

# Sad day for Livonia hoops when none make playoffs



BRAD EMMONS

Western Lakes Activities Association girls basketball playoffs.

(Also, when was the last time Farmington Hills Mercy or Livonia Ladywood missed the Catholic League playoffs? I do remember one of the two, but not both during the same season (falling to qualify).)

As far as the WLAA's four non-qualifiers, some may say a non-competitive middle school program may be the culprit.

As much as I'm asked: What's wrong with Livonia Churchill's football program? I'm now hearing similar complaints from various coaches and people in the community about the middle school program, which stresses participation over competition. Livonia's program, which gives students a taste of various sports over six-week increments during the course of the school year, is comparable to Farmington's.

Students in Livonia practice or play games three times per week, 1½ hours per session. It's a six-game season in basketball with all the games scheduled within the district.

Farmington students have a similar program, but meet Monday through Thursday. But are we satisfying our students' competitive needs?

Harrison girls basketball coach Pete Mantyla brings up one interesting point. He doesn't feel Farmington's program measures up with the middle school programs in Plymouth-Canton and Walled Lake.

"I'm sure we'd be at the bottom in our league if it wasn't for the AAU program we have going here in the off-season," said Mantyla, whose team finished fifth in the WLAA regular season behind Walled Lake Central, Plymouth Canton, Plymouth Salem and Northville.

Some may argue that Livonia Schools are competitive enough, particularly when it comes to soccer, swimming, golf, tennis and cross country.

But a lot of the success comes from community club teams, especially at Livonia Stevenson where the Spartans are state contenders this fall in soccer, girls cross country and girls swimming. By the time many of these athletes reach high school, they've already been exposed to state and national competition. Stevenson's football team won its division and the girls tennis team qualified for state.

Churchill's boys golf team was a state qualifier, while Stevenson and Franklin have already won district boys soccer titles. This is merely food for thought, something superintendents, school board members, coaches, parents and administrators may want to hash over sometime soon, and see if we need to re-evaluate things.

Personally, I campaigned vigorously to reinstate middle school sports in Livonia, and I'm starting to wonder whether they're competing on a level playing field with other WLAA members.

This and that

Made my first trip downtown to the Free Press/Mazda International Marathon and both ends of the spectrum — both the agony and the exhilaration of finishing a 26.2-mile race.

It's quite an accomplishment just to finish, particularly when the weather conditions are not favorable.

Hats also go off to fellow Heart and Sole Running Club

**Some may say a non-competitive middle school program may be the culprit.**

member John Bagley, a former Stevenson High runner who qualified for next spring's Boston Marathon with a 3:05. Also, Gary Plank, another running friend, ran a 3:20, just missing the Boston cut-off for his age group (I won't say how old, Gary). It was a job well done by Gary and everybody who competed.

Got to see the second half of the Eastern Michigan-Central Michigan football game a few weeks back. EMU certainly runs an entertaining offense, and Rynearson Stadium is impressive since the renovation.

EMU nose guard Bobby Johnson (Livonia Franklin), a fifth-year senior, gets plenty of playing time on defense.

I hope the Michigan High School Athletic Association wins its legislative battle against Sen. Mike Rogers, D-Howell, who is challenging the HESA over the eligibility of charter school students at public schools.

With all the inequities that exist when it comes boundary areas for private and public schools, we don't need to open another can of worms.

My response to those who want to tilt an otherwise shaky playing field — start your own athletic association.

Not everybody likes all the NCAA rules, but I don't see any other governing bodies for college sports other than the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).

Can you believe I didn't mention mega mergers once in this column?

## SPORTS SHORTS

Items for the Sports Roundup should be submitted by 5 p.m. Tuesday and 5 p.m. Friday. News can be mailed to 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or faxed to (313) 591-7279. The number to call is (313) 553-2141.

### COLLEGE TENNIS

Keely Jones of Farmington Hills (North Farmington) has a 6-2 record to date at fifth singles and 7-2 record at second doubles for the Vassar College women's tennis team.

Vassar's season continues through October with dual matches and culminates with the New York State Collegiate Tennis Championships. Vassar's record is 7-2.

### BIG TIME WRESTLING

Great Lakes Wrestling will

present seven matches beginning at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 10, at the Wayne-Ford Civic League, 1645 N. Wayne Road, Westland.

The main event is a tag team match between Machine Gun Kelly and Ray the Crippler Roberts vs. the Action Wranglers, Woody and Bobby Lee.

Others scheduled to appear include Punisher Rock Stevens, Tommy Knox, Judge Dred and Skull Ganz.

Tickets are \$9 for adults and \$5 for children (12 and under).

For more information, call (313) 728-5010.

### COACHES NEEDED

Farmington Hills Mercy needs an assistant coach for its junior varsity volleyball team. Applicants should call Ed Moeller at (810) 555-4200 during the day or

(810) 682-9169 in the evening. Resumes can be faxed to Moeller at (810) 597-0492.

Redford Catholic Central is seeking a head varsity swim coach. Interested persons should contact CC athletic director Bob Santello at (313) 534-2708.

Walled Lake is seeking an assistant boys swim coach. Interested candidates should submit an application to: David Yarbrough, Director of Athletics and Physical Education, Walled Lake Schools, 850 Ladd Road, Building D, Walled Lake, MI 48390. For more information, call (810) 960-8373.

### SPORTS ACADEMY

Classes in baseball fundamentals will be taught Saturdays and Mondays in November at the Sports Academy of Novi for youths age 7 to 14. The fee is \$50.

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