

Prep basketball teams ready for tipoff

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

The boys basketball season begins Tuesday. Here's a look at each league in Observerland:

WESTERN LAKES

Plymouth Salem advanced to the Class A quarterfinal a year ago before losing, and returns Central Michigan University since Jake Baker for his senior year.

Baker, a 6-5 swingman, will get help from 6-5 forward K.C. Kirkpatrick and a strong bench. So guess who's favored to win the Lakes Division, the WLLA title and... well, a lot of games?

The future also looks bright for Salem coach Bob Brodie, who likely will give 6-5, 195-pound freshman James Head a look on the varsity. Head is the brother of former Observerland girls basketball star and Miss Basketball player Dena Head, now playing at the University of Tennessee.

Salem should take the Lakes Division regular-season title with ease, but first-year Westland John Glenn coach Pat Bennett says the Hawks can contend. Bennett, also Glenn's girls coach, will miss leadership and a whole lot of talent without graduated guard Bobby Lawrence. Glenn returns promising forwards Gamal Ahmed and Jackie Howard.

Defending WLLA tournament champ Livonia Stevenson will be young, having to replace 6-9 center Glenn Serman and guards Ron Baran and Rick Laven. Stevenson's best player is junior guard Matt Grodzicki and he'll get help on the perimeter from returnee Phil Woods.

Salem's Baker top player

BRAD EMONS RATES
TOP OBSERVERLAND PLAYERS

1. Jake Baker, Plymouth Salem: The 6-foot-5 senior has already earned a national letter-of-intent with Central Michigan University. A rugged inside player, the left-hander has extended his shooting range and improved his ball-handling skills. Can run the ball, but often gets winded because he plays so hard. Led Salem to the state Class A quarterfinals last year.

2. Bobby Kummer, Redford CC: The 6-5 junior was a shining light in Catholic Central's otherwise dismal 5-17 season of a year ago. A good leader who plays with intensity, he is a forward, guard or center? Has improved his range shooting, but needs to play more under control.

3. ReShawn Sumler, Redford Bishop Borgess: Still growing at 6-6 1/2. His long arms give him shot-blocking ability. He's already a Division II player who could become a Division I recruit. Has shown improvement over the summer and needs to get tougher and work on his post moves. He is the key to Borgess's season.

4. Andy Smith, Farm, Harrison: You won't get anything flashy from this 6-3 junior, who made first-team All-Observer last year. Smith is Harrison's top scoring threat and a solid all-around forward.

Farmington will be small compared to other league teams, while North coach Tom Negoshian worries about replacing guard Matt Hoffmann, who is playing for Lake Superior State College.

Negoshian might be better off tossing out a football for his rugged group, which includes Todd Pawlowski and Chris White, a pair of standouts on the gridiron. Jayson Childress is Farmington's top front-court player, and coach Bob Kaup hopes CC transfer Steve Gallagher will help when he becomes eligible next semester.

• The WLLA's most talent appears to be in the Western Division, where Farmington Hills Harrison is favored to defend its title.

The Hawks, who return All-Observer forward Andy Smith for his senior year, will get challenged by Plymouth Canton and Livonia Franklin, as well as Northville. Canton has the area's tallest frontline in 6-8, 250-pound junior Tony Coshatt, 6-7 senior Rob Wilson and 6-4 senior Kevin Holmes.

Franklin's hopes revolve around holdover senior forward Steve McCool and junior point guard Keith Roberts, who impressed coach Rod Hanna after being brought up to the varsity the second half of the season. Livonia Churchill will upset some teams and has a strong frontline with 6-7 center Randy Calcaterra and 6-4 swingman Mike Thomas returning for their senior years. Thomas averaged 13 points per game, but Calcaterra could be the big gun, after scoring nine points and grabbing nine rebounds a game and coming on strong at season's end.

Walled Lake Western will be weak, but at least the Warriors have

basketball

Coming next in the Monday issue of The Farmington Observer will be the future prep basketball previews on the North Farmington and Farmington Hills, Harrison boys teams.

Harrison is considered a solid choice to repeat as Western Division champ, while North Farmington hopes to challenge defending champ Plymouth Salem in the Lakes Division.

The 1990-91 season begins Tuesday with non-league games.

strong leadership as Chuck Henry takes over after coaching Wayne Memorial to several successful seasons.

Winning either division would be a big accomplishment, just ask Hanna. "The league is the strongest I've seen in my four years," he said. "There's a lot of potential college talent out there."

CATHOLIC LEAGUE

The Central Division will be stronger, with the addition of the University of Detroit Jesuit and improvement expected out of Warren De La Salle and Redford Catholic Central.

Defending champion Redford Bishop Borgess, which has won three of the last four regular-season titles, won't be as talented but should again contend.

Three starters graduated, so Borgess coach Mike Fusco is counting on better numbers from ReShawn

Sumler, the Spartans 6-foot-6 1/2 senior forward. Foremost of the losses was guard Shawn Rеспert, an all-star being red-shirted as a freshman at Michigan State University because of knee surgery.

Senior guard Kevin Riser is improved and the Spartans also will get a boost from 6-3 freshman Perry Robinson.

The 1989-90 season wasn't a memorable one for Catholic Central coach Bernie Holowicki. Consider: CC suffered through a 5-17 season; Holowicki was sidelined part of the year with pneumonia; and his best player, Bob Kummer, missed a month with mononucleosis.

Holowicki has a better outlook, as he welcomes back a healthy Kummer for his junior year. Kummer, a 6-5 swingman who made second-team All-Observer, will be joined by senior guard Steve Whitlow and 6-3 junior Chad Varga, a transfer who will be eligible in January.

Varga's an impressive offensive player, but has to learn to guard more than his shadow. The Shamrocks figure to have no trouble scoring, but Holowicki would rather go with someone other than Whitlow at point guard.

A natural second guard, Whitlow is forced to play the point until someone comes to the front.

The team to watch could be Birmingham Brother Rice. The Warriors lost all five starters, but 6-9 junior Paul Grant returns — and is vastly improved, according to coach Frank Carriaco. A pair of intriguing transfers, Lejon Thomas and Lance Arnold, could be eligible in January.

They are intriguing because both are nephews of Detroit Pistons guard Isiah Thomas.

• In the C-D Division, Redford St. Agatha struggled to a 6-15 finish a year ago and things don't look much more promising in '90-91. Senior Jeremy MacNicol, a 6-4 center, returns after averaging 15 points a game, but missing is swingman Brian Kutch, a senior who left school this semester.

Detroit St. Hedwig, which won last year's C-D crown, closed its doors, but Murphy expects Hamtramck St. Florian, Waterford Our Lady of the Lakes and Immaculate Conception to battle for the title.

NORTHWEST SUBURBAN

Redford Union has one of the league's finest scorers in 6-1 junior guard Bill Malecki, and his return is important with the graduation of Steve Kummer and Dan Lesotte. The pair combined to score 33 points a game for the Panthers in '89-90.

A fine talent, Malecki still must distribute the ball better and play better defense if the Panthers hope to contend in a league dominated in recent years by Woodhaven. Inside strength will come from returnee Jason Gagnon, a 6-4 junior center.

The league title could be in question, with Woodhaven having to find a replacement for 6-7 Vernon Crump, now playing at Miami (Ohio) University.

Over at Garden City, first-year coach Mark Cramton inherits a team that went 8-13 overall in Bob Dropp's last year at the helm. The Cougars will be battling for respectability.

WOLVERINE A

Dan Henry, taking over for his brother Chuck as coach of Wayne

Memorial, has a rebuilding job on his hands. The Zebras will rely on youth after losing all five starters, including All-Observer player Kevin Hankerson, from a team that was 21-2 a year ago.

Belleville, with 6-4 Ron Hunter and 6-5 Derrick Boles, is favored to take the throne away from Wayne. Wyandotte and Trenton are improved.

METRO CONFERENCE

Look for Auburn Hills Avondale, Hamtramck and Detroit Lutheran West to battle for supremacy here. Local entrant Livonia Clarenceville will rely on senior guard Kendrick Harrington and a possible Detroit Public School League transfer come January.

MICHIGAN INDEPENDENT

Warren Bethesda is the strongest team, but Plymouth Christian will get help from transfers and Lutheran Westland's 6-5 center Chris Habitz returns for his senior year. Habitz averaged 15 points per game a year ago.

TRI-RIVER LEAGUE

Redford Thurston coach Mike Schette took his girls team to the Class B regional, and he has similar goals with the boys. The Eagles have something good to build on, having taken third last year in the Tri-River behind co-champions Taylor Truman and Taylor Kennedy.

Thurston, 15-7 overall, return 5-10 senior point guard Danny Pertulla, whom Schette calls one of his best point guards ever. Also back are forwards Justin McEwen and Jeremy Courval.

Balanced offense lifts Eagles

Eight players reached double figures in scoring Sunday as the St. Mary's College men's basketball team rocked visiting Indiana-South Bend 134-92.

The Eagles took a commanding, 60-34 halftime lead and capitalized on 12 second-half turnovers by South Bend for the win.

Senior guard James Gillespie led St. Mary's scorers with 24 points. Other Eagles in double figures were freshman Brian Koscielski (24), junior guard Garth Howard (17), sophomore guard Jimmy Bolden (16), and sophomore Fred Russell, together with freshmen Denny Butcher, Brian Smith and Jeff Suspek adding 10 points apiece.

South Bend was paced by Ken Pitroff with 17 points and Greg Hughes with 16 points.

CLOSE WAS all the Eagles could get Saturday as host Eastern Michigan University clubbed St. Mary's, 102-77.

basketball

The Eagles tied the score twice early in the first half before the Hurons scored 11 straight points to take a 47-34 halftime lead.

With 10:36 left in the game, St. Mary's pulled to within 10 before EMU put the game out of reach by scoring 16 straight points.

The Eagles were led by Suspek with 18 points. Gillespie added 15 points and Bolden had 14 points.

For EMU, Kory Hallas scored 22 points and Marcus Kennedy (from Troy HS) added 20 points.

THE EAGLES hit 11-of-13 free throws in overtime Wednesday night to beat Wayne State University, 100-95.

The Tartars took a 53-50 lead at

half-time, but the Eagles' defense prevailed in the second half.

Gillespie hit a layup with 54 seconds left that sent the game to overtime. He was called for traveling on a layup with three seconds remaining that would have won the game.

The Eagles were led by Gillespie's 28 points. Howard added 14 points and Bolden scored 12 points.

Ous Evans led Wayne State with 24 points. Junior guard Art Johnson added 23 points.

The Eagles, who improved to 5-2 overall, travel to play the University of Toledo Saturday. They played at the University of Windsor Wednesday.

St. Mary's beat the University of Windsor earlier this season at the Gino's Pizza classic, 141-100. They are 1-10 overall.

The University of Toledo is 2-1 after opening its season at the Maui Classic in Hawaii.



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