

# OU women cagers about more than results



RALPH ECHINAW

My name is Ralph and I'm an Oakland University women's basketball fan.

There, I said it.

That's an unusual state to be in for someone who isn't a parent or a friend of one of the players. Oakland has two teams, men's and women's, but most people consider the women's game to be a sideshow or an opening act for the men.

That's how it was 10 years ago when I was the sports editor of the Oakland University student newspaper, and that's how it is today.

People seem to believe that men playing basketball is as good as it gets, and watching basketball is like 12-year-old kids pretending to drive a car.

At Oakland University, the men's and the women's teams have both performed exceptionally well for 10 years. But the women's team has always been a little bit better.

I'm a contrarian, so I tend to do what everyone else isn't doing. So it was only natural that I would prefer the women to the men. Besides, the women have usually won more games than the men and won more games that they were supposed to lose than the men.

There's an interesting dynamic in sports, male or female, whereby an underdog or underdog, where you want it more than your opponent, you can win. Or as one cogent aphorism goes, "All it takes is all you have."

I find it intensely moving and invigorating will, in any sport, a competitor will himself or herself to overcome the opposition.

We're not used to seeing women in those situations, and maybe that's why most of us would rather watch men's sports. Yet I find that if the competitor's gender is female, it intensifies the experience because they're not just battling the immediate opponent. They're up against the apathy that most people feel for their endeavors.

For the last 10 years Oakland University has been tied with the best basketball coaches in the state: Men's coach Greg Kampo and women's coach Bob Taylor.

Greg does his job well, but the fact is I haven't been excited by the men's team since the late Zeb Gregory and Eric Taylor tore up the court in 1988-89.

With one exception a couple years ago, Bob Taylor has put a talented, tenacious, willful women's team on the court every year. I don't know if it's the type of player he recruits or how he coaches. Probably both. But year after year the Oakland women's team plays better than

one would expect.

And surprisingly, Bob gets most of his players from metro Detroit, often from the Rochester area. The current team features three alumni of Rochester Adams High School; senior guard Lori Young, junior guard Jamie Fawinski and sophomore guard Courtney Ruffing.

From my admittedly limited spectator's perspective, I sense that Young is the glue that holds the Pioneer gals together on the court, much like Deanna Richard and Kelli Krajniak did before her. I can see even in the way she walks that she's got what it takes to take what you've got, and she knows it. I suspect opponents are actually afraid of Lori Young, not because she's more talented, but because she's more tenacious.

I find this degree of tenacity admirable at any level of athletic endeavor. But to see it in legitimate college students who have

virtually no prospect of turning professional, whose only realistic hope of staying in the game is coaching, is awe inspiring.

To me this is as good as athletics gets. Young women who get short-changed on respect as athletes, who weren't good enough or tall enough to play for a big school, who have no future as professional athletes, who take real classes and study on the bus at midnight coming home from an Upper Peninsula road trip.

It doesn't matter if it's Colleen Hipp of Grand Valley, or Heather Bertram of Lake Superior State, or Shana DeCramer of Northern, or Ann Ilek of Hillsdale, or Alyson McChesney of Oakland. If they fit the aforementioned description and they play hard, they're my heroes.

I wouldn't trade my \$4 seat at Oakland University for a court-side ticket to see the Pistons, the Wolverines or any other team in

the state.

The Oakland University Pioneer gals play their games at 5:30 p.m. Thursdays and 1 p.m. Saturdays. The men's team plays at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays and 3 p.m. Saturdays. For schedule information, call 370-3190.

Ralph R. Echinaw is a copy editor for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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for the fall semester, had one of her best games of the season at Seton Hall on Jan. 2, scoring nine points, dishing out eight assists, collecting five steals, grabbing three rebounds and committing no turnovers.

Ohio Northern University freshman Drew Hayes (Birmingham Seaholm) is a member of the school's men's basketball team. The Polar Bears started the season with a 6-3 overall record; Hayes scored seven points in an 84-45 win over Wilmington Dec. 23 and six points against Greensboro (N.C.) five days later.

Western Michigan sophomore center Russ DeErmia (Rochester) recorded a career-high five blocks in the Broncos' 71-63 win over Eastern Michigan last Wednesday. DeErmia averaged 8.1 points and a team-high seven rebounds per game through WMU's opening 14 contests.

Ferris State University sophomore Rachel Clanton (Walled Lake Central) was crowned the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference champion at No. 2 singles. Clanton, who helped the Bulldogs earn their 13th consecutive GLIAC title this past season and extend their conference dual-match winning streak to 103, secured her individual championship with a three-set victory over Northwood's Erin Davis. Clanton and No. 2 doubles partner Amber Shantz also took first-place conference honors. Clanton finished the season with a 16-2 singles record and a 15-2 doubles mark at No. 2.

Bucknell (Pa.) University freshman Blakely Lauria (Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood) finished her tennis season with a 7-5 singles record and a 1-1 doubles mark. Lauria was the only Bucknell player named to the 1996 All-Patriot League women's tennis team in singles.

Lake Superior State University women's tennis player Susan Bogertis (Troy Athens) completed her sophomore season by teaming with Gina Palumbo to go 1-2 at No. 2 doubles at the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Championships. LSSU's Angie Acres (Walled Lake Central) finished her senior season on the women's cross country team by competing at the Michigan Intercollegiate Championship in Dowagiac, Mich. She completed the five-kilometer course in the Dave Colliver (Southfield Christian), the University of Michigan men's

soccer club reached the championship match of the National Collegiate Soccer Association's tournament and dropped a 2-1 decision to the University of Texas. Colliver was an All-Tournament First Team selection. Freshman goalkeeper Albert Grednes (Detroit Country Day), freshman defender Steve Huber (Rochester Hills), freshman midfielder Yuri Krym (Birmingham Troy), senior forward Grant Greathuk Chatterjee (Groves), junior midfielder Eric Frickel (Troy), freshman forward Ajani Burrell (Southfield-Lathrup), sophomore forward Alan Zakaria (Bloomfield Hills Lahser) and freshman defender Mayra Valanju (Troy) were also on the U-M roster.

John Carroll (Ohio) University junior goalie Grant Mast (Adams) earned the Co-Defensive MVP award at the Blue Streaks' annual men's soccer banquet.

Dan Paul men's soccer midfielder Don Dombic (Athens) finished this past season with four goals, two assists and 10 points. Dombic played in all 19 matches and started nine.

Kalamazoo College sophomore midfielder Erin Killian (Seaholm) was named to the Division III All-Great Lakes Region Third Team by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. Killian led the women's squad in scoring with 21 goals and nine assists and ranked second in scoring in the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association with 33 points. ... Kalamazoo College freshman Robert Hillard (Athens) was an All-MIAA first-team selection for men's soccer.

Senior Gabi Higgins (Cranbrook Kingswood) and sophomore Jason Passalacqua (Troy) were named to the 1996 All-MIAA Men's Soccer Second Team from Alma College.

Chuck Draper (Seaholm) played in 17 games and finished fourth on the team in scoring in his first season with The College of Wooster's men's soccer squad.

Western Michigan University's Bridget Norris (Walled Lake Central) recently capped an outstanding career as a member of the Broncos' volleyball team. Norris had a combined 55 kills, 30 digs, seven aces and hit .327 during WMU's season-ending victories over Bowling Green and Toledo. The talented senior, who had 32 kills against Toledo, led the Broncos this past season in kills (410), service aces (63) and digs (317) and finished her career with over 1,000 kills and 500 digs.

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