See FINAL, 3C

Marlins win another district title

BY DAN O'MEARA

STAFF WRITER

A little anxiety stemming from a fear of failure might have been a good motivator for the Farmington Hills Mercy volleyball team Saturday.

The Marlins continued their success in district tournaments, but not without some uncertain moments early in the championship match against host Berkley.

Mercy eventually won its fifth consecutive title and sixth in the last seven years by defeating the Bears for the second straight year, 16-14 and 16-11.

"Myself and three players had the same nightmare the last two weeks," Mercy coach Peggy Spengler said. "We dreamed we were going to beat Southfield and (Detroit) Henry Ford and totally fall apart against Berkley."

"In both games, there was that inner fear it could come true. But may-

be the bad dreams helped in that sense because nobody got overconfident."

The Marlins return to Berkley High School for the regional tournament Saturday and will play Plymouth Salem in the semifinals.

Mercy whipped Southfield (16-0, 15-1) and Ford (15-6, 15-3) in its first two matches and had to wait 1½ hours until the final while the Bears disposed of Southfield-Lathrup in three games.

The Marlins fell behind in both games but eventually came alive to win, and senior Christiane Grant played a key role in getting the Mercy engine in gear each time.

With Berkley up 11-8 in the first, Grant stopped the Bears with two kills for sidout and started a Mercy

ally with another. Her kill in the second tied the score after Berkley jumped out ahead, 5-1.

"I wasn't playing as well as I usually do at first," Grant said. "I was nervous, basically. I got one hit and said, 'OK, I can do this' and went after it. I started feeling the adrenaline and getting into match."

"When the team starts struggling, I know I have to do something to help and get the momentum going."

Grant wasn't alone in providing key hits. Senior Jill Higgins, sophomores James Emerson and Ebony Landrum and junior Mitzi Ruddock also took their turns.

Spengler had made changes to get more production from her outside hitters, bringing Landrum up from the junior varsity to play the middle and moving Emerson to the outside.

"All three of our outside hitters came forward, and that is great be-

cause we needed that," Spengler said. "We always count on Christiane in the first three rotations to put ball away. She had two great games before this, but she had a hard time in this match."

"The passing picked up (in each game) and it only takes one or two really good hits to get this team rolling. If someone else is doing well, it seems to boost everyone's confidence."

Sophomore setter Heather Grieg, who followed Grant's kill with four aces to give Mercy a 13-11 lead in the first game, placed the ball for the hitters and was the unsung hero.

"We've been struggling, trying to make all of this work," Spengler said. "It started to flow and Heather had a lot to do with that. It all came together at the right time."

See MARLINS, 2C

Vikings defeat Hawks
in tournament finale

BY BILL PARKER

STAFF WRITER

It was one of those volleyball matches no one deserved to lose.

But, as Farmington Harrison coach Ron Short put it, "Someone had to."

In one of the most competitive district championship matches played at Walled Lake Central in recent years, the host Vikings overcame match point on three occasions in the final game Saturday to claim a 16-14, 11-15, 16-14, victory over the Hawks.

Central, which has won three straight district championships and is 27-11 overall, plays Holly at 5:30 p.m. Friday in the opening game of the regional tournament at Lakeland.

"That's a great volleyball team," said Viking coach Mike Lindstrom of his opponent. "That was the best final we've ever had. We did the same

thing with Harrison last year, but it was in the semifinals. It was almost anticlimactic after that."

Short remembers the battle well. "They beat us last year, too, but in the semis," he said. "That match also went three games and they beat us 16-14 in the third. We've had some great, great matches with Central."

Saturday's meeting was no exception, particularly the last of the three championship matches.

The game was tied eight times and neither team led by more than three points. Harrison appeared to be in the driver's seat at 14-11 following three service points by senior Carey Perkins — the third on a block kill by senior Amanda Ault — but the Vikings realized they hadn't come this

See DISTRICT, 2C



BILL HANSEN

Hawk defense: Erika Greene keeps the ball alive for Harrison in district play Saturday.