

Thurston Alone-Or With Company As Cage Champ?

One champ?
Two champs?
Three champs?
Friday night will provide the answer in the Northwest Suburban League.

ban League.

As matters now stand, Thurston is in the driver's seat with an 8-1 record and assured no less than a share of the flag.

North Farmington and Oak Park are right behind, each with a 7-2 mark.
In Friday's season's finale, it'll be Thurston vs. Oak Park

and North Farmington vs. Groves.
The winners are these:
1--A Thurston victory assures the Township's championship outright.

2--Should Oak Park and North Farmington both win, there'd be a three-way tie for the flag.
3--Should Oak Park and North Farmington both lose, the honors would be split between Thurston and Oak Park.
Thurston had to resort to a final period uprising to beat Groves, 65-54, Friday.

It was the same for Oak Park against Franklin, as the Parkers outscored Franklin, 18-8, in the final eight minutes to squeeze out a 66-64 triumph.
North Farmington had the easiest time of the three front-runners, posting a 75-56 run-away over Glenn.

Here's the story of the three games:

THURSTON - GROVES
The teams played on virtually even terms for three periods. After one quarter it was 15-12 for Groves. Thurston took a 30-29 lead at halftime and held a 48-46 advantage at the three-quarter mark.

In the final stanza, "things just began to work the right way for us," according to Thurston Coach Mike Pasternak.

In particular, it was Thurston's zone defense that virtually stopped Groves cold. The Birmingham team was held to eight points in the last period. Urban Rice paced the final stanza: uprisings by Thurston. He notched eight points to finish the evening with 17.

Individual honors for the winners went to Dale Joyce with 18 points. Tim Forbes also closed in double figures, scoring 12 points.
Steve Manz and Mins Brown scored 17 and 16 points, respectively, for the Groves team.

The victory upped Thurston's overall season's mark to 12-5. OAK PARK - FRANKLIN
Here was a game that came within a whisker of producing, probably the biggest upset of the season in the league.

Franklin had only won once in 14 games before taking the floor against the strong quintet from Oak Park.
Yet, Franklin took an 18-16 lead into the first period, upped the margin to four at halftime and to eight going into the last quarter.

But with victory staring the Franklin players in the face, they suddenly ran into problems trying to cope with a pressing defense Oak Park threw up in the closing stages.

This, combined with some ill success when it counted at the foul line, ruined the Franklin bid for a stunning victory that would have knocked Oak Park out of the playoffs.
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DAN DOYLE (42), of Bentley High, knocks Plymouth's Greg Corrigan (head showing) to the floor in a mad scramble for a loose ball. The Referee was on top of the play and is indicating a personal foul on Doyle.

Bentley Crushes Rocks, Nears Perfect Record

A perfect Suburban Six League season for Bentley High in basketball? It could be.

By George Maskin
observing sports

It's that time of the year again which is known as "The March Madness" in Michigan.
Well, to be exact, March doesn't arrive until Friday and the "Madness" doesn't start until Monday.

The "Madness" isn't any movie, or TV flicker, or re-run.

It's the annual Michigan State High School basketball tournament which turns the folks from the Ohio-Indiana border up to the farthest reaches of the Upper Peninsula simply daffy for three straight weeks.

In particular, if you happen to be cheering for one of the winning teams.

Big schools, as well as smaller ones, are gripped by the excitement of the tournament. In many communities, business stops when it comes time for the preps to take to the court.

There have been instances over the years when about all that's left in a small town is one policeman, one fireman and maybe a nurse to watch over the few patients unable to leave the hospital.

THE BEAUTY OF the state tournament is that every worthy team in the state gets the same shot at the golden honors — one of the four state championships at stake.

It's not like the NCAA meet where only 16 designated conference champs, plus a few powerful independent squads like No. 1 ranked Houston, are restricted to the competition.

The Michigan tourney is like a second season for the 700 state prep teams.

What happened between the opening of the regular season in late November and the finish on the first weekend of March means nothing — comes the state tourney.

There is no more consideration given to the team which might have a 19-0 record than the one that winds up with 0-18.

Time was that in the Upper Peninsula, they did seed the teams in the district meets to make sure that the two best weren't in the same half of the bracket.

But it's never been that way below the Straits. The only rule that prevails is that a host team can't draw a bye in the districts.

Otherwise, you dig into a hat or box ... and pull slips to determine who plays whom.

Coaches have been known to grumble over this setup. So have newspapermen.

We have suggested — to no avail — that the state wait until late in the season before assigning teams to their district meets.

In this way, regular-season performances could be taken into consideration and three rated teams might not wind up in the same district, while another district draws no ranked contenders.

But the schools obviously don't want it that way ... and the majority naturally must rule.

Just how the tourney affects the state is proved by the record sellouts every year at the finals in East Lansing.

Minus the regular daily newspapers hereabouts, the word probably eluded you that the 1968 windup at Michigan State has followed precedent. No more tickets remain for any of the three sessions — the Class B in the morning, the Class C-D in the afternoon and the Class A at night.

And, mind you, it already has been announced that there will be statewide television of this year's finals!

The response to the tournament is a tribute to the way the kids play basketball in the state of Michigan.

It gets better every year.

This is obvious by scanning the rosters at Michigan and Michigan State, which more and more are turning to homegrown talent to develop their teams.

It's also to be noted that Michigan boys are starting elsewhere in the Big Ten and in the country.

All Bentley has to do is to win Friday night. That would make the Bentley record read 10-0 in the loop.

The Livonians must guard against a letdown, however, since they have reigned as the undisputed champs now for three weeks in turning the race into a one-sided affair.

Bentley also will be shooting for an overall season's mark of 17-2 and to be in a winning frame of mind when the district tournament opens next week at Franklin.

Loop victory No. 9 for Bentley came at the hands of Plymouth, 56-38, in one of the lowest scoring games the state prep ranks have seen this season.

THE SCORE read 9-9 after one quarter, which has to be some kind of a record.

It was 20-18 for Bentley at halftime ... probably another mark.

Then Bentley went to work, outscored Plymouth 18-5 in the third period and the rest was pretty easy.

It was Senior Night at Bentley and Coach George Fefles started some of his 12th graders who have spent a fair amount of time on the bench this season.

This no doubt explains the low-scoring by Bentley before the intermission.

Ken Bollin and Walt Blazucha each tossed in six points in the third period when Bentley made its big move while Plymouth was held to only two baskets and two free throws. In the second half, Bentley outscored Plymouth, 36-20.

Bollin wound up with 12 points, well under his season's average of 20. Dan Doyle had eight and Jim Powers six for the winners.

Mike Kubik scored 12 and Greg Corrigan eight for Plymouth, which never could get its offensive clicking against the mighty giants of Bentley.

Prep Sports Schedule

BASKETBALL
FRIDAY
Kettering at Farmington
Groves at North Farmington
Pontiac Northern at Stevenson
Trenton at Plymouth
Redford Union at Alden Park
Franklin at Glen
Oak Park at Thurston
Livonia at Belleville
NEXT WEEK
Opening of state district tournaments.

WRESTLING
FRIDAY-SATURDAY
Regionals at John Glenn
SWIMMING
TUESDAY
Clareville at Stevenson
Plymouth at Trenton
Alden Park at Redford Union
Belleville at Bentley
FRIDAY
Northwest Suburban League meet.
GYMNASTICS
WEDNESDAY
Clareville at North Farmington

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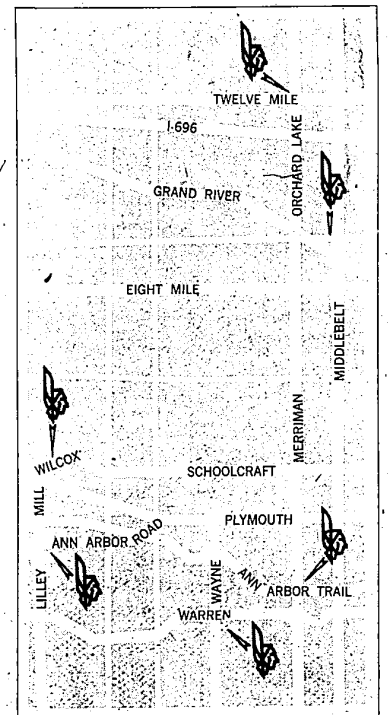
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