### West Bloomfield '9' dreams of state title



it Bloomfield's Jeff George, a catcher, was one of the team's most consistent players this season.

# Salem's strength is up the middle him to second. And if second batter Todd Riedel is out, the speedy Madson probably won't steal. "I don't run Madsen because they'll walk Slavin," Gilles explained. "I've got to hold back to give Slavin a swing." Now hat's an important bat. But Satem has other weapons. Such as Madsen has other weapons. Such as Madsen has other weapons. Such as Madsen as More and the such as Madsen at Satem has other weapons. Such as Madsen at Satem. The sate was the clark of the Cindrich. 358 with 12 steak; and Dan Carlson, 333 with 17 RBIS. Good defense, too, has been a boon to Salem. The strength of the team is just where baseball coaches like it — up the middle, with Slavin behind the plate (three errow), Madsen at short (nine errora), Riedel at second (four errora) and Cindrich in center (one error). The Rocks aport a team fielding average of .933.

Shocking success or anticipated

Shocking success or anticipated eventuality?
Is this a Cinderella story or the predictable answer from the figures provided? Are those really the same Plymouth Salem baseball players that started the season, or is coach Brian Gilles tricking us with mirrors?
The answer to all three questions is — well, yes and no. For few of even the stoutest Salem baseball backers could have been convinced a month ago that, when the Class A state semilinals rolled around, the Rocks still would be in the thick of are.

Yet here they are, on the threshold of state championship. Salem battles West and the state championship salem battles well and the state of the state of the sale of the state of the sale of the

WHAT HAPPENED in the last month that transformed Sciem from also-ran to in-the-running? "Pitching," is Giller's answer, "That was the only thing wrong with us before." Indeed, that was Salem's biggest problem. Of their eight losses, six were by a single run. That has changed, as Rick Berberet (10-3 for the season, 475 earned run average) and Barry McNamara (5-3, 2.37 EHA) have solid-field the mound staff, Berberet, a junior right-hander, will start against West Bloomfield. "He seems to be bearing down on every hitter," Gilles said of Berberet, who suffered through some rough out. "He seems to be bearing down on every hitter," Gilles said of Berberet, who suffered through some rough out. "Still, the jelling of the pitching said;" as long and well-amara pitched well last year in summer leagues. The Salem coach, knew the ability was three.

Larry Reichle can be excused for anything he may have done out of the ordnary the past few day. You see, the baseball team Reichle coaches — West Bloomfield High School — plays Plymouth Salem 3:30 p.m. tomorrow at Ypallanti High School in the semifinals of the Michigan State High School Athlieic Association's annual tournament. That's never happened to a West Bloomfield baseball team before.

In fact, the Lakers have never woo

happened to a West Bloomfield base-ball team before.

In fact, the Lakers have never woo district or regional championships. That's why Reichle has been somewhere in the clouds this entire week. There are 219 teams in the state that start the burnament and we're in the final four," said Reichle, whose team is proud owner of a 20-4 overall record. The slated ... I'm just on cloud nine. It's a great feeling." Salem won its own regional with victories over Ann Arbor Huron (6-2 in the final) and Treaton (16-4). The Rocks, coached by Brian Gilles, compete in the Western Lakes League and compiled a fine 10-8 mark thus far.

"THEY'VE GOT good pitching and hitting — they scored 22 runs in the regional," said Reichle. "We just have to hope we get the same thing (pitching and hitting) against them. They're just as good as we are at this stage of the game.
"We have to keep our fingers crossed that we get the right breaks," he said. "Salem is a good team with a strong baseball tradition — both them and Canton."

baseball tradition — both them and Canton."

West Bloomfield has been just at hot as the weather it played last week's regional in. The Lakers, two-time champions of the eight-team Greater Oakland Activities League, have won it straight games and 19 of their last 20.

Reichle's team defeated two league champions in the regional. The Lakers stopped Royal Oak Kimball, the state's No. 1-ranked team, 2-1, in the first game and Sterling Heights Henry Ford, 4-1, in the Championship game, but that want the way the season began.

West Bloomlield lost three of its first four games, and, even though two of the losses were by one run, that's not the way Reichle hoped to start defending the league title.

"We weren't intentionally had, but we had some new players," said Reichle. "PLUS, THE kids weren't laving to avain the property of the state of the playing the playing

"PLUS, THE kids weren't playing to-

gether as a team during the first part of the season. We had nine individuals then. We just ast down and talked about what we needed to do. We had good talced, but we thought we could just step you the field and we thought we could win.

Lots of times we were waiting until the end of the game to get going, and I was getting migraine headaches. he said. 'It was just a mental thing. Their attitudes have changed and we really have some momentum going now.'

Jay Bobel, a senior right-handed transfer student from Orchard Lake St. Mary's, will start for the Lakers. He has a 6-2 record, a 3-46 earned-run average and 88 strike outs in 58% innings.

He's really come on for us, said Reichie. 'He dominated the Kimball hitters. He was impressive because he challanged all the hitters.'

Todd Krumm is West Bloomfield's second starter (he plays shortatop when rut pitching). The juntor right hander had a 9-1 record and a 2-12 ERIA. He is also West Bloomfield's lead-off hitter with a 550 on-base percentage and a 417 batting average.

SENIOR ACTCHER Jeff George has been one of the Lakers' most consistent batters this season, hitting 425 and leading the team with 28 RBI. He's had 18 RBI in the last nine games batting from the clean-up position. Senior infleider Rob Patter (407), senior left fielder Dave Austin (389), sophomore second baseman John Kiriako (413), and junior outfielder Bob Butler (333) have been West Bloomfield's other key hitters. Kiriako has batted .700 in the last four tournament games.

games.

Zae Childress (center field) and Bob
Fish (third base) are the Lakers' other
starters.

"I believed at the beginning of the season we could win our district and the league," said Richihe. "And, I thought there was a chance we could do well at the state tourney.
"Everyone is pulling for each other now—even the bench. It's a total team effort from everyone. It seems like we've had a different person come through for us in every ballgame.
"There was a lot of emotion in that game against Kimball, and I went berajent afterwards," said Reichle. "I love, to see these kids do well."

The winner of tomorrow's semifinal game plays in the state championship game Saturday afternoon. There's no telling what Reichle will do it the Lakers win two more ballgames.

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