

## SPORTS

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## Raiders prepare for success

■ The North Farmington boys basketball team is taking a basic approach to the upcoming season, focusing on the building blocks for success.

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER

Coach Brian Swinehart was a little uncertain when his North Farmington basketball players told him their team motto for the 1996-97 boys season: prepare to win! The Raiders, after all, were 3-8 in the tough Western Lakes Activities Association and 6-15 overall last year.

Swinehart wondered at first if they had the right approach. It turns out they do.

"They want to know they did everything to put themselves in position to win," Swinehart said, adding the Raiders aren't rushing to count victories without first focusing on the ways to be successful.

"Winning is the outcome of doing everything else. The reward will be in knowing we did those things. That doesn't mean we won't play to win, because that's why we're here. But it's not the end all for us."

North returns six varsity players and will be led by a pair of seniors with substantial varsity experience.

Six-foot-6 forward Brad Rivers and 6-foot point guard Julian Cochran finished their sophomore years on the varsity and started all of last season.

Rivers is the top returning scorer, having averaged 10 points, as well as three rebounds. But Swinehart adds he scored almost 15 a game in the second half of the season when Rivers got hot from three-point range.

He set three school records for three-point shooting when he made eight in one game, sank 53 triples overall and shot 39 percent.

Rivers, the quarterback of the football team, is still recovering from a broken left wrist he suffered in late September. Fortunately for him, he's a right-handed shooter.

"I was up in the pressbox that day," Swinehart said, "and the first question I asked was 'Is it the left or right?' Luckily, it was his left hand."

"His mobility isn't there right now; it's affected him a little bit. By the time we get to the second game (on Dec. 19), he should be about 100 percent. He's still playing well, however."

Rivers also expanded his game, according to Swinehart, while playing during the summer months.

"At times he was our biggest guy and really had to rebound. I think that helped his development. Being able to pull out if it didn't dribble, hit the mid-range jumper and attack the rim has rounded out his game."

Cochran played the last 10 games on the varsity and lettered as a



STAFF PHOTO BY SHAWN LESTER

Senior members: North Farmington's boys basketball team will rely heavily on its six seniors this winter. They are (clockwise from left) Corey Forth (with basketball), Ernest Yeldo, Scott Gold, Harry Banks, Brad Rivers and (center) Julian Cochran.

sophomore. He averaged eight points and 3 1/2 assists last season while shooting 37 percent from the three-point arc.

"He understands his job, as the point guard, is to distribute the ball and set other guys up, and he's doing a great job," Swinehart said. "If he can do that and get us into our half-court offense, we can be a lot more competitive."

"More than anything, Julian has improved his rebounding. He's not

afraid to go in and mix it up."

Besides losing starting forwards Tim Zolan and Richard Beal to graduation, the Raiders are minus 6-6 junior Jeff Trzos, who started at center for two seasons.

He and 6-5 junior Kirk Taylor are outstanding, left-handed baseball pitchers and decided to forego basketball to concentrate on that sport.

The other returning players are seniors Corey Forth (6-7), Scott Gold (6-3) and Ernest Yeldo (6-11) and

junior Ray Louisia (6-11).

All are guards except Gold, who will start in the middle. The Raiders will count on him to rebound and score in the low post.

"What we don't have in height we make up for in quickness," Swinehart said, adding North will be a running, pressing, shooting team. "Every guy has to show up on the glass, because we don't have one dominant guy inside. We can make

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## Mustangs advance to Class A semis

BY BILL PARKER  
STAFF WRITER

It was a bumpy ride, but the Birmingham-Marian girls basketball team made it "over the hump" Tuesday and is headed to the Class A finals for the first time since its state championship run in 1992.

The Mustangs overcame a five-point halftime deficit and scored eight of the game's final nine points to pull out a thrilling, 47-43 victory over Walled Lake Central in a quarterfinal game at Ferndale.

Marian (23-3) will play No. 2-ranked Grand Rapids Christian (28-0) in a state semifinal game 1 p.m. today at Kellogg Arena in Battle

## BASKETBALL

Creek.

Grand Rapids Christian advanced with a 52-51 victory over defending state champion and previously unbeaten Flint Northern.

"Usually, it's been that we can't get past the quarterfinals," Marian coach Mary Lillie-Cicerone said. "My history has been that if we can get past the quarters we'll win it."

"This has been the hump for us. We've been here (quarterfinals) eight times and only gotten over the hump two times (before Tuesday)."

Both of those times ended in state championships. Marian beat Flint Powers, 71-49, to win the Class A title in 1988 and Flint Northwestern, 39-27, in 1992.

Last year, Central ended Marian's season in the quarterfinals, 60-57, but the Vikings needed a 21-13 advantage in the fourth quarter to secure the win. Central got to the championship game before losing to Flint Northern, 59-40.

"This was kind of a reversal of last year's game," Lillie-Cicerone said. "Last year they were supposed to win, and we gave them a good game. This year we were supposed to win, and they led most of the game."

Central's senior center, Becky Cummings, who finished fourth in the voting for Miss Basketball, led the Vikings to an early lead.

Cummings was unstoppable in the early going, scoring 10 of her game-high 25 points in the first quarter as the Vikings took a 12-7 lead.

She scored five more early in the second as the Vikings opened the quarter with an 8-2 run for a 20-9 advantage.

The Mustangs trailed, 24-15, with just under three minutes remaining in the half before junior guard Mary Trupiano gave the Marian fans a

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## Coaching veteran finally gets state title

BY MARTY BUDNER  
STAFF WRITER

It finally happened for Bob Kefgen. After 37 years of coaching, he has a state football championship.

The ex-Bloomfield Hills Lahser mentor was a full-time offensive line coach this year for Class AA champion Walled Lake Western. It was a gratifying moment in a long and distinguished career.

"I finally made it; it didn't come at Lahser, but I'll take it," Kefgen said. "It's the apex; it's the epitome. That's what you're out here for every year."

"It's fun being part of it, and I feel very privileged."

Western won its first state title Saturday at the Silverdome with a 34-18 upset victory over top-ranked Sterling Heights Stevenson.

The Warriors, who finished the season with an 11-2 overall record, had an incredible playoff run.

In springing to four consecutive victories, Western averaged 42 points per game, including a high of 50 in the regional championship game against Brighton.

Western ran a Wing-T offense, with speed as its most valuable asset. The Warriors out rushed their opponents by more than a 2-1 margin this

year (2,877-1,167).

Sophomore Dave Johnson had the most carries and led the team with 1,042 yards rushing. Junior quarterback Frank Stanford, senior running back Scott Naz and senior flanker Donny Davis averaged more than 7 yards per rush and combined for 19 touchdowns.

It was, of course, Kefgen's senior-dominated line that opened gaping holes for those talented runners.

The line consisted of tackles Andy Carl (5-10, 205) and Kevin Sims (6-1, 205), center Ricky Styles (6-0, 210), guards Peter Seitz (6-0, 205)

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DAN O'MEARA

## Western's victory wasn't a surprise to every observer

Before we close the book on the 1996 football season, a few words remain to be written about the state finals last weekend at the Silverdome.

Yours truly can't resist doing a little gloating in print this week after Walled Lake Western's 34-18 victory in the Class AA championship game Saturday.

If you saw the Nov. 28 edition of the Farmington Observer, you read it here first — the Warriors win!

Western's defeat of No. 1-ranked Sterling Heights Stevenson might be remembered as one of the most stunning outcomes in state-finals history by all but a few reporters, this one being among the latter.

I suppose you can call it an upset were you consider the Warriors had two losses, both to the team Stevenson defeated in the semifinals, and the unbeaten Titans were heavily favored (though not by this paper).

"The biggest thing that helped us is that we were not rated and Sterling Heights was No. 1," Western coach Chuck Appap said. "That was something we liked."

The genesis of my reasoning the Warriors would win goes back to Sept. 21 and the Farmington Harrison-Western game.

The Warriors beat the Hawks, 14-3. That seems like a modest score, but Western thoroughly dominated the game and could have scored more points.

As the season unfolded, we came to realize Harrison was a fine team despite that loss. And, as coach John Herrington, would later say: "Now we know just how good Western is, too."

## Warriors do what they do well

Secondly, I like the way the Warriors play. They have the right talent for what they do, or should it be they do what is right for their talent?

Their execution of the Wing-T offense and defensive philosophy, which relies on speed instead of strength and forces the ball outside instead of inside, make the Warriors a hard-to-figure, hard-to-stop team.

I had heard about Stevenson's complicated, pro-style offense, its huge linemen and its stifling defense that shut down Westland John Glenn.

But the Class AA final proved something I think is true about high school football.

If you have decent size but more importantly tough players who are quick/nat, you can overcome bigger opponents. The Warriors had decent size and were outstanding in the other areas.

Another example was the 1977 Brother Rice team. Those Warriors won a state title with their biggest defensive starter being a 180-pound tackle. Rice averaged 165 pounds on defense.

Another reason is just a gut feeling. Western didn't just win three playoff games to reach the final. The Warriors rolled into the Dome!

Sure, Stevenson beat Glenn, which had the toughest road to travel by playing Catholic Central and Fordson. But I disagree with some who say Western had an easy route to the Dome.

Battle Creek Central, Brighton and Rockford are fine teams, ranked among the state's best every year, and the Warriors didn't just win. They whipped 'em; they racked up big victories!

## Warriors re-evaluated attitude

Which supports Appap's assertion Western became a different team, a more focused team on a mission, after its second loss to Glenn in the Western Lakes championship game, 24-0.

That's when the Warriors became a tougher team, mentally, Appap said.

"We learned that from Glenn," he said. "They didn't just beat us; they kicked our rear ends. That's the mentality Glenn has — 'We're coming in there and going to beat you up.'"

Not surprisingly, that loss stunned Appap and his team.

"If you had asked me if we were ready, I probably would've bet my house on it," Appap said. "We had one first down. How do you have one first down with this offense?"

To their credit, the Warriors didn't fold but accepted Appap's challenge. They got mad; they got better, instead of giving up.

"I said 'Hey, you have five games left — Walled Lake Central and four in the playoffs. Now it depends on what you want to do and how you want to be remembered,'" Appap told his players, who made a comeback that rivals Catholic Central's feat of 1990.

The Shamrocks also qualified with two losses that year. After losing to DePue and Detroit King early in the season, the Shamrocks won the Catholic League title by defeating DePue and the Class A crown a month later by beating King

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