

District pairings offer key match-ups

By C.J. RISAK

It's called the "second season" — and it starts tonight.

"It" refers to the girls' basketball state district tournament. Farmington, Our Lady of Mercy and West Bloomfield will play in district openings tonight, while North Farmington and Farmington Harrison have each drawn first-round byes and won't see action until Wednesday.

The five teams will participate in two districts. Farmington hosts one, with North, Livonia, Bentley, Walled Lake Western, Northville and Livonia Stevenson competing.

Southfield High School will be the site where Mercy, West Bloomfield and Harrison will play. Also in the district

is host team Southfield, Bloomfield Hills, Andover and Detroit Henry Ford. The pairings in both districts should make for some interesting confrontations. Here's a preview of the upcoming competition in the opening rounds of the state tournament.

SOUTHFIELD DISTRICT

It's not hard to pick the favorites in this district.

The Observer & Eccentric's two top teams in its area cage poll throughout the season has been West Bloomfield and Mercy. The Lakers sport an 18-1 season record, while Mercy is 14-3.

Neither should lose its opening round games. In fact, since both are in opposite brackets, neither should be challenged until the district finals.

West Bloomfield faces Andover Monday night, a team the Lakers have beaten twice already this year during the Greater Oakland Athletic League season.

But Andover is more than capable of an upset. The Barons have been bothered by injuries throughout the season, the worst being to starter Peggy Bortfield. The senior forward has been in and out of the lineup all year.

Andover's major scoring threat is Lauren Marakas, who has led the Barons in the point column most of the season.

Mercy is coming off a loss in the Catholic League semifinal playoffs. The Marlins used to dominate both the Catholic League and the early rounds of the state tournament, waltzing through the districts and regionals into the state semifinals before meeting any competition.

But it won't be that easy this year.

Southfield should prove to be no real threat to Mercy, and neither should second-round opponent Harrison. The Hawks, led by Linda Bache, haven't the firepower to stay with Mercy despite three season-ending wins that raised their record to 6-12.

BARRING UPSETS, it should be Mercy vs. West Bloomfield in the district championship next Friday.

The Lakers have a good tournament team — all seniors, all experienced. Guard Carolyn Barcewicz is the team leader, but the scoring comes from frontliners Sandy DeSilvio, Lynn Gerber and Katie Odena.

Mercy has more depth, but during

tournament play depth is not important. Seven players can carry a team.

While West Bloomfield has experience, the Marlins are a young group. At times during the season, Mercy started two seniors, two juniors and a sophomore. But they are a talented lot.

West Bloomfield has the muscle and is most effective offensively working inside or on short jumpers. Mercy is a good outside shooting club and can get into trouble if that shot isn't falling.

Both teams use full-court press defenses effectively. Mercy may be smaller, but the Marlins are quicker.

This will be a classic matchup. Although West Bloomfield has the better record, Mercy played a far tougher schedule.

The Marlins have also been involved in many close contests, and their record in those games is good. They're a good clutch team.

Both teams use full-court press defenses effectively. Mercy may be smaller, but the Marlins are quicker.

But it'll be very, very close.

FARMINGTON DISTRICT

Neither Farmington nor North Farmington figure to make it past their first game in the district.

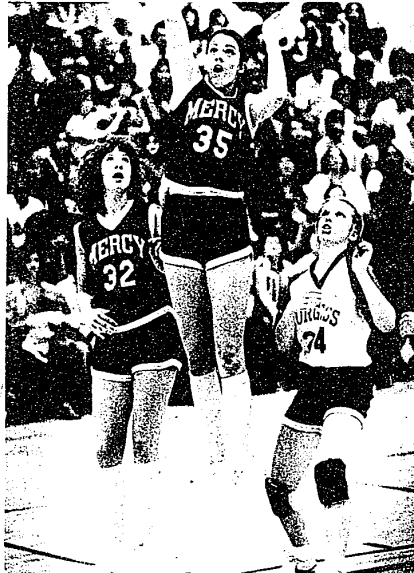
Farmington goes up against the team that has to be the district favorite in the opening round — Livonia Bentley.

Bentley has lost only once all season in 19 games and was the undefeated champion of the Suburban Eight league.



West Bloomfield's Ann Claverilla (in white) will see plenty of playing time for the Lakers in the district tournament. (Photo by Santa Fabio)

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Two of Mercy's starters who will be counted on heavily during the districts are juniors Suzanne Dietz (No. 32) and Kelly Fortescue. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

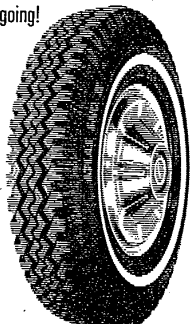
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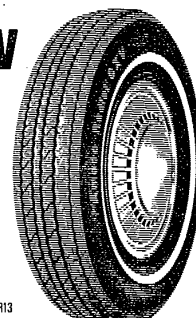
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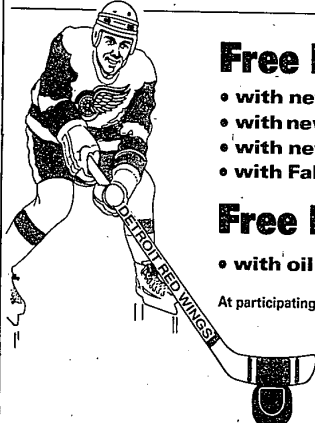
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