

By George Maskin



observing sports

It's Plymouth, R. Union And Bentley

3-Team Battle Shapes Up For Track Flag

Basketball wasn't much of a sport at the University of Michigan seven or eight years ago. The Wolverines seldom were a threat in the Big Ten race. Most times when they played in old Yost Fieldhouse, seats were plentiful.

Only a small percentage of the student body—obviously with nothing better to do or, perhaps, slightly short of cash to go elsewhere—would show up to watch Michigan engage in basketball action.

Then there arrived on campus a smiling, young man from Detroit. His name: William Buntin, Jr. The following year, from the other direction, came one Cazzie Russell from Chicago.

In short order Buntin and Russell combined, under Coach Dave Strack to make Michigan a mighty name in college basketball.

The Wolverines surged to Big Ten titles... to district NCAA honors... to the finals of the NCAA championships.

The two biggest reasons were Buntin and Russell. Each was a three-time All Big Ten star. Russell made All American as a junior and senior. Buntin, too, gained All American recognition.

BUNTIN AND RUSSELL re-wrote Michigan records in scoring and rebounding.

They, of course, didn't do it alone. They had with them Oliver Darden, John Cantrell, George Pomy and Larry Tregoning, among others.

And, Strack, too.

When they finished their collegiate careers, Buntin and Russell were No. 1 picks for the professional ranks.

The Detroit Pistons took Buntin and wanted Russell. But they lost a flip of a coin and had to settle for Dave Bing instead of Russell.

Buntin never could make it with the Pistons. He checked in overweight and stayed that way. The Russell story saw him start slowly with the New York Knicks. But last season he became a Knick star as Buntin completely passed out of the pro cage scene.

Buntin didn't quit playing basketball. And the other evening, he was stricken with a fatal heart attack while engaging in a practice cage session at Cathedral Central High in Detroit.

His best pal, Cazzie, came to pay his last respects. So did the other members of those great Michigan teams—Darden, Pomy, Tregoning and their coach.

CAZZIE NEVER BEFORE was more shaken.

"Bill was still trying to show right up to the end that basketball was his game," Cazzie was saying.

"He always had PRIDE... great pride."

The hearse pulled away from the church on Detroit's east side.

Cazzie and his former coach stepped into a waiting car to help escort their pal on his last journey.

Fittingly, Coach Strack has announced that Buntin's old friends at the university have set up a special memorial scholarship fund for Buntin's three youngsters, who range from 10 years to 16 months.

Somewhere, too, in the new field house that now accommodates Michigan's basketball team there'll probably be a special something set aside one of these days to salute not only Buntin, but Russell as well.

Buntin did more than any others to "wake up" basketball at the University of Michigan.

They made the entire state more basketball conscious. High schools benefited. So did the colleges. And we might add the Pistons prospered because of the Russell-Buntin dynasty.

There was one thing about Buntin. He never quit smiling.

WHILE THE LIVING WORLD closed on Buntin, new horizons opened for another former University of Michigan star.

Named coach of the San Francisco Warriors of the National Basketball Association.

Lee, like Buntin, first made his name in the Detroit area. Lee was all-state at Highland Park High, while Buntin went to Northern.

Lee also had a shot with the Pistons, but wasn't able to cut the mustard with the team.

When he was traded to San Francisco, he smiled.

"It was the greatest thing that ever happened to me," he told us in New York last week. "I figured that getting away from home would do me a lot of good."

It obviously has.

A three-team battle. That's the way matters shape up Wednesday in the Suburban Six Leagues annual track championships at Belleville.

Based on dual meet action, Plymouth shapes up as the favorite. The Rocks won all five of their loop encounters and posted an overall 7-0 mark.

Redford Union wound up 4-1 in the league and 9-1 overall. Then came Bentley with a 3-2 conference record and seven wins in 10 starts overall.

"It's going to be one of the best meets we've ever had," said Coach Keith Baughman of Plymouth.

"I hate to try and predict who'll win. The three top teams really are very balanced."

Baughman noted that Plymouth beat Redford Union in a

mouth of unbeaten, but the RU team was suffering from some injuries. Against Bentley the Rocks barely managed a two-point triumph.

THERE'LL BE some thrilling individual competition when the field events start at 4 p.m. and the running events take over at 6:30.

The hurdles will match John Morrison (RU), Dave Derr (Plymouth) and Fred Howell (Bentley). Tom Spiller (Bentley), Steve Montgomery and Mike Kubik (Plymouth) and Dennis Field (RU) will combat in the sprints.

Plymouth's Bruce Cavender will put on an unbeaten record on the line in the 880 as will RU's Bob Junk in the two mile.

A dandy race figures in the 440-yard with Joe Chemello (Bentley), George Corombos (RU) and Jerry Latham (Plymouth) locking strides.

Plymouth's Tom Elias heads the shot putters while Bruce Bauman (Plymouth) and John Plimley (Bentley) top the pole vaulters.

Redford Union and Bentley figure to have an edge in the relays although RU's ace sprinter, Field, has been on the injured list and out of action for two weeks.

ALL THREE teams swamped their rivals in final league dual meets Tuesday.

Plymouth ran up one of its most one-sided scores in crushing Belleville, 94-24, as Dick Coop set a variety record of 10:24 in winning the two mile.

Montgomery won both dashes to lead the Rocks.

Bentley rolled over Allen Park, 72-46, with Howell taking both hurdles and Spiller the two dashes.

Morrison continued his brilliant running in the hurdles as Redford Union swamped Triniton, 83-31, despite the fact the Townshippers were using a patched-up lineup caused by injuries.

BENTLEY 72, ALLEN PARK 46 Bentley winners:

Shot put: Tom Garrett. Distance—47 feet, 11 inches.

Long Jump: Joe Chemello. Distance—19 feet, one inch.

Two Mile: Steve Sollenberger.

880-yard relay: Bentley (Tom Spiller, Chemello, Fred Howell, Bill Warren). Time—1:30.1.

High Hurdles: Howell. Time—15.7 seconds.

440-yard: Dan Koch. Time—54.2 seconds.

100-yard: Spiller. Time—10.6 seconds.

Low Hurdles: Howell. Time—20.8 seconds.

Pole Vault: John Schramm. Height—10 feet, 6 inches.

220-yard: Spiller. Time—23.6 seconds.

Mile relay: Bentley (Koch, Mark Fredericks, Craig Auten, Warren). Time—3:41.4.

PLYMOUTH 94, BELLEVILLE 24 Plymouth winners:

Pole Vault: Bruce Bauman. Height—12 feet.

Shot Put: Tom Elias. Distance—50 feet, 1 1/2 inches.

Two Mile: Dick Coop. Time—10:24 (school record).

880-yard Relay: Plymouth (Dave Martin, Bill Mason, Steve Montgomery, Mike Kubik). Time—1:34.3.

Mile: Ed McClendon. Time—4:46.

High Hurdles: Dave Derr. Time—15.5 seconds.

880-yard: Bruce Cavender. Time—1:59.8.

440-yard: Jerry Latham. Time—52.4 seconds.

100-yard: Steve Montgomery. Time 11 seconds.

Low Hurdles: Martin. Time—21.2 seconds.

220-yard: Montgomery. Time—23.2 seconds.

Mile relay: Plymouth (Harry Wagenschutz, John Norman, Cavender, Mark Whittaker). Time—3:34.

REDFORD UNION 86, TRINITON 31 RU winners:

Long Jump: Roger Glover. Distance—18 feet, 9 inches.

Pole Vault: John Young. Height—10 feet.

High Jump: Dan McAlain. Height—5 feet, 6 inches.

Shot Put: Jim Walker. Distance—46 feet.

Two Mile: Bob Junk. Time—10:23.

880-yard: Jim Lagana. Time—2:02.

440-yard: George Corombos. Time—54 seconds.

High Hurdles: John Morrison. Time—15.3 seconds.

100-yard: Grant Derdarian. Time—11 seconds.

Mile relay: Redford Union (Bill Miazas, Lagana, Jim Childress, Corombos). Time—3:35.

Tigers Stay In AL Flag Race By Winning One-Run Contests

Who says there's no truth to that old axiom: "As long as there's life, there's hope."

But Tigers left the bill this season, which explains their roaring start and why they have been in first place in the American League most of the spring.

Statistics showed that going into their weekend series with Washington (there'll be a doubleheader Sunday to wrap it up), the Tigers have won seven games by one run.

Most important, all seven of the one-run conquest came in their last turn at bat.

Six different players have figured in producing the hair-raising finishes: Gates Brown, Bill Freehan, Willie Horton (twice), Jim Northrup and Tom Matchick.

THERE ALSO has to be at least one other strong reason why the Tigers have been winning—Horton.

Back in the physical plank after missing a great deal of last season with a heel ailment, Horton is swinging a potent bat.

He slugged two homers Wednesday to account for three runs to help Earl Wilson blank the Baltimore Orioles, 4-0.

The other run in the game came as a homer by Ray Oyler, who isn't supposed to produce such blows.

Wilson allowed four hits in squaring his record at 4-4. But the big story was Horton.

He now has eight homers for the season and it marked the second time this season he has socked two circuits in a single game.

The loss was the seventh in a row for the Birds, but they cracked the streak and also Denny McLain's winning way the next night when they outslugged the Tigers, 10-4.

THE GAME was a departure from the usual this season. It was one of the rare affairs in which two teams broke loose in mighty fashion.

McLain, who had won five in a row this year without a loss and went into the game with a 14-3 earned run average, couldn't get untracked.

Boog Powell slugged a three-run homer in the first inning and the Birds never trailed. McLain and most of the 20,000 fans thought that Powell had struck out on the pitch preceding his blast far into the upper deck in right.

It appeared that Powell had swung at what would have been the third strike. The ump said no and Powell followed with his sock.

Eliot Hendricks, a rookie catcher, chased McLain in the

Sports Shorts

MARIELE GOITSCHER of France, holder of the Olympic gold medal, has announced her retirement from competitive skiing.

MICHIGAN STATE's baseball team is headed for a record for victories in one season. When the Spartans beat Notre Dame, 6-2, it marked their 22nd of the season — six shy of the team's all-time mark.

FOUR MICHIGANERS were named on the 1968 All American basketball team. They were Howard Cadek and Jack Patton of Detroit, Jean Shields of Grand Rapids and Ted Hanafoord of Warren.

second with another homer, but the Birds also found the long range against his successors as Dave Johnson tagged one with none out and Curt Mottome connected with two aboard in the

eleventh to put the game out of reach after the Tigers closed within one run of a tie.

Mickey Stanley pitched a two-run homer and Norm Cash hit his first of the season. Dick

McAuliffe had a couple triples, but that didn't help the Tigers who had beaten the Orioles in 22 out of 27 games dating back to Aug. 19, 1966.

After winding up with Wash-

ington Sunday, the Tigers head for a long trip that will take them to Minnesota, Oakland and Anaheim before returning home on May 31 against the New York Yanks.

Three pitchers shared honors as Our Lady of Sorrows blanked Country Day School, 2-0, in a non-league game.

Greg Main worked the first two innings and allowed the only Country Day hit. Mike Hart worked the middle three frames and Frank Barber finished up.

Dan McGrath singled in the first inning for Sorrows. He was forced by Dennis Perry who eventually came around on a fielder's choice and two errors.

Perry also scored the other Sorrows run in the third. After being hit by a pitch he stole second and third and scored on a balk.



JOHN MANN, the area's premier high jumper from North Farmington, discards one shoe while jumping in the rain to win his favorite event at the annual Schafer Relays.

Teams Lift Lid On Observer Baseball Tourney

This will be kickoff week in the fifth annual Les Anders Memorial Invitational High School baseball tournament.

Fourteen teams will contest in the single-elimination action which will take place at Henry Ford Field on Farmington Road in Livonia under the auspices of the Livonia Recreation Department, the Observer Newspapers and the Livonia Optimist Clubs.

Bentley High will be the defending champion but faces strong opposition from teams like Garden City West, Thurston, John Glenn, Stevenson and Garden City East.

Two games are slated for next Friday night, followed by two on Saturday and two on Sunday.

The winners will advance to the quarterfinals on May 30. Semifinals are listed for May 31 and the championship game for June 1.

Here's the opening round of action:

Friday -- Thurston vs. Glenn, 6 p.m.; Garden City East vs. Franklin, 8:30 p.m.

Saturday -- Redford Union vs. Northville, 6 p.m.; Plymouth vs. Stevenson, 8:30 p.m.

Sunday -- Our Lady of Sorrows vs. Garden City West, 6 p.m.; Wayne Memorial vs. St. Agatha, 8:30 p.m.

Clarencville and Bentley drew the first-round byes.

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