

# Churchill's Montagano (19-6) No. 1 Cage Coach

By TOM DONOGHUE  
Sports Editor

The "Year of the Churchill Charger" is building up momentum and picking up more honors along the way.

Churchill's football crew swept to a perfect 9-0 season and Ken Kaseiner was selected as Observerland's co-coach of the year on the gridiron scene.

Pat Montagano and his Churchill cagers knew they had a rough road ahead to complement the football season.

But the Churchill basketball squad came through with a spirited drive, patted the football season on the back and went on to higher honors. For this showing, Observer Newspapers have selected Coach Pat Montagano as basketball coach-of-the-year.

Even if he did catch German measles after his regional championship loss to Detroit, Murray-Wright, Montagano bowed out a true champion with his Chargers.

This '72-'73 season was only the fifth for Churchill and only the third with a senior class.

Montagano started off at Churchill in the '68-'69 season with an all-sophomore squad and compiled a 4-15 record against varsity teams.

Next came the '69-'70 season with his junior squad and a 6-13 season.

The '70-'71 stint featured Churchill's first senior class and the Charger cagers responded with a 9-9 mark. Last season they racked up a 12-6 record and won their first league title in the Western Six.

This season started Dec. 2 with a 74-72 victory over Thurston High and it ended with a regional title loss to Murray-Wright March 16.

But in between those two dates, 104 days, Churchill made a name for itself in area basketball and the man pushing and inspiring his Chargers was Montagano.

"We started off a simple ball club and we finished



PAT MONTAGANO - Cage Coach-Of-The-Year

one," said Montagano whose Chargers reeled off a 19-6 season and finished No. 1 in Observerland. "We didn't change from week to week. We just worked together as a team and jelled at the right time."

Churchill dropped its third game of the season to Walled Lake Western, 61-57, in its Western Six opener and fell to Plymouth, 61-58, after crushing Northville, 73-41.

Then came wins over Thurston, Franklin and Southfield before losing to Walled Lake Central, 64-54.

A 52-51 victory over Waterford Mott, 64-63 edging of Bentley and 57-50 crush over Harrison pushed the Chargers to 9-3 before losing to Wayne, 75-72.

Churchill then bested WL Western, Garden City East, Northville, Walled Lake Central and Ann Arbor Huron before falling to Mott to stand 14-5.

The Chargers successfully defended their first cage crown with a regular season finale victory over Harrison, 46-45, to wind up a 19-6 season.

regular season performance.

"My season prediction for this squad was 15-5," chuckled Montagano. "And somehow or another it all happened."

Then followed a district championship with victories over Bentley, Redford Union and Plymouth and then a regional win over WL Central before closing the season against Murray-Wright, 53-47.

Thus ended an overall 19-6 season.

"We set our goals mentally and the kids stayed with my predictions," said the cage coach-of-the-year.

Montagano graduated from Elkhart High School in Indiana as a 10-letterman in '56, lettering three times in both football and basketball and four times in track.

Pat was Indiana all-state pole vaulter his senior year as well as all-state punter.

Montagano was destined to make a name for himself at the University of Michigan but a skull fracture his sophomore year ended his collegiate hopes for the Maize and Blue.

He graduated from U-M in '56 and was set to enter the Air Force but there existed no need for small fighter bomber navigators at the time and Montagano decided to work within his family.

In '58, Pat decided to go a different route, married, and now his top fans are his wife Diane and her mother, Mildred Lakin.

The years '60 through '65 saw Montagano in the

## Mutch, Thornbladh Rated High

# Spring Drills Could Solve U-M?????s

W.W. EDGAR

The University of Michigan football squad starts its drive toward another Big Ten title and a trip to the Rose Bowl Monday afternoon. Much of the hope for success is pinned on two Observerland athletes - Bob Thornbladh and Craig Mutch - who played prominent roles a year ago. They're back on the job bigger and Coach Bo Schembechler hopes, better than last fall.

"They're two fellows we don't have to worry about," the Wolverine mentor commented as he went over the list of candidates who will report and start filling the holes left vacant by the loss of 17 lettermen.

Thornbladh, the former Plymouth High School star, won the starting assignment at fullback last fall, but an unfortunate fumble in the opening game, forced him back to the role as an understudy to Ed Shuttleworth.

This is the role he's expected to play again next fall and according to Schembechler he'll be a real asset.

"We have the two best fullbacks in the Big Ten," he said, "and Bob is the type of fellow who will be ready -- and eager -- anytime Shuttleworth falters."

Mutch, was given another year of eligibility because of the "red shirt" rule, and the former Thurston High star is due for a major role.

Rated one of the best defensive backs in the Big Ten, Schembechler hasn't decided just where Craig will wind up by the time of the opening game.

Last year he served well as the middle line backer and easily could have that job back again.

However, because of a wealth of talent available, he may be moved to either outside position. Either Steve Strisko, a six foot junior weighing 235 pounds, or Jim O'Neal could fit into the middle spot. This would free Mutch for the outside positions.

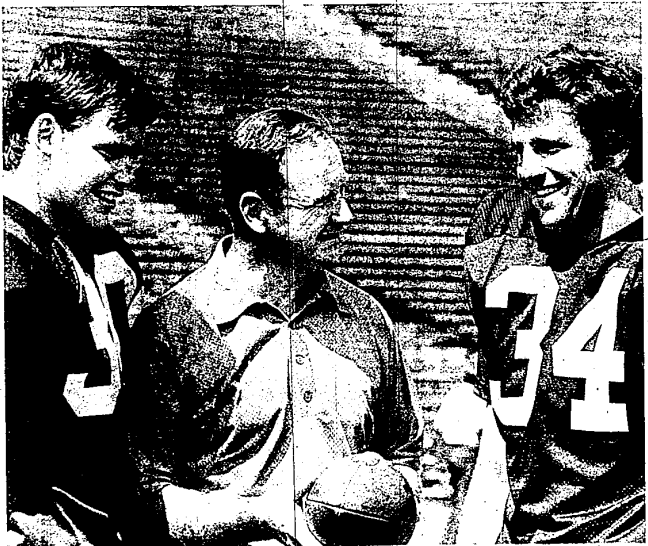
With last year's backfield returning intact and the quarterback problem solved with Dennis Franklin, the big problems are in the offensive line.

Replacements will have to be found for Bill Hart, at center, at right guard where Tim Coyle fit in nobly last fall, and at the strong tackle position where Paul Seymour held forth.

Senior Curtis Tucker is considered the favorite for the strong tackle job and Junior Denis Franks is expected to land the important center position.

"We've got some questions which must be answered," Schembechler said, "and we expect to get them solved in spring practice."

He has listed 20 practice sessions prior to the annual spring game in Michigan Stadium on April 21.



MICHIGAN'S HOPES -- The success of the '73 University of Michigan football squad will rely heavily on these two Observerland gridiron standouts. Bob Thornbladh (left) from Plymouth High and Craig Mutch (right) of Thurston High should be playing a key role in Coach Bo Schembechler's (center) plans. (Observer photo)



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## Observer's Top 10

FINAL STANDINGS

	W	L	AVG.	PA
1-LATHRUP	20	2	69	58
2-JOHN GLENN	18	4	66	58
3-CHURCHILL	19	6	60	56
4-REDFORD UNION	17	4	72	64
5-PLYMOUTH	18	8	69	60
6-FRANKLIN	15	9	63	61
7-HARRISON	14	8	59	52
8-STEVENSON	12	9	58	57
9-N.FARMINGTON	11	10	60	58
10-GC WEST	11	10	61	62

(Overall "Pick" Record, 140-61)

## Franklin Hosting Quarter-Finals

Area basketball fans will have one of Thursday's state Class A quarter-final battles in their own backyard. The game between Ann Arbor Pioneer and Detroit Southwestern will be played at 7:30 p.m. at Livonia Franklin High School. Tickets are \$1.25 and may be obtained at Franklin. Capacity of the gym is about 2,500 and the competing schools have ordered 1,500 tickets.

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