

Height a key factor in NSL cage year

By Brad Emons
staff writer

How is the Northwest Suburban League (NSL) basketball race shaping up?

It may be too tall to tell. The teams with size seem to be the favorites — defending champ Redford Thurston, Garden City and Westland John Glenn.

RU, however, has everybody who was anybody back from last year's 6-11 club. Livonia Franklin and North Farmington, meanwhile, are rebuilding.

But it could be a repeat of the just-concluded football season, where several teams have a legitimate shot at winning the championship.

Here is a pre-season look at the six teams.

GARDEN CITY

The Cougars surprised quite a few teams last year under the coaching of Bob Dropp.

Garden City is coming off a third-place finish in the NSL (6-4 in the league and 14-7 overall).

Gone are starters Craig Dimaya, Tom Ferrell, Brett Emery and Mike Kraus.

But the team's top scorer and leading rebounder, 6-foot-8 Scott McCloskey, returns. The senior forward averaged 18.3 points and 10.0 rebounds per

game en route to All-NSL and All-Observer (third team) honors.

McCloskey, a tireless worker, has plenty of company up front in 6-7 senior center Dave Haydon, 6-5 junior Dave Wegryn, 6-3 senior Jeff Shroat and 6-3 junior Jeff Brothers.

Senior Paul Krul, who saw limited action last year, returns at guard. He will join in the backcourt by 5-11 senior Steve Klein and 6-foot Steve Priker.

"We have a good front line — tall and strong," Dropp said, "but our guard play will have to improve."

The league has good balance. It should be fun."

With the return of McCloskey and a 14-4 JV squad, the Cougars seem to be a serious threat for the NSL crown.

REDFORD THURSTON

The Eagles lost their two big guns from last year's 18-3 squad — All-Observer pick George Sibel (now at Stens Heights) and Jim Weiss (Henry Ford CC). Point guard Steve Smith was also lost to graduation. The three combined for 47 points and 25 to 30 rebounds per game.

Thurston, however, is still a contender with the return of 6-7 center Dan Starinsky, who improved dramatically at the end of last season, and junior guard Hal Kostejan.

Starinsky, who averaged nine points and seven rebounds per game, is "look-

basketball

ing good," according to fifth-year coach Gary Fralick.

"I'm happy with his development," Fralick said. "We need him to score 15 to 20 per game."

Kostejan, who averaged six points per game, gained confidence last year as a starter, according to Fralick. He will replace Smith as point guard.

Last year's top reserve, 6-4 Lars Anderson, is ready to step in at forward, while 6-3 sophomore Tony Sokol and 5-11 senior Brian McGrath are battling for the other spot.

Scott Filuplak, a 6-7 junior who averaged 18 points per game on the JV squad, will be the shooting guard. He's a 6-1 high jumper.

Off the bench will come 5-7 sophomore Dan Ramos, 6-1 junior Jeff Fralick and 5-10 junior Rich Voytowich. "I'm optimistic," Fralick said.

"We've got the tradition going now. We've had winning teams three years in a row. Now we have the winning attitude and that's half the battle."

WESTLAND JOHN GLENN

The Rockets lost four starters, including 6-8 Paul Granula (Eastern Michigan) and 5-6 point-guard Greg

Gill, both All-Observer choices.

New coach Gordie Davis is not really new. He coached Glenn for 11 years until retiring in 1980.

The trademark of Davis' 1983-84 team will be same as it has been in the past — full-court and half-court pressing, both zone and man-to-man.

The Rockets will also fast break and play a motion offense.

Leading the attack is guard Mike Baydarian, a starter who was one of the better sophomores in the area last season.

His outside shooting touch should be complemented by part-time starter Jeff Hawley, a 6-1 senior, and Todd Stein, a 6-2 forward who sat out all of last season with a hamstring injury after starting as a sophomore.

Other variety reserves ready to step in include 6-6 Mario Granula, who backed up his brother, Dave Long, Craig Thornton and Pat Murphy.

Promising newcomers include Dave Jensen and Steve Henson, both guards, and Ron Talg, a forward.

What are Davis' expectations for the coming season? "We're inexperienced," he said, "but team balance and aggressiveness will make them competitive."

REDFORD UNION

First-year coach Lee Bjerke is hoping for a fresh start.

RU, winless a year ago, has everybody back including All-NSL honorable mention picks Keith Roloff and Rich Williams.

Other returnees include 6-2 center Ken Atwood, currently out with an injury; 6-2 forward Mike Hartie; 6-1 junior guard Pat Lowrey; and 5-9 guard Brian Winter.

Bjerke is also counting on contributions from Dennis Bushart, a 5-10 sophomore; his brother Bill, 6-0 senior; and 6-4 junior Alex McKay.

"We are expecting to be competitive in every game," Bjerke said. "Last season we lost by an average of 23 points per game."

"Our goal is to be a factor in the Northwest Suburban League this season."

Bjerke's offensive philosophy is somewhat different than his run-and-gun league foes.

"We'll operate a point-guard offense and try to outpace our opponents out because of our lack of size up front," he said. "And we will operate multiple defenses and put pressure on the ball."

LIVONIA FRANKLIN

The Patriots (6-4 league, 12-10 overall) may have been hit hardest by graduation.

Four starters are gone including the

one-two punch of Bob Stebbins and Mike Johnson, both All-Observer and All-NSL picks.

Seventh-year coach Jim McIntyre will build around 6-2 senior guard-forward Mike Wilkins, a three-year starter who averaged eight points and six rebounds per game a year ago.

The other returnees are long-range bomber Dave Carravallah, a 6-0 forward, and Steve Phillips, a 5-10 guard. Both are seniors.

The remaining cast includes a pair of 6-3 juniors off the JV, Jeff McCaw and Tim McGillivray; Paul Kurek, John Mondro, Mark Olschanski, Greg Pawelaki, Ahmad Hamade and two sophomores — 6-1 Dan Camp and 6-2 Don Lohman.

"We hope to rebuild into a competitive and league-challenging ballclub," said McIntyre. "We'll fast-break — with a set offense after the break."

"And we'll use a pressing defense with a man-to-man defense."

NORTH FARMINGTON

The Raiders are another NSL team hit hard by graduation.

Second-year coach Tom Negoshian lost his top six players from a 10-12 club.

Scott Draper, a 6-2 senior, and Steve Bamback, a 5-10 senior, both have varsity experience.

Negoshian will be relying on last year's JV talent, including 6-3 junior Bob Chawik and 6-5 sophomore Rick Anderson.

OU kickers fall out west

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Chances for a national title don't come along too often. Oakland University's soccer team has had two in two years, but both have ended in frustration.

For the second straight year, OU dropped a heartbreaking decision in the NCAA Division II semifinals, falling 1-0 Saturday at Seattle-Pacific. A year ago, the Pioneers made it to the semis before being ousted by eventual champion Florida International, 3-2 in overtime.

Seattle-Pacific (15-4-1) will play Tampa University for the Division II crown this weekend.

The only score of the game came at the 59:30 mark, as Brad Elmenhurst, a senior midfielder, headed in a shot that bounced around in front of the OU net before going in.

"IT WAS VERY disappointing," said Pioneer coach Gary Parsons. "I thought we played excellently. It was a real even game. We had our chances to win it near the end, we just didn't do it."

"It was a game of who got the breaks. They did and we didn't."

OU lost earlier this season to Seattle-Pacific, 3-2 in the Wheaton Invitational, but the Pioneers were without three starters in that game. The injury bug bit OU again before this clash, as forward Mark Christian was sidelined after getting poked in the eye during practice Thanksgiving Day.

And Morris Lopez, the team's top scorer, was hobbled with stomach problems that forced him to the sidelines during Saturday's contest.

With two starting forwards ailing, it isn't surprising that the weakest part of OU's game against SP, according to Parsons, was its "inability to finish off our plays. It was a combination of those things."

The Pioneers outshot SP 12-10. For

SP goalkeeper Bill Glandon, it was only his second shutout of the season, and he did it against an OU team that set a school season record for goal scoring (72).

OU also finished with its best record ever — 18-3.

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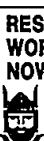
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