

1997 ALL-OBSERVER GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM

Hawks' Roble, North's Fournier saluted

By C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

Selecting the best girls basketball team in Observerland wouldn't be any real problem: Redford Bishop Borgess lost once all season, rolling through the Class C state tournament with relative ease en route to its third state championship in five years.

Which is why the Spartans' Alysha Smith was selected as Miss Basketball, with some controversy.

Choosing the rest of the team wasn't so easy, simply because there was a lot to choose from. The teams that faced the best didn't do so on the shoulders of any single player. Depth of talent was the key element in successful seasons at Borgess, Plymouth Canton, Plymouth Salem, North Farmington and Farmington Harrison.

Selecting an Observerland coach of the year was also a difficult task. It might seem Borgess' Dave Mann is being penalized because he had a team so loaded with talent and wasn't our choice. Instead, the honor goes to Canton's Bob Blohm.

It shouldn't be any real surprise, considering what Blohm's Chiefs accomplished this season. They won the Western Lakes Activities Association championship with an 11-0 record and defeated a very tough Salem squad en route to a district title.

Canton was 19-5 for the year and came within an eyelash of upsetting Birmingham Marian in the state regional final. What makes all this more remarkable is that the Chiefs' biggest starter was 5-foot-8 1/2 Nkechi Okwumabua. Canton looked sized and was not a great offensive team, but Blohm's motion offense — which stressed patience — wore opponents down and put Canton in control.

Which is why he was chosen.

Amanda Abraham, 6-1 Sr., Plymouth Salem: Asking what Abraham did for Plymouth Salem would be a difficult question. Better to ask what she didn't do.

That's because there wasn't much. A four-year starter for the Hawks, Abraham has been their point-forward the past two years, shouldering the responsibility of handing the ball the most.

That, however, did not harm the rest of her game. Abraham led Salem in just about everything this year, scoring 12.4 points, rebounding (6.7), steals (2.6) and assists (4.0). Indeed, she was a double-figure scorer throughout her four-year varsity career.

"She's a player who's got a complete game," said Salem coach Fred Thomann. "She can handle the ball, she's a great finisher, she's an excellent defender, she's got great quickness, she runs the floor and she handles the ball."

"She's just an excellent high school player."

Abraham has been recruited to play college basketball by several NCAA Division I schools. Her list has been pared down to Central Michigan, Bowling Green, Ohio University and Holy Cross.

Kristin Lukasa, 6-0 Sr., Bishop Borgess: Merchant dropped the tag of enigma and became a star most of the time for the Spartans, averaging 15.0 points, 7.5 rebounds, 1.5 assists, 2.4 steals and 1.6 blocks per game. She made 49 percent of her field goals, 74 percent of her free throws.

"The only thing she failed to do was dunk, as she promised midway through the season. That'll have to wait for AAU season."

"She's the most athletically gifted kid in the state and at the time the most offensively explosive," Mann said. "She improved defensively quite a bit this year."

Amy Roble, 5-8 Sr., Farmington Hills Harrison: Simply put, Roble was Miss Everything for the Hawks this season. An All-WLAA player for the second straight season, she led Harrison in scoring with a 14.8 average while shooting 43 percent from the field. Roble also averaged better than five rebounds — not bad for a shooting guard.

"She'll leave Harrison as one of our best players ever," said coach Pete Montyla. "She made great contributions to the program and her teammates."

Roble also earned fifth team all-state honors this season. Montyla said she didn't have a bad game.

"She was a model of consistency," he commented.

Besides playing great offense, Roble knew how to play defense, too.

She averaged three steals per game and is the school's career leader in that category.

Roble is also the career leader in three-pointers with 85.

"She's very versatile," Montyla said. "She could shoot from the perimeter, take it to the basket and post up."

Melissa Marzoff, 6-7 Sr., Plymouth Canton: Another four-year starter, Marzoff was part of a Canton team that needed everybody to do a bit of everything if it were to succeed.

The Chiefs did, coming within a possession or two of reaching the state quarterfinals. And Marzoff was a major reason why.

The team's second-leading scorer (10.5 points per game), Marzoff led Canton in assists (4.3 per game) and steals (2.7), and averaged five rebounds as well.

The Chiefs' career leader in assists and steals, she also has more starts than anyone with 91. Canton was 23-20 during her career, winning three district championships and reaching the state

semifinals once.

"She's great in the open court, she sees people and is a great passer," said Canton coach Bob Blohm. "She allowed people to get open and got the ball to them when they did."

"That kind of player fits in really well with us. She was a good decision-maker."

Marzoff has already signed to play at NCAA Division II Northwood University.

SECOND TEAM

Christina Anderson, 5-6 Sr., Bishop Borgess: A three-year starter, Anderson averaged 9.8 points, 6.0 assists, 4.2 steals and 4.2 rebounds per game. She made 43 percent of her field goal attempts, 61 percent at the free throw line.

"She probably enjoys playing more than anyone I've had," Mann said. "During the time she's on the floor she has a good time. She shows it, always smiling. She's a great, great guard with exceptionally quick hands. She's a good passer and shot the ball great toward the end of the year."

Andrea Pruett, 6-1 Jr., Plymouth Salem: What Pruett accomplished as a junior was, simply put, paved the road for what figures to be a very impressive senior season.

A threat in the low-post as a sophomore, Pruett showed improvement there, and also took her game outside more.

"Through the middle of the season, we spent time with her playing facing the basket," said Thomann. "So her perimeter game improved, and that made her a more complete player."

"She's already got a really nice inside game, and her facing-the-basket game is really getting better."

Thomann also called Pruett, who was second on the team in scoring (11.2 points) and rebounding (6.6), "a great defender, and a good rebounder. I thought, by the end of the year, she was the kind of player who wanted the ball."

Nkechi Okwumabua, 5-9 Sr., Plymouth Canton: Okwumabua led an over-achieving Canton team in both scoring (11.6 points) and rebounding (7.0).

What made her production more remarkable was that she was forced to play center against teams with far bigger players at that position.

"She did a great job getting open," said Blohm. "She's just a great athlete. Her athletic ability and her ability to get out in the open court really put pressure on opposing defenses."

"She also did a great job on defense for us. She and (Marzoff) led our team in deflections defensively."

A statistic even more impressive concerning Okwumabua is her 4.0 grade-point average. That will take her on an academic scholarship to the University of Michigan.

Sarah Pogits, 6-0 Sr., Livonia Ladywood: Helped lead Ladywood to the regional finals and a 12-13 overall record. The Catholic League All-Central Division pick finished the year averaging 12.5 points, seven rebounds, and 1.5 blocks per game. Pogits shot 49 percent from the field and 72 percent from the free throw line.

In five state tournament games, Pogits stepped up her game by averaging 17 points, seven rebounds, while shooting 56 percent from the field and 87 percent from the line. Her best outing was against Livonia Stevenson with 22 points (on 11 of 15 shooting), eight rebounds, five blocks, five assists and two steals.

"Sarah was a lot more aggressive offensively this year," Ladywood coach Andrea Gorski said. "She was always a

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North FarmingtonKellee Fournier
North Farmington

good shooter. When she got the ball inside she was committed to scoring."

Pogits, who committed to Loyola Chicago to play volleyball, carries a 3.9 grade point average.

Kellee Fournier, 5-6 Sr., North Farmington: The Raiders were one of the area's most improved teams this year. Fournier was one of the reasons why.

"Her senior leadership on the floor was tremendous," North Farmington coach Linda Perkins said. "She was always in the right place on offense and defense."

Fournier was a varsity player for four years for the Raiders.

At shooting guard this season, she averaged in double figures while connecting on 34 percent of her three-point attempts.

Fournier also averaged better than two steals per game and nearly four rebounds.

"I think she played the best she has ever played this season," Perkins said. "She's been a tremendous player to coach."

"Every year she developed more court sense. She had a great senior season."

1997 ALL-OBSERVER
GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM

FIRST TEAM

Alysha Smith, 6-1 Sr., Borgess
Amanda Abraham, 6-1 Sr., Salem
Koren Merchant, 6-0 Sr., Borgess
Amy Roble, 5-8 Sr., Harrison
Melissa Marzoff, 6-7 Sr., Canton

SECOND TEAM

Christina Anderson, 5-6 Sr., Borgess
Andrea Pruett, 6-1 Jr., Salem
Nkechi Okwumabua, 5-9 Sr., Canton
Sarah Pogits, 6-1 Sr., Ladywood
Kellee Fournier, 5-6 Sr., N. Farmington

THIRD TEAM

Samantha McCombe, 5-7 Fr., N. Farm.
Tara Merrill, 5-11 Soph., Franklin
Tiffany Goughnagh, 5-8 Soph., Borgess
Kase Mathews, 5-8 Sr., Redford Union
Mangogry Fletcher, 5-8 Sr., Harrison

FOURTH TEAM

Tonya Crawford, 5-11 Jr., Wayne
Jessie Brannan, 5-9 Jr., Mercy
Kristin Lukasa, 5-7 Sr., Canton
Tiffany Simon, 5-9 Jr., Borgess
Hershen Corbin, 5-9 Jr., Churchill

COACH OF THE YEAR

Bob Blohm, Plymouth Canton

HONORABLE MENTION

Redford Bishop Borgess: Shermaine Drake; Plymouth Canton: Kristin Meyer, Jonell Twissmeyer; Plymouth Salem: Christine Phillips, Bree Pastalanec; Farmington Hills Harrison: Ari Ault, Amy Jenkins, Kristin Koudan; North Farmington Hills: Gretz, Katie Vintello; Livonia Ladywood: Erin Hayden, Jenny Lachapelle, Kelly Jeffery, Cheryl Woloski; Farmington Hills: Mary: Susie Roble, Ashley Schumacher, Kelly Moug, Katie Van Leeuwen; Livonia Stevenson: Carolyn Courtright, Stephanie Dutz, Lindsay Guick; Livonia Churchill: Terri Owens, Steacy Supanich; Wayne Memorial: Ericka Davis, Natalie Garrison, Beth Molitor; Livonia Franklin: Lori Jendrusak, Julie Warner; Westland John Gierman: Rola Amad, Letoya Chandler, Samantha Gurnea; Farmington: Beth Jaker, Jennifer Jasek; Garden City: Sarah Tabet, Masey Bako, Shannon Felter; Redford Union: Katie Thomson, Laura Hillson; Redford St. Agatha: Katie Miller, Chris Woods; Lutheran Westland: Anna Schwacke, Bakah Hoffmeier, Kierra Decker; Livonia Clarenceville: Danielle Sledz, Michelle Berry; Westland Huron Valley Lutheran: Sara Tacis; Plymouth Christian Academy: Liz Pugno, Jenny Steinhilber; Canton Agape Christian: Kim Ther, Margie Henry.

FIRST TEAM

Alysha Smith, 6-1 Sr., Bishop Borgess: The Miss Basketball winner did a little of everything for the Class C state champion Spartans. She averaged 10.8 points, 11.8 rebounds, 4.5 blocks, 4.1 steals and 3.5 assists per game while shooting 52 percent from the floor and 62 percent at the free throw line.

"I think she is the best defensive player, most versatile — and best player in the state," Mann said. "I had the opportunity to compare her firsthand to (First Northern's) Tawana McDonald and (Detroit Dominican's) Raina Goodlow."

Borgess, which finished 27-1 overall, beat Northern in the regular season and Dominican in the regionals.

Rich is about to join the
3-2-1-SOLD! club.

Rich was up in the attic the other day and saw his old bowling gear. He'd like to sell it along with his wife's Vaughn Monroe record collection and a couple of other things, but doesn't want to spend a lot on an ad. Who does?

Our 3-2-1—SOLD! offer is just what you need when you have things to sell for under \$200.

Here's how it works:

1. You get 3 lines to describe your item (remember, you have to be asking less than \$200)
2. You get to run your ad for 2 days (one week)
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Rich did.

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