Western Lakes re-alignment not easy issue to resolve



Coaches were given an oppor-tunity Tuesday night at Farm-ington High to weigh in their thoughts and opinions on the expanding West-ern Lakes Activ-ities Associa-

ities Associa-

EMOND titles Association. The WLAA will grow from 12 to 15 schools in the fall of 2002 when new schools Plymouth High and Walled Lake Northern open their doors. Also in the fold is Wayne Memorial, a defector from the Michigan Mega Conference.

from the Michigan Mega Conter-ence.

Mega leagues became a fad in the early 1990s as principals and athletic directors embraced the idea to putting together 20 or more schools and dividing them up equitably according to thely past record of wins and losses.

Now the WLAA is grappling how to divide up their pie.

There seems to be two schools of thought.

of thought.
One idea, endorsed by at least nine coaches in football, would like to keep the Lakes and West-rendivisions intact. The two new schools would join one side, while Wayne would become a member of the other. That would mean one division of eight, the other of seven.
Another popular plan again.

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Another popular plan, especially among the smaller schools in the league, is to divide the 15 schools into three divisions of five.

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For example, is to divide the 15 schools into three divisions of for transportation needs, league crossovers and playoff formats, along with non-league scheduling, are other issues that must be addressed in the upcoming months.

Whatever the plan, A.D.'s and principals of the WLAA hope hey don't repeat the mistakes of the Oakland Activities Association and the Michigan Mega.

Otherwise, the howling, which has already begun by many coaches, will dub the future WLAA — What a Lousy Athletic Arrangement.

Myself L have concerns with

Arrangement.
Myself, I have concerns with
the three divisions of five, which
I'd like to call the Three Stooges
idea.

What's going to happen is that you're have one strong division (Mo), one medicare division (Larry) and one weak division (Curly).

God forbid if another division is created and Shemp enters the mix.

But seriously, enrollment should definitely play a factor in determining how far up or how far down a school can go.
People point to Farmington Harrison's football program, traditionally the best in the legue, but the lowest school in enrollment.

but the lowest school in enrollment.

As it stacks up now, based on past performance standards, Harrison's football team would be grouped in the top division with schools such as Westland John Glenn, Livonia Stevenson, Walled Lake Western and either Walled Lake Western and either Walled Lake Central or Plymouth Canton.

Yes, it's not ideal for a school of barely 1,000 to compete against a school of 2,400. The MHSAA breaks its tournament divisions down strictly by enrollment, not by strength of programs.

Re-classifying this league will Re-classifying this league will not be easy. With teams jumping around in divisions from sport to sport, most people who follow this league will have trouble identifying where they belong. Heck, we've got several varsity coaches in the area right now who don't have a clue right which division they're in. Stay tuned.

Stay tuned.

Bird is THE WORD: Two months ago, schoolcraft College guard Detrick Bird was considered a good mid-mejor recruiting prospect.

But after the 6-fool-4 sharpshooter's performance in the National Junior College Athletic Association Division I men's basketball tournament in Hutchin-aon, Ken., Bird has become a not commodity.

Bird, an Ypsillenti High product via transfer from Central Michigan University, had 25 points and 33 rebounds in a 94-86 overtime loss to eventual NICAA champion Wabsath Valley (III). He had 18 points in an opening round win over hosterske Western and hit some clutch shots down the stretch en route to 22 points in a 96-93 OT loss to Okalossa (Fia.).

Before the tournament had ended,

soon-to-be Texas Tech assistant coach Pat Knight (son of the General Robert Montgomery) was asking Schoolcraft coach Carlos Briggs If Bird could make a visit to Lubbock. Sunday, UNLV also called Tuesday morning and want to join in on the Bird sweepstakes.

And with Michigan State's Zech Ran-

The humble and soft-spoken Bird, you see, has a lot going for him,

As Briggs said, "Derrick may be a
better person than he is a player." And

Since Hutchinson, Bird has been besieged by such schools as Creighton, Indiana State, Drake, Toledo, Oklahoma, Auburn and TCU.

a 3.5 GPA doesn't hurt either.

Bird mede official recruiting trips to Auburn and TCU last week, and repre sentatives from Northwestern, Toledo and Creighton made home visits last

dolph and Jason Richardson jumping to the NBA, Bird's fancy has now caught the eye of the Spartan coaching staff, who are also trying to nail down a commilment from Taliahassee (Fla.) JC

point- guard Marcus Hatten What seemed to be an easy decision for Bird has become much more complicated. But with the second signing period starting up again this week, Bird will

most likely make a decision by April 23. BASEBALL ORAPEVINE: I haven't heard anything officially, but I was told three area minor leaguers were released

recently during spring training.
Former Westland John Glonn huller
Azion Scheffer, who spont a couple of
weeks in 1999 with the Sestite
Mariners, got his well-king papers from
the Minnesott Twins.
Scheffer, who became a free agent,
pitched in only one late spring training
game and it was against the Yankees
where he had kittle luck getting out Tino
Martinez, Bernie Williams and Jorge
Possda.

Another Glenn product, outfielder Derek Besco, who played at Michigan and was with the Tigers' Class A, AA and AAA clubs tast year, was also

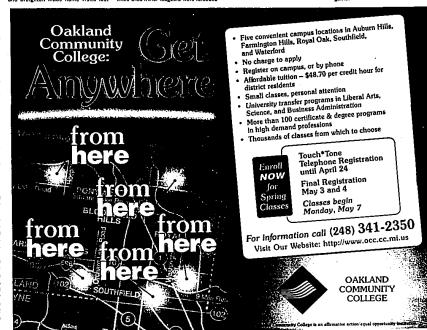
The third casualty is former Livenia Churchill and Eastern Michigan Universi-ty standout Mark Rutherford, who pitched in Double-A last year in the

Rutherford was coming off arm surgery in 2000.

That leaves Plymouth Salem's 1000.

That leaves Plymouth Salem's 1000 payer, who made the cut as a sal-up men for the San Diago Padres, and White Sox minor league first baseman Casey Regorabl (Rediord Catholic Central) as area survivors. Meanwhile, Seet leith ander flyan Anderson (Westland) will sit out the year after undergoing surgery for a torn laburm.

Nöbody sald baseball was an easy game.



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