

SPORTS

C

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1995



BRAD EMMONS

Bring cheer for holidays

Here's some stuff to bring you a little holiday cheer.

- I couldn't figure out why Michigan State freshman Tara Overmiller (Livonia Ladywood/Dearborn Divine Child) played seven minutes in the first half, but didn't see a minute in the second half during last week's blowout against Western Kentucky.
- Speaking of MSU women's hoops, the press guide says ex-Spartan Kim Archer (Livonia Bentley) is back in town working as a physical therapist. I'll say it again, when she played high school sports, she was a "Woman Among Girls."
- Heard Guy Rucker (Westland John Glenn) is red-shirting this season at Iowa. Reliable sources told me that the 6-foot-11 freshman center was in-and-out of practice the first three weeks tending to academic matters and a sore ankle. A red-shirt year is probably the best thing that ever happened to him.
- I wonder if Eastern Michigan's James Hoad (Plymouth Salem) will ever get a chance to play against Iowa?
- Mike Donnelly (Livonia Franklin) is on a rehab assignment for the Dallas Stars in Kalamazoo. Does that mean he's joining forces with his old Livonia buddy, defenseman Dennis Smith?
- Best wishes to Denny Knittel, the unofficial associate athletic director at Livonia Stevenson, for a speedy recovery. Hope he gets well fast for 1996.
- I'm still trying figure out how the Livonia Churchill boys soccer team, with players like Scott Lamphreys, Mike Gentile, Dominic Vella and Jeff Cassar — all college standouts — couldn't get out of their district playoff tournament back in 1991?
- Good to see old Garden City West standout Gary Nustad back coaching basketball. He's over at Henry Ford Community College and doing a pretty good job. Remember when he coached Tim McCormick at Clarkston?
- Ex-Schoolcraft coach Dave Bogataj is back coaching basketball as an assistant with the Wayne Memorial Zebras.
- Did anything notice Wayne's Lorenzo Guesz and his brother Lavallo sitting behind the Michigan bench during the Duke game? And there was Steve Fisher watching Guesz play Thursday night at Detroit DePores.
- A few weeks ago, I caught some flak from Clarenceville Superintendent of Schools Dave Kamleh (phone call) and booster club president Richard Wood (letter to the editor) because they thought I "trashed" their facilities prior to the first-round football playoff game between Redford Catholic Central and Livonia Stevenson. Yes, I agree the facilities more than suit a Class C school, but not a Class AA playoff game. My intention was to get the Michigan High School Athletic Association's attention about quality playoff sites.

Also, Mr. Wood says he's never seen me at any Clarenceville home sporting events. Maybe not as much as Stevenson, but we sent two reporters, including myself on one occasion, and had photographers on two separate occasions this fall at Clarenceville football games, the same amount as we did this season for Wayne Memorial and Livonia Churchill, both AA schools.

And secondly, Mr. Wood, I've made many special trips to the school tracking down delinquent coaches who didn't return phone calls or couldn't be reached (because of wrong numbers) to write preseason previews.

And thirdly, Mr. Wood, I made three visits to the University of Michigan. When I was fighting for his life following a car accident. I arranged a visit on Donaldson's behalf from then U-M assistant, now Michigan head football coach Lloyd Carr.

Happy New Year, Mr. Wood.

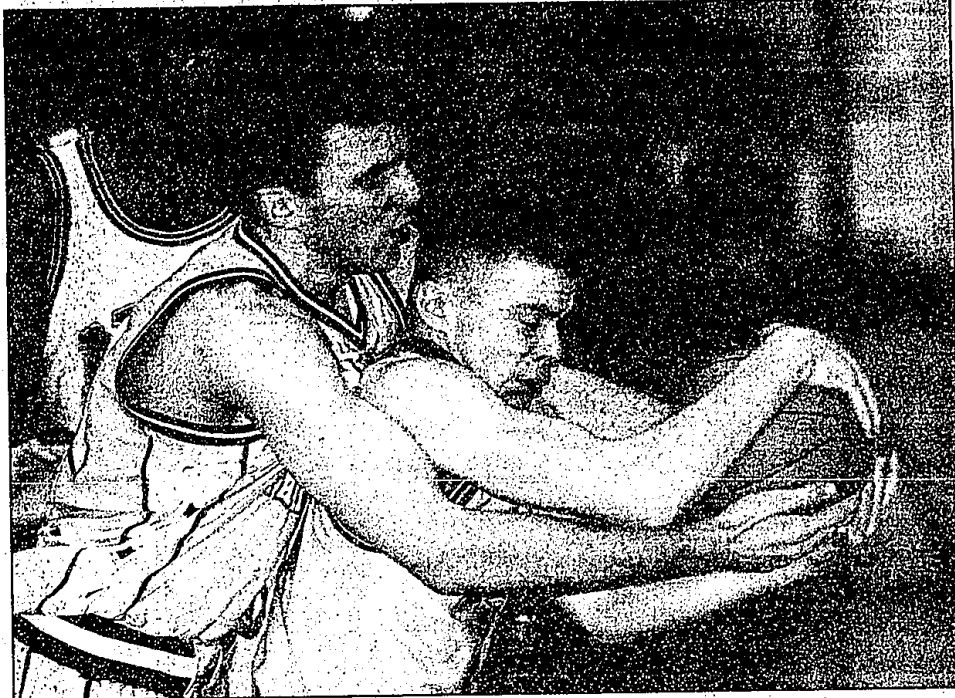
Also, an aside to the CC-Stevenson football playoff site controversy.

Maybe the timing was too short, but people don't realize that Livonia Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Watson made arrangements to play at both Livonia Churchill and Dearborn Heights Crestwood, but administrators at both schools balked at the move.

CC athletic director Robert Santella said he was committed to the concession stand people at Clarenceville. Also, CC was able to charge for parking at Clarenceville. And apparently Stevenson administrators weren't wild about playing as the visiting team on one of their Livonia fields.

I hope this clears up some misunderstandings.

It appears that the expansion of the Suburban High School Hockey League has done wonders for competition. The addition of Walling Lake Central and the emergence of Birmingham and Livonia Franklin, makes it an interesting season. It's called parity, but at least Stevenson and Churchill have to play hard just about every night now, or they'll get beat.



SHARON LEMIRE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Over: North Farmington sophomore center Bill Trzos gets the ball but no call for hugging Novi's Sean Kramer.

Raiders take defeat into break



North Farmington couldn't catch a break against Novi, but it has caught a break from the schedule-maker. The Raiders have until Jan. 5 to iron out the kinks that have kept them from winning the close games.

Just another loss? Well, yes and no.

Sure, Novi tripped North Farmington, 68-54, last Wednesday night in the consolation game of the Northville Holiday Tournament.

But it took the Wildcats overtime to do it.

And yes, it left the Raiders 1-4.

But there are good 1-4 records, and 1-4 marks where you're getting slaughtered.

North Farmington has not been getting slaughtered. Things appear to be coming together. It's just that the

record does not reflect that. Yet.

"It was the best defensive game we've played all year," coach Brian Swinehart said. "We're doing a better job of controlling the boards."

"We've made strides the last five games. We've come a competitive team."

Novi, 4-1, spent the whole game trying to shake North Farmington but could never manage to do it. In fact, the Raiders scored the first four points of overtime to take a 52-48 lead they haven't quite learned how to hold.

Baskets by Tim Dolan and Julian Cochran provided the margin but Tim Davis started Novi back with a basket, and free throws tied it.

Then, with 14 seconds left, Sean Kramer hit a free throw to give Novi a 56-54 lead. He missed his second shot but North Farmington was unable to run the play it wanted and finally settled for a desperation three-point try that failed to connect as time ran out.

The Wildcats caught some breaks to even get to overtime. Trailing by one, they intentionally fouled and the Raiders missed their two free throws — only to snag the rebound for another opportunity.

Brad Rivers was fouled with 17 seconds to play in regulation and hit his first before missing the second, leaving North Farmington on top 48-48.

Junior Kyle Kearney hit a shot with

two seconds to play to tie the score.

North Farmington's attempt at a court-long pass hit the ceiling to give the Raiders the ball under the basket, but Novi's ensuing shot rolled in and out, forcing overtime.

Rivers led North Farmington with 16 points, including five three-pointers, while Dolan added 13 and Cochran nine (plus four steals and six assists). Sophomore Jeff Trzos had six rebounds and Rivers five.

Chad Dickens paced four Novi players in double figures with 14 points, Davis and Kearney had 13, while Kramer added 11.

North Farmington will have plenty of time to turn on getting the things done it needs to work these close losses into wins. It does not play again until hosting Farmington Hills Harrison on Jan. 6.

Walk-on Lowe finishes fine career

By RICHARD L. SHOOK

STAFF WRITER

The answer, when you think about it, is obvious.

"The only reason a person would subject himself to physical abuse — self-inflicted and otherwise — for several months a year is because he absolutely loves what he's doing."

"The bottom line for me," said Sam Lowe of Central Michigan, "was that I got to play (NCAA) Division I college football."

"Against a lot of great athletes, some of whom are going to go on to have professional careers. And I got to meet a lot of great guys who I'm going to remember for the rest of my life."

Sam Lowe, 23, played high school football with some success at North

Farmington. But by no means would you have called him a highly recruited star.

Very good, yes. All-Lakes Division as a guard for the Raiders in the Western Lakes Activities Association. Honorable mention All-Area.

But a superstar? No.

The University of Michigan was not beating at the door of a lineman who stood 5-foot-10 and weighed maybe 180 pounds. Nor was Central Michigan.

But through a triumph of determination and grit — and maybe the help of a well-placed lie — Sam Lowe became a walk-on football player for Central Michigan University who just spent his senior season as a special teams member.

He didn't do it for the glory.

It's the associations, the workouts, the training sessions that Sam Lowe will remember the rest of his life.

Coming out of North Farmington in 1991, Lowe did not have the grades necessary to have a four-year college demanding his presence. So he went to Oakland Community College.

"My whole goal was to get into Central (Michigan)," Lowe said. "They have a very good education program. I wanted to get into their program and get out with a teaching degree."

"After high school, I had decided I didn't want to play (football anymore). I let sports go. I became a volunteer coach at North Farming-

ton for the JV (junior varsity) team."

Lowe got good grades at OCC, then transferred to Central after his freshman year.

"Being home as a freshman year was probably the best thing for me," he said. "It helped me adjust to having a college schedule. If I'd been up here (at CMU), I think I would have been totally distracted. It helped me bear down and get studying."

But something happened to Lowe in the interim. "I just really got to missing football. I decided after I got up to Central, to try to get my grade point to where it was solid."

"I knew football, especially in college, was going to be incredibly de-

See LOWE, 2C

Salem tabs Farmington's Robinson to be assistant AD

By C.J. RIBAK

STAFF WRITER

One era officially ends, and another begins.

In a span of just over a year, all three of the positions overseeing athletics at Plymouth Canton and Plymouth Salem, as well as middle school athletics, have changed hands.

The latest was a long time coming. Cary Balconi accepted a buyout option and retired prior to the start of the school year, but a replacement could not be found. So Balconi stayed on through the fall season.

Finally, the change has come. John

Robinson, a 44-year-old Chelsea resident whose background is chiefly in sports medicine, was named as Balconi's successor Dec. 11.

"I can tell you this," said Brian Wolcott, who in September took over as the school system's director of athletics and served on the selection committee. "He's a real quality individual."

What makes him so, Wolcott said, was "his experience, for starters. He has a variety of experience. He's been around athletics all his life. He's coached and he's handled the administrative end."

"I'm anxious to work with Brian," said Robinson, whose latest position was as coordinator of district athletic system for the Farmington school system. "Brian wants to continue to create a positive emphasis on sports. He's motivated."

Robinson's official title will be athletic coordinator. His job, which he officially starts Jan. 8, will entail handling athletic activities at Salem.

Wolcott succeeded Paul Cummings, who had been director of athletics for 10 years; the same length of time Balconi had served as his assistant, working mainly at Salem. Now

Sue Heinman — who took over for Jim Finn as Canton's coordinator in the fall of '95 — will be Wolcott's assistant, with her duties to include Canton and middle school athletics.

Extensive experience doesn't fully describe Robinson's background. A '68 graduate of Ivonia HS, Robinson got his bachelor of science degree in biology at Michigan State in '74, then taught and coached — football and baseball — at Lakeview HS near Big Rapids for seven years.

He returned to school, attending

See RIBAK, 2C