

It's 'Play Ball' For '73 Season!

The first pitch has been thrown. Bentley High trounced Bloomfield Hills Andover, and we are into the '73 prep baseball season.

Who's going to win its league? Who will be No. 1 in Observerland?

Which area team could make waves in the fresh baseball state tournament?

This is the time of year where question marks dominate and baseball in Observerland fits the time.

Redford Union's Bob Atkins and Co. are out to defend the No. 1 slot in Observerland in addition to the Suburban Eight championship which they captured last year with a 10-4 mark.

The RU Panthers finished 22-6 overall last year for a .786 mark.

"The Suburban Eight race should be between Edsel Ford, Allen Park and RU," said Atkins. "It should be a real strong race because no one has a weak team."

Atkins feels this way even though he lists his entire outfield of Kurt Fritz, Mike Johnson and Mark Durance. "Needless to say," Atkins added, "Our strength will be in pitching, catching and infield."

Tom Nippa has to be ace of the staff, coming off a 14-3 season in the spring and summer. Along with 9-3 Tom Miller the pitching staff also includes all-area pitcher turner Gary Fulk who was 12-2 last year.

Glenn Richmond is one of the top backstop men in the area.

He hit .300 in 49 games last season and collected 31 RBIs. Lupe Bravo, Steve Friedman, and Mark Yourcheck will be the keys to the Panther hitting attack.

Bentley Coach Marty Flozick and Plymouth mentor Wayne Sparkman agree that RU, Edsel Ford and Allen Park will be the teams to beat.

"Hopefully, Plymouth will be fighting in there somewhere," said Sparkman whose Rocks wound up the '72 campaign with a 5-9 league mark and a 10-14 record overall.

But the Rocks did win a district title and were runners-up in the regional at Southfield. Sparkman has Steve Robb, Ron Egloff, Mike Lindman, Keith MacDonald, Rob Willette, Jeff

Stringham and Tony Ross returning in the senior ranks. Klozik has three letter winners back in Brent Boegler, Bob Deacon and Bob Wasilewski for the backbone of the Bentley Bulldog attack.

Bentley finished 5-9 last year in the Eight and 11-13 overall. Klozik is hoping his sophomore crew will make things a little different this year.

The Northwest Suburban race has the makings of another Northwest tangle similar to the '72-'73 basketball season. John Glenn Coach Norm Hoenes is hoping for the same results as the Rocket cagers with a first year crown.

It is shaping up to be a three team race between Franklin, Garden City East and Glenn.

Glenn has five key returning lettermen in J. P. McBride, Dave Wesley, Jeff Hodgkins, Steve Kaufman and Bill Kelley. Hoenes has lost his entire '72 infield but has back his three main pitching crew.

The Rockets were 5-5 in the Northwest and 11-11 overall.

This has to be the year for the Patriots.

Franklin Coach Ron Heller has 10 returning lettermen with all-stars first baseman Gar Frantz leading the crew, along with all-conference outfielder Jeff Waterstone.

He sees GC East and Glenn as the teams to beat, coming off a 4-6 league record and 11-10 overall.

Heller is hoping the addition of the nine batgirls will provide that needed spark in the '73 campaign.

Over at East, John Kulazka finds himself in much the same situation East football Coach Gary Humphrey was in, an overabundance of talent returning, including all-area shortstop Steve Orr. This will be the first year for East in the Northwest baseball race and the Panthers are out to better their 11-6 '72 showing.

North Farmington and Thurston High each have six lettermen returning. North Farmington Coach Roger Coach Tom Wallis coming off an 8-10 season and Thurston's Emil Majeski off an 11-10 year.

The Inter-Lakes battle could see Pontiac Northern walk away with the title but Stevenson's new coach, Gerry Goode, has tabbed his club a definite contender.

The Spartans finished 6-4 in

the league last year and 9-7 overall. Farmington has seven returning lettermen and Coach Richard Roy is hoping to improve upon his 5-4 league mark and 9-9 overall showing.

"Ours is a young team, hit hard by graduation with pitching the big question mark," said Roy.

The Western Six League race should include all but Walled Lake Western. Waterford Mott will be out to defend the crown. North Farmington will run-up in the state Class B finals and Churchill and Farmington Harrison have talent coming back to give both teams a real run at the crown.

Churchill Coach Roger Frayer has 12 returning lettermen including All-Observer outfielder Rick Dreher. Harrison Coach John Herrington, in his first year on the diamond, has five coming back to improve upon the '72 mark of 10-7 and 6-2 in the league.

Bishop Borgess and Coach Jim Brisky will be in their

first season of Catholic Double A competition with nine returning lettermen, coming off a 16-11 overall '72 mark.

Clarenceville has a new coach in Del Cory. Cory has six returning lettermen sparked by all-leader Greg Saurela who hit .350 in his junior stint. The Trojans placed next to last in Observerland last year with a 5-5 league record and 6-11 overall record.

"Andover and Kettering are the ones to beat but we could sneak up the ladder," said Cory.

Southfield Lathrup finished 5-9 last year in the Inter-Lakes but should find things easy going this year in the Met Suburban and could give a repeat performance of the basketball season.

Southfield captured the basement seat in the area in '72 and Coach Ed Bryant should be able to maneuver his Blue Jays out of a 5-16 season and break into the win column after an 0-8 football season.

Here we go. '73: Redford

Union should win the Suburban Eight, Franklin the Northwest Suburban, Pontiac Northern the Inter-Lakes, Lathrup the Met Suburban and Churchill's baseball team has to keep pace with the football and basketball showing.

Observer Baseball '73 Picks

ST. AGATHA	12-7
BENTLEY	12-7
BORGESS	10-8
CHURCHILL	10-8
CLARENCEVILLE	5-10
FARMINGTON	5-12
HARRISON	10-4
FRANKLIN	15-8
GC EAST	12-4
GC WEST	9-9
JOHN GLENN	15-8
N. FARMINGTON	7-11
PLYMOUTH	7-15
REDFORD UNION	21-6
SOUTHFIELD	7-18
LATHRUP	15-6
STEVENSON	8-8
THURSTON	18-10

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Southfield Cindermen Capture 8th At Huron

Southfield High didn't win the 85-school Huron Relays at Eastern Michigan University, but the Blue Jay cindermen did score in four events for an eighth place finish and Coach Chuck Balog couldn't have been happier.

"Everything went real well," said Balog. "I knew we had the potential to do everything and we did. This

was the first meet in my career where my team didn't come up with some sort of mishap."

Mt. Clemens scored points in six of the 14 events, including three first place finishes, for 122 points and its first Class A victory in the 19-year history of the meet at Eastern.

Flint Central was second

best with 38 points with Southfield six notches down in eighth with 27 points.

Southfield placed second in the two mile relay behind Grand Blanc. The Blue Jay foursome of Dan Henry, Bill Bangert, Kevin Charnesky and Prince Miles got Southfield rolling.

There was no correct timing for the two mile relay as

each squad's second man ran only three laps instead of the required four. Meet officials go the No. 3 man in the running one lap early.

But all schools ran the lap around the relay, and Southfield finished second best only to Grand Blanc.

Southfield's shuttle hurdle relay team of Tom Bakerman, Kevin McNamee, Scott Slatte and Steve Troybridge finished fifth overall with a Blue Jay school record of :29.9.

Flint Central won that event with a clocking of :28.7.

Tom Bakerman captured another Southfield second in the 65 yard hurdles with a time of :08.2. Mt. Clemens' Bob Cornwall won the event in :08.0.

High jump competition saw Southfield's Roger Hibbard place third with a leap of 6-2. Dave Armstrong of Amherst, Ohio and Daryl Williams of Grand Rapids Ottawa finished higher with jumps of 6-4.

Southfield was tied for second for most of the meet but fell behind in the 800 and mile relays when the state powerhouses took control.

The shotput event saw two Observerland athletes break into the scoring.

Thurston's Tom Huron came up with a toss of 54-1 1/2 feet for third while Redford Union's basketball star, Jerry Petch, placed seventh with a heave of 52-3 1/2 feet.

Ann Arbor Pioneer's Bob Elliott won the shot put with a toss of 55 feet six inches with George Washington of Flint Central next best with 55 feet, one half inch.

Behind Cornwall and Southfield's Bakerman in the 65 yard football and basketball star Mark Sopko of Bishop Borgess with a seventh place finish of :08.6.

The pole vault was won by Dave Lipinski of Warren FHS with a climb of 13 feet. Redford Union basketball standout Scott Bjerk finished fifth with a height of 12-6.

Dual meet competition kicked into high gear this week and most area schools will travel to the Spartan Relays this weekend at Michigan State University.

TEAM STANDINGS

1-Mt. Clemens, 52; 2-Flint Central, 28; 3-Ann Arbor Pioneer, 27; 4-Grand Rapids Ottawa Hills, 23; 5-Ann Arbor Huron, 20; 6-Pontiac Central and Cross Point North, 20; 7-Southfield, 27; 8-DeARBorn and Toledo Woodward, 19; 10-Amherst Steeles, 19; 12-Farmington, 18; 13-Kalamazoo Loy Morris and Grand Blanc, 12; 15-MacFarland Center and Port Huron, 11; 17-Warren Fitzgerald, 10; 18-Flint Kerley, Highland Park and Flint Northern, 8.

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"HEAVE-HO" -- Thurston High's Tom Huron heaved himself into a third place finish in the Huron Relays at Eastern Michigan University with a shot put toss of 54-1 1/2 behind the winning distance of 55-6 by Bob Elliott of Ann Arbor Pioneer. (Observer photo)

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