

Chiefs will try to overcome lack of height again

By C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

Funny how some things never seem to change.

The problem Plymouth Canton's girls basketball team faced at the end of last season will be the same problem it faces at the start of the '96 campaign: size, or rather a lack of it.

The Chiefs, in simplest terms, are not big. However, it's worth remembering that most of this under-sized team was part of the '94 squad that made a run through the state tournament, a trip that wasn't derailed until the Class A semifinals.

Canton completed last season with a 19-7 record.

Considering that only two con-

tributors from that team were lost to graduation should put the Chiefs into the title-contender class. But the players lost won't be easy to replace.

Gone are Amelie Crayton and Jackie Nicastri, taking with them some of the team speed, a lot of experience and a good deal of defense.

"We'll miss Jackie and Amelie a lot because both were great defenders," said Canton coach Bob Blohm.

Although the Chiefs may not have anyone in particular capable of filling those spots just yet, they do have a solid foundation.

It starts with 5-foot-10 senior center Sarah Warnke. A team co-captain, she averaged 11.6 points and 8.5 rebounds a game last sea-

son, battling in the low post against mostly bigger foes.

But Yachow, a 6-6 senior who started part of the time last season, also returns. She, too, will be a team co-captain.

Those are the only seniors on the squad, but experience is no problem. Junior Kristi Florensd, a 6-9 senior, is in her third year on the varsity. And 5-6 sophomore guard Melissa Marzoff was a freshman starter last year.

"My big concern," said Blohm, "is depth."

What about offense? Before Canton's run through the state tournament, the team struggled to score at times.

That won't be the problem this season, Blohm feels. "We won't have as hard a time scoring as re-

bounding and defending. In our league, and against the non-league opponents on our schedule, we're going to play some pretty large teams."

In the Western Lakes Activities Association, that begins with defending champion Walled Lake Central, which returns all but one of its players. Plymouth Salem also has a sizable team, and Northville is expected to be both experienced and talented.

If Canton is to challenge for the title, the experience it gained through last season's tournament run — which included a 49-35 upset of Walled Lake Central in the quarterfinals — will have to be harvested by veteran players like juniors Mary Anderson and Tif-

fany Williams, and sophomore Kristin Lukasik. All must step up their game.

Which means translating Blohm's offense into points. This will not be a fast-breaking team, if it follows form: "We have pretty solid perimeter players. We've got a real solid nucleus of kids. I think this group feels good about what they're doing."

"We're not a very good team when we just run down the court and fire off the first shot. We're better when we're a little bit more patient, when we pass it a bit and get good spacing."

If the Chiefs are to match last year's success, Warnke will have to be a more consistent inside scoring threat (she shot only 43

percent from the floor and 60 percent from the free-throw line last season), and newcomers like junior transfer Jennifer MacLellan, a 6-6 guard from Southgate Aquinas, and 6-8 sophomore Nkechi Okwumabua will have to contribute.

"The thing we need to do is balance our inside and perimeter games," said Blohm. "We need to be more consistent in the half-court game. It all comes down to that. You've got to score. The ball has to go in the net."

The elements are in place to make the Chiefs a formidable team again. How formidable depends on how much, and how quickly, they can elevate their game.

While rival Rocks have plenty of it

By C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

It's got to be said: Plymouth Salem's hopes for basketball success are sizable.

That's because the Rocks are just that — sizable. To prove that point, one only need note that sophomore Amanda Abraham, a 6-footer who earned all-Lakes Division honors as a freshman forward last year after averaging 10 points and nine rebounds a game was switched to point guard.

"We have two good pieces of the puzzle to build around," said Salem coach Fred Thomann, referring to Abraham and all-Western Lakes Activities Association center Shelby Sills, a senior co-captain. Sills, another 6-footer, averaged 15 points and 10 boards a game in '94.

Those two, combined with seniors Nicole Van Hees and Kelly Simpson, will provide the Rocks with a good deal of leadership. The 5-10 Van Hees, a part-time starter last year, and the 6-1 Simpson will also serve as captains.

What the Rocks may be lacking is open court ability, although Thomann might not agree. "This is a pretty competitive group of 10

players," he said. "Every one of them has legitimate credentials in playing the game, at some level."

The juniors with varsity experience are 5-9 Laurel Welman and 5-11/4 Janelle Sterling. Leslie Erickson, a 6-9 forward, and Marit Walker, a 6-0 center/forward, both played for Salem's junior varsity last season.

Two freshmen will play varsity this season, and they, too, are big: 5-9 Angela Sillmon and 6-1 Andrea Pruitt.

"We've got nice size and outstanding athleticism, for the size we have," said Thomann. "And we've got decent skill."

What Salem still was leadership, and the ability to move the ball, talents Kelly Lukasik, Karen Gundry and Liz Erickson provided to last year's 15-7 team. All have graduated.

Will this group be able to replace those qualities? "That's the part of the game we're working at real hard," Thomann said when questioned about his team's passing ability. "And we're getting better at it."

Some of the perceived strengths may turn out otherwise if not worked at and developed. "One of the strengths of this team is the

ability to rebound the basketball, at times," the Salem coach said. "They've also shown a decent ability to play defense — at times."

Guard's switch to point guard is "an interesting change. It's something we just came upon this summer. One day, we just told her 'You're the point guard. Go play.' And we kind of developed it from there."

The change should suit Abraham, who seems a better distributor than scorer. And scorers are not lacking on this team; indeed, until roles are clearly defined, it may be difficult to figure the Rocks.

"One of the questions we have with this team is, 'Can we create offense in the half-court game?'" Thomann asked. "Who should shoot, who should score, and do we have the patience to get them the ball?"

Salem still will have to find answers to those questions quickly if they plan to survive their early-season schedule. The Rocks face Ann Arbor Pioneer and Rochester Adams next week, but the big challenge comes Sept. 16 when defending Class A champion Flint Northern, featuring 6-4 center Tawana McDonald, invades Salem's gym.

MICHIGAN TIRE DAYS

Annual SALE! ENDS AUG. 26

GOOD YEAR Decathlon \$28.99 P155/B0R13 Whitewall	GOOD YEAR Decathlon \$41.99 P195/75R14 Whitewall
GOOD YEAR T-Metric \$36.99 175/70R13 Blackwall	GOOD YEAR Workhorse \$69.95 P235/75R15 Raised White Letter

OUR LOWEST PRICED RADIAL FOR IMPORTS & SMALL CARS
FITS: Ford Escort, Geo Prism, Toyota

ECONOMY ALL-WEATHER RADIAL FOR LIGHT TRUCKS & MOVES
FITS: Jeep Cherokee, Chevy Blazer, Ford Explorer

GOOD YEAR

25% OFF! off regular price

ALL-SEASON RADIAL
PASSENGER RADIAL

Conquest \$54.95 P195/70R14 VSA
FITS: Dodge Spirit, Ford Probe, Pontiac Grand Prix

WRANGLER AT \$69.95 P235/75R15
FITS: Ford Bronco, Chevy Blazer, Ford Explorer

Sell it in 3* or we'll run it FREE!

Big Bill Savings!

Observer & Eccentric

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

WAYNE COUNTY OAKLAND COUNTY

313-591-0900 or 810-644-1070

LIMITED TIME OFFER • PRIVATE PARTIES ONLY • NO COPY CHANGES
REAL ESTATE SALES AND RENTALS NOT INCLUDED

MOTOR CITY GOODYEAR TIRE PROFESSIONALS

BIRMINGHAM 1000 1st St. S. (810) 641-3370	FARMINGTON HILLS 2000 1st St. S. (810) 832-5400	PLYMOUTH 1000 1st St. S. (313) 425-7800	UNION LAKE/BLOOMFIELD 1000 1st St. S. (810) 663-3200
CANTON TOWNSHIP 1000 1st St. S. (810) 434-0440	GARDEN CITY 1000 1st St. S. (313) 422-3360	PONTIAC 1000 1st St. S. (810) 335-6107	UTICA 1000 1st St. S. (810) 868-0009
CLAWSON 1000 1st St. S. (810) 434-0440	LINCOLN PARK 1000 1st St. S. (313) 422-3360	REDFORD 1000 1st St. S. (810) 831-6450	WARREN/CENTERLINE 1000 1st St. S. (810) 725-3770
DEARBORN 1000 1st St. S. (810) 872-5410	LIVONIA 1000 1st St. S. (810) 478-0900	ROCHESTER 1000 1st St. S. (810) 681-4007	WARREN 1000 1st St. S. (810) 673-4900
DEARBORN/DETROIT 1000 1st St. S. (810) 844-9282	MADISON HEIGHTS 1000 1st St. S. (810) 641-1244	ROYAL OAK 1000 1st St. S. (810) 644-0110	WALLED LAKE 1000 1st St. S. (810) 624-3700
DETROIT 1000 1st St. S. (810) 873-3200	MADISON HEIGHTS 1000 1st St. S. (810) 644-9282	SOUTHFIELD 1000 1st St. S. (810) 355-0550	WATERFORD 1000 1st St. S. (810) 681-2000
DETROIT 1000 1st St. S. (810) 371-3302	NORTHVILLE 1000 1st St. S. (810) 348-0430	STERLING HEIGHTS 1000 1st St. S. (810) 978-1070	WATERFORD 1000 1st St. S. (810) 688-2200
DETROIT 1000 1st St. S. (810) 371-3302	OAK PARK 1000 1st St. S. (810) 348-0430	STERLING HEIGHTS 1000 1st St. S. (810) 933-0230	WESTLAND 1000 1st St. S. (313) 731-1810
DETROIT 1000 1st St. S. (810) 371-3302	OAK PARK 1000 1st St. S. (810) 348-0430	STERLING HEIGHTS 1000 1st St. S. (810) 933-0230	WESTLAND 1000 1st St. S. (313) 731-1810

OPEN SUNDAY