

1997 ALL-OBSERVER GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM

Hawks' Roble, North's Fournier saluted

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GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM

FIRST TEAM

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

SECOND TEAM

Christina Anderson, 5-6 Sr., Borgess
Andrea Pruitt, 6-2 Jr., Salem
Nkechi Okwumabua, 5-9 Sr., Canton
Sarah Pogits, 6-1 Sr., Ladywood
Kellie Fournier, 6-0 Sr., Farmington

THIRD TEAM

Samantha McComb, 5-7 Fr., N. Farm.
Tera Mornell, 5-11 Soph., Franklin
Tiffany Gruaugh, 5-8 Soph., Salem
Kasie Mathews, 5-8 Jr., Redford Union
Mahogany Fletcher, 5-8 Sr., Harrison

FOURTH TEAM

Tonya Crawford, 5-11 Jr., Wayne
Jessie Brennen, 5-9 Jr., Mercy
Kristin Lukasz, 5-9 Jr., Canton
Tiffany Simon, 5-9 Jr., Borgess
Kersten Cookin, 5-0 Jr., Churchill

COACH OF THE YEAR

Bob Blom, Plymouth Canton

HONORABLE MENTION

Redford Bishop Borgess: Shermanne Drake; Plymouth Canton: Kristin Meyer, Janell Telemeier; Plymouth Salem: Christine Phillips, Bree Pastalaniec; Farmington Hills: Hartie: Art Aut, Amy Jenkins, Kristin Kutzon; North Farmington: Melissa Gratz, Katie Viholic; Livonia Ladywood: Erin Hayden, Jenny Lachapelle, Kelly Jeffrey, Cheryl Wroble; Farmington Hills: Mercy; Susie Roble, Ashley Schumacher, Kelly Moug, Katie Van Leuven; Livonia Stevenson: Carolyn Courtright, Stephanie Dult, Lindsay Gorski; Livonia Churchill: Terri Owens, Stacey Supanich; Wayne Memorial: Ericka Orms, Natalie Garrison, Beth Moller; Livonia Franklin: Lori Jendrusk, Julie Warner; Westland John Glenn: Rose Amad, Latoya Chandler, Samantha Juras; Farmington: Beth Jager, Jamie Jakiela; Garden City: Sarah Talbot, Misty Baki; Shannon Feuer; Redford Union: Katie Thomas, Laura Hillson; Redford Thurston: Kelly Green, Kristie Koester; Redford St. Agatha: Katie Miller, Chris Woods; Lutheran Westland: Anna Scheweck, Beth Hoffmeyer, Kiera Deckle; Livonia Clarenceville: Danielle Sledz, Michelle Berry; Westland Huron Valley Lutheran: Sara Tacik; Plymouth Christian Academy: Liz Pugno, Jenny Sutherland; Canton Agape Christian: Kim Ther, Marlie Henry.

BY C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

Selecting the heat 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 fared the best did the best, the players of any single player. Depth of talent was the key element in successful seasons at Borgess, Plymouth Canton, 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 Blom.

It shouldn't be any real surprise, considering what Blom'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 19-3 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 lacked size and was not a great offensive team, but Blom's motion offense — which stressed patience — wore opponents down and put Canton in control.

Which is why he was chosen.

FIRST TEAM

Alysha Smith, 6-1 Sr., 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 60 percent from 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 (Flint Northern's) Tawanda McDonald and (Detroit Cass Tech's) Bernice Givens."

Borgess, which finished 27-3 overall, beat Northern in the regular season and Dominican in the regionals.

Amanda Abraham, 6-1 Sr., Plymouth Salem: Asking what Abraham did for Plymouth 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 Rocks, Abraham has been their point-forward the past two years, shooting 50 percent from the floor and handling 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 (2.0) and blocks (1.0). Indeed, she was a double-figure scorer throughout her four-year career.

"She's a player who's got a complete game," said Salem coach Fred Thoman. "She can handle the ball, she's a great foul shooter, she's a great defender, she's got great toughness, 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 CAAC and Division I schools. She has been paraded down to Central Michigan, Bowling Green, Ohio University and Holy Cross.

Karen Merchant, 6-foot Sr., Bishop Borgess: Merchant dropped the tag of enigma and became a star much too late in her career. She averaged 15.0 points, 7.8 rebounds, 1.5 assists, 2.1 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 shoot the ball from midrange, though through the season, that'll have to wait for AAU season.

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

Amy Roble, 5-8 Sr., Farmington Hills: Simply put, Roble was Miss Everything for the Hawks this season.

She was the most athletically-gifted kid in the state and one of the most offensively explosive," Mann said. "She improved defensively quite a bit this year."

"She did a great job getting open," said Blom. "She's just a great athlete. Her ability to get open 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 her," said (Marzof) "Marzof led our team in defensive steals."

Besides playing great offense, Roble was averaging three steals per game and is the school's career leader in that.

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

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

"She's a model of consistency," he commented.

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In five state tournaments games, Pogits stepped up her game, averaging 17 points, seven rebounds, while shooting 56 percent from the field and 87 percent from the line. Her best outing was against the Rockford Rocks, with 18 points (on 11 of 15 shooting), eight rebounds, five blocks, five assists and two steals.

The Chiefs' career leader in assists and steals, she also has more starts than anyone with 91. Canton was 73-20 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 Blom. "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."

Marzof has already signed to play at NCAIA 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 exceptional quick hands. She's a good passer and shot the ball great toward the end of the year."

Andrea Pruitt, 6-1 Jr., Plymouth

Balman: What Pruitt accomplished as a junior was, simply put, impressive.

"She's going to be a very impressive senior season."

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

"She's a great inside player, and we spent a lot of time playing facing the basket," said Thoman. "So her perimeter game improved, and that made her a more complete player."

"She's already got a really nice inside game," he said, referring to the basket game is terms of getting better.

Thoman also called Pruitt, who was second on the team in scoring (11.2 points) and rebounding (6.6), "a great defender, and a good rebounder. I think she's going to be a great player."

"Nkechi Okwumabua led an over-achieving Canton team in both scoring (10.6 points) and rebounding (7.0)."

What made Okwumabua 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 Blom. "She's just a great athlete. Her ability to get open and her ability to get out in the open court really put pressure on opposing defenses."

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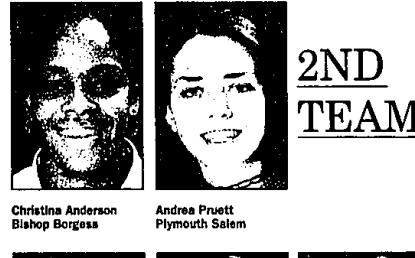


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2ND TEAM



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Nkechi Okwumabua
Plymouth Canton
Sarah Pogits
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Kellie 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.

"Kellie Fournier, 6-0 Sr., North Farmington: The Raiders were one of the area's most improved teams this year. Fournier's 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 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 per game.

"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."

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?

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2. You get to run your ad for 2 days (one week)
3. You get 1 low price—just \$19.26. That's only \$3.21 per line!

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