



March Madness

Only 5 Days Away

How can it possibly be here already? Why, it seems like only yesterday I was making my season predictions. But, yes, "March Madness" is almost upon us.

It is one of the most irresistible, overpowering, pulsating forces that strikes every year the first week in March. It causes both young and old to tremble, with the momentum reaching its climax by the final week in March.

First come the districts March 5-10. Then the regionals the following week, the state quarterfinals, semifinals and then the goal of every prep cager, the state Class A championship, which will be held this year in Crisler Arena, Ann Arbor.

Garden City East and West and Westland John Glenn join Belleville, Cherry Hill and Wayne in the Belleville district. The winner will match talents against the champions of the Romulus, Bedford and Melvindale districts in the Belleville regional.

Glenn, with Dave Carlington and Co., should win its district but probably will be meeting Allen Park from the Romulus district, and the Parkers know how to handle exploding Rockets.

The district at Birmingham Seaholm could be one of the most interesting around. At least Southfield Lathrup Coach Jim Kourtakis hopes so.

His Lathrup cagers have lost only one game, that in their second outing against Berkley. The 17-1 Lathrup crew will get its chance to strike revenge against 18-0 state-ranked Berkley.

If Bob Malaby is on target for Lathrup, I think Kourtakis and his Charger crew can overtake Berkley and handle Rice. They also would be a fair shake in the regionals at Seaholm against clubs like Pontiac Central, Sterling Heights and Waterford Mott.

Andover, Farmington, Harrison, Southfield and North Farmington will be in competition with Henry Ford in the Farmington Harrison district. If North Farmington decides to play basketball, it could win it all and then move on to the Ferndale regional where the Raiders would meet Catholic Central.

The Franklin district could produce some interesting results. Franklin itself is by far the top team in its district and the only club with a half-way decent record. But the Patriots have been known to fold in state tournament action.

Unless the Patriots forget how to dribble and shoot, they should handle Crestwood (2-16), Thurston (4-14), Bishop Borgess (10-9), Cody (5-15) and Detroit Redford (2-14) with ease and then get set for a whale of a regional.

Churchill Hill should be the site of one of the most balanced district tournaments in the state. Besides each team sporting a winning record, these are five neighborhood rivals.

Plymouth has to be the favorite, and Coach Fred Thomann could have his eyes set on something more than just the district trophy.

The regional at Franklin will include the winners of the Franklin, Churchill, Walled Lake and the Detroit Murray-Wright districts.

Thurston Bumps Falling GC East

The Thurston Eagle swept down and captured a Garden City East Panther by the tail. Last year on East lost to Thurston would have been a major area cage upset. This season it's just another sad tale in Coach Billy Joe Young's disappointing campaign.

Thurston tipped East, 74-70. For the hungry Eagles, it was only their second victory in the Northwest Suburban Conference against seven losses and fourth win overall against 14 setbacks.

East stands 3-6 in the Northwest and 10 overall. At one time it appeared that Young's Panther crew had it together and would be making a running fight of it with Franklin and John Glenn.

The Panthers have collapsed wherever at this time last year. East was well on its way to the state quarterfinals.

Kevin Keenan jumped in six points in the opening minutes as Thurston slipped to an 18-16 first-quarter lead. The Eagles sped off to a 17-7 second quarter advantage to lead 35-23 at the half.

"We started moving and East just couldn't do much of anything," said Thurston first-year Coach Dan Bennett. East hit only two of 15 from the field while Thurston connected on seven of 14.

RU Breezes By Dearborn, 66-37

Redford Union rolled over Dearborn, 66-37, to put the clamps on the No. 2 slot in the Suburban Eight basketball race.

RU finished 28 of 68 from the floor for 41 per cent and outscored Dearborn, 46-33, Jerry Petsch leading in 15.

"It looks like Allen Park is the champion," added Andrews. "Sure there are a couple of games I would like to take back," said Andrews. "But Plymouth could probably say the same."

Allen Park has all but wrapped up the Eight championship with an 11-1 record. RU is next best at 10-3.

"I would like to take back," said Andrews. "But Plymouth could probably say the same."

Andrews is already looking forward to the district at Churchill High School, which includes Bentley, Churchill, Stevenson, Plymouth and RU.

RU wraps up its Suburban Eight action Friday at home against Bentley.

Scott Bjerk opened the Dearborn contest with a Father's bucket from the corner and RU sped off to a 13-8 lead, hitting six of 16 from the field.

RU rapped in seven of 17 in the second eight minutes. Gary Fulkus scored with his game high 20, with Bjerk adding eight, and RU was up at the half, 31-14.

Dearborn never closed the gap. The Pioneers trailed after three quarters, 50-25, and lost the final period, 16-12.

"They never left their tight zone," added Andrews. "We hit from the outside and that was the game."

Dearborn closed the game, 66-37. RU finished 12 of 19 from 16-68.

Kennedy Gymnasts Take Honors In North Tourney

Taylor Kennedy scored a repeat in the North Farmington Gymnastics invitational.

Kennedy captured first in the 10-team tourney with 52.75 points. Allen Park was second with 49.75.

Top honors went to Kennedy last season with 46.75 points. This year's 10 team stands fell exactly in line with the 72 invitational. Taylor Kennedy was on top and Flat Rock on the bottom.

Kennedy sported four individual champions.

Mark O'Malley won the floor exercise, Bob Malieke the parallel bars, Jim McLaughlin the still rings and Terry Mills tumbling.

The three schools from Observerland boasted one individual winner in Clarenceville's Howard Diamond with a 6.6 on the side horse, Diamond also took second on the parallel bars and North Farmington's Jim Patterson a third in tumbling.

Individual Results Floor Exercise: 1 - Mark O'Malley (TK), 8.0; 2 - Archie Varney (AP), 7.8; 2 - Steve Rimer (TK), 6.7; 3 - Steve Sarmack (AP), 4.6

Parallel Bars: 1 - Bob Malieke (TK), 8.0; 2 - Howard Diamond (TK), 8.0; 3 - Mark Immonen (AAPI), 6.35

Still Rings: 1 - Jim McLaughlin (TK), 7.65; 2 - Harley Danner (AAH), 7.3; 3 - Gary Stockland (TK), 6.3

Tumbling: 1 - Terry Mills (TK), 8.2; Harley Danner (AAH), 7.45; 3 - Jim Patterson (WF), 7.15

Team Standings 1 - Taylor Kennedy, 52.75 2 - Allen Park, 45.00 3 - Plymouth, 44.00 4 - John Glenn, 44 5 - Churchill, 44 6 - Harrison, 41 7 - Franklin, 41 8 - Stevenson, 41 9 - GC West, 40 10 - N. Farmington, 39

100 YD BUTTERFLY 1 - STOKLEY, R.U., 1:56.2 2 - BLANCHARD, G.C. East, 1:57.0 3 - DUPREY, Bentley, 1:57.3

Observer's Top 10

Table with columns W, L, PF, PA and rows for Lathrup, Redford Union, Plymouth, John Glenn, Churchill, Harrison, Franklin, Stevenson, GC West, N. Farmington.

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Swimming Ratings table with columns for 200 Medley Relay, 100 Yd Freestyle, 400 Yd Freestyle, 100 Yd Backstroke, 100 Yd Breaststroke, 400 Yd Free Relay, 100 Yd Butterfly, and Diving.

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