

Holiday Break

No games doesn't mean no basketball

BY RICHARD L. SPOCK
STAFF WRITER

Just because there's no basketball scheduled for Farmington schools during the holidays doesn't mean there isn't any basketball.

Farmington, North Farmington and Farmington Hills Harrison all have 1-season records so each will spend the time between now and the first week in January trying to break losing habits.

"We don't play until Jan. 5 (when we host Farmington Hills) Harrison," coach Brian Swinehart of North Farmington said. "It's part of the scheduling that happens. The league sets the schedule."

"We have scrimmages. We'll refine and refocus some of the things we're trying to do."

"As a coach, I look at it as a time to refocus on fundamentals. We'll work on refining the things we're trying to do — refining our defense, offensive sets and plays so you can try to get a little bit sharper in those areas."

"We're going to scrimmage a couple, three times," said Harrison coach Mike Teachman, whose team is 1-3 and hosts Novi Jan. 5. "What I do a lot of (during this period) is scouting."

"It's the only time you get to see other teams play. I'll be watching (Westland) John Glenn at (Detroit) Mumford on Dec. 27."

"Even though we didn't play last Friday, we finished out the week by practicing. We have long weekends (because of the holidays)."

"We'll practice four days the week of Christmas. Two to three of those will be scrimmages. We'll come back Tuesday after New Year's Day so we'll have regular practices then."

"We don't play until the Friday after we get back," said Dennis Mikel, whose 1-3 Farmington team hosts Livonia Churchill Jan. 5. "But we're in a little different situation."

"Our gym floor was refinished this summer, but because of the high humidity they only got to

put two coats of sealer on it instead of three."

"Our maintenance department is going to come in Tuesday and put another coat of sealer on the floor. I'm told it will take two days for it to dry. I might not have a gym all week."

"I might take the time off. If I've got a floor, I'm just going to have a couple of practices. When we get back to school, we'll get back hard at it."

"Other than that, I'm going to spend some time with my family, get some basketball in a facility if it's available."

"And that's not all bad. The kids need to get away and have some fun in life except basketball. It's a long season."

A few schools host or play in tournaments during the holidays.

Each coach has his or her preference. Some feel kids who have been playing sports full bore since August or September could stand to have their batteries recharged.

Others feel not playing for more than a week sets a team's progress back by that week plus the week or 10 days it takes them to regain proficiency.

In basketball-rabid communities, especially those away from major metropolitan areas, high school games would draw if they played at 3 a.m. Monday morning.

But in southeastern Michigan, there's too much hustle and bustle to make scheduling a tournament worthwhile at most places.

"Nobody comes to watch," Teachman said. "It's like playing in a mausoleum. And some parents say, 'Nope, my kids are going on vacation with me.' You find very few holiday tournaments that last more than a couple of years. You're playing to empty seats."

"To me, it's kind of nice to have the relaxed time. It gives early season injuries a chance to heal. And my guys are coming off playing (football and basketball) since August. As a result, this is a good time for them to catch their breath."

"I'd rather play less games now.

Let it run out in January and February."

"At this point," Farmington's Mikel said, "we don't have any scrimmages scheduled. But that might be another option. If we don't have our floor at all, I might get on the phone and try to make arrangements for a scrimmage at (somebody else's) facility."

North Farmington's Swinehart is taking a low-key approach. He feels his 1-4 team is making improvement, as shown by its overtime loss to Novi in the consolation game of the Northville Holiday Tournament last week.

"I think the kids know that they've made strides from the beginning of the year to now," he said. "A couple of our games could have gone either way, particularly Novi."

"I think they feel better. They're taking a little bit of pride in their defense. Kids are pretty resilient. It doesn't take a much for them to bounce back. They lost a game to Northville on a Tuesday and then came back the next night fired up."

"They come back. They're a lot more resilient than I am. It's tougher for us to bounce back."

But these are 15-, 16-, 17-, 18-year-old kids. They're in the prime of their life. They're having fun. They take basketball for what it is — a great thing, great to be a part of a team.

"This is a great group of kids. They're fun to be around and they enjoy being around each other. They enjoy the game."

"We try to do a lot of things to keep the guys up, fun things."

"I borrowed something from my JV coach, who coaches the girls team. They have a father-daughter game. We have a father-son game."

"We'll have a clinic with some young kids and the team will get a chance to work with them. We'll work with the Special Olympics, too."

"We try to keep it in perspective, make them better men, let them take something away from being part of a team."

SPORTS ROUNDUP

Items for the Sports Roundup should be submitted by 5 p.m. Tuesday for the Thursday edition and 5 p.m. Friday for the Monday edition. Items run only once.

CARSON MVP

Jim Carson of Farmington Hills was named offensive MVP of the University of Detroit-Jesuit high school football team.

The junior wide receiver led his team in receptions, yardage and touchdown catches. He also maintains a 3.0 grade point average.

FIRE WIN, TIE

The Farmington Hills Mite AA Fire travel hockey team raised its record to 11-3-1 with a victory and a tie last week.

Charlie Hourigan's goal earned the Fire a 1-1 tie with Jackson (assists to Eric Lubanski and Spencer Mabey) while Mark Eberline's hat trick paced the team to a 5-2 victory over the Michigan Stars.

Hourigan scored the other two goals while Lubanski had a pair of assists against the Stars. The Fire return to action Jan. 4 when they host first-place Livonia at 6 p.m. at the Farmington Hills Ice Arena.

"The Livonia game is a huge one for us," assistant coach Paul Lubanski said. "We're hoping our momentum carries through the Christmas break."

MADONNA MEN FALL

It looked promising. Don Pertulla, the senior guard from Redford Thurston, finally

returned to the Madonna University men's basketball lineup (he had to sit out the first 13 games due to a lack of credits) and the Fighting Crusaders were rolling. Playing at Urbana University (Urbana, Ohio), they took a 44-41 lead into the locker room at halftime. They made 16-of-30 from the floor (50 percent), including 4-of-10 three-pointers (40 percent) and 10-of-11 free throws (90.9 percent).

But it didn't last. Urbana outscored Madonna 44-31 in the second half to cruise to an 85-76 victory Thursday in Urbana.

Mike Maryanski led the Crusaders with 16 points. Pertulla had 15, while Jeff Kennedy totaled 12 points, four assists and five steals, with Brandon Stone (Plymouth Salem HS) had 11 points. Christian Emert scored nine, with four assists.

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