

The Swami



Trail Trash, Issue #97-1, February, 1997

Experts thought it to be impossible but David L. Spengler, publisher of Trail Trash, has obtained the services of the Swami for an unprecedented fourth consecutive year. Terms of the deal have not been announced but it is rumored to be for an amount somewhat higher than the current value of the publisher's unsold bleacher and upper mezzanine tickets from past state tournaments. The Swami claims to be one of Northwest Ohio's leading experts on high school basketball.

Parody is the name of the game this year in NW Ohio which makes it difficult on any prognosticator but this Swami is up to the challenge. Rather than using this as a vehicle to get good state tournament tickets (it never works), let's go to the predictions.

DIVISION I

Regional tournament action returns to NW Ohio in 1997 with the two district winners joining two Northeast Ohio entrants at UT. Plenty of balance this season in NW Ohio with the Toledo sectionals considerably stronger than the other sectionals. Liberty-Benton is a new sectional site and an improvement over the previous ONU and Napoleon venues.

Sectionals:

Willard: As usual, a balanced field with no standouts. Any of the six in this field can advance. Take top seed Mansfield and inconsistent Sandusky in the semis. Senior wins one final by dropping Madison while look for Ross to top Sandusky in the other.

Liberty-Benton: Remember what OJ said about those Bruno Magli shoes? That fits this sectional which boasts of but one team with a winning record. Results here come down to which teams show up ready to play and which teams just show up. Celina squeaks by BG in one semi while Lima Senior nips Defiance in the other. Celina and top seed Wapak head to the district with wins in the finals. Looks like a potential 0-6 start for the Swami.

Waite: Don't believe any of the stuff about St Francis' fall

from their #1 state ranking being the result of the foot injury to standout Rick Fox. The Knights were overrated. St. Francis has talent, questionable depth, and way too much attitude not to mention a starting backcourt that might have the worst hair in the state. Take the Frannies, a disappointing Rogers club, SJ, and Central in the semis. For those planning to attend the Central/Woodward clash, do not sit in a direct line between the Woodward coach and the Woodward parents. You could be hit by a projectile thrown by one of those Woodward "fans". Look for St Francis to stop Rogers in one final while SJ faces Central in a dandy (stolen from WMTR/96.1) in the other final. SJ has the upper hand when it comes to coaching, but look for the Irish to avenge a January loss to SJ.

Libbey: Two great first round matchups with Whitmer facing Libbey and Tim Reiser's Springfield club matching up with Pburg. Look for Libbey (at home) to edge a fast finishing Whitmer team with Bowsher, Start, and Pburg also winning in the semis. The Start/Maumee clash marks the swansong for veteran Panthers coach Jim Robinson. In the finals, Libbey beats Bowsher while Start stops a big Pburg team.

Districts:

BGSU: This will remind no one of the 1972 Celina/Findlay game of the century at Anderson Arena. Look for Mansfield Senior to stop Wapak and Fremont to top Celina in the semis. The Mansfield Tygers advances to the regional with a win over Fremont Ross in the finals.

UT: Injuries have played a major role for two of the clubs in this Savage Hall district. The injury to Rick Fox may have been a blessing in disguise to St Francis as it forced the Knights to develop some depth. Start was arguably the best team in the Toledo area when leading rebounder Tommy Walker went down with a broken leg against Scott. Fox might be back for the tourney while Walker is done. Take the Frannies and Fox over Central as all-stater Robierre Cullars leads the way. In the other semi, Start nips Libbey. In the final, St. Francis earns a trip to the UT regional. All bets are off and this becomes a wild scramble if Fox can not return for St. Francis.

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DIVISION II

Ottawa-Glandorf has spent the majority of the season as Ohio's top ranked Division II club as they looked to better last year's runner-up finish at the state tournament. The Titans, playing without Brad Schumaker, were shocked on February 9 by a 4-12 Bowling Green club dropping from their #1 perch. That loss followed a couple of close calls during the season and certainly has to raise the hopes of several Division II clubs around NW Ohio. The two NW Ohio winners will join two NE Ohio winners at the UT regional.

Sectionals:

Lima Senior: Three excellent clubs in this seven team field. St Marys, Elida, and Bath win first round contests. O-G is not pushed as they destroy St Marys in one final while Elida with the very calm Chris Adams at the helm edges Bath in a classic in the other final. Elida returns to BGSU for the district but this time as a Division II team.

Southview: For those experts that had Anthony Wayne as a top ten team in the state back in January, you might want to think about turning over those ballots to someone who will act responsibly. In the semis, Napoleon easily defeats an Oak Harbor squad that has had its season turned upside down by football injuries while a fine Bryan team stops AW on the other side of the bracket. In the other semis, an underachieving Rossford club over Swanton and Oregon Clay over 1994 state runnerup Wauseon advance. In the finals, the Swami likes Napoleon in a squeaker over Bryan while Rossford moves to the district with a win over Clay.

Sandusky: Normally an eight team deal but Oak Harbor has been moved to Southview and Fostoria to Madison. Bellevue with losses only to Lexington and Shelby stops Norwalk while Clyde defeats Port Clinton. It has been a difficult year at Port Clinton with the untimely death of Coach Tom Bodager in January. In his years at PC, Tom built a basketball tradition at a school that did not have one prior to his arrival. But it was more than wins and losses, Coach Bodager was a gentleman and his teams were a reflection of their coach. He will be missed. In the finals, look for Belle-

vue to drop Vermilion and Sandusky Perkins to defeat Clyde.

Mansfield Madison: It's funny but you don't hear of people complaining about Willard and recruiting anymore. Maybe three wins have something to do with that. Bucyrus nips the Flashes in an opening matchup while Shelby whips Fostoria in the other semi. In the finals, Lexington with OSU recruit Jon Sanderson beats Shelby while Galion advances with a win over archrival Bucyrus.

Districts:

BGSU: In a return matchup from the '96 district at BG, Rossford takes on O-G. The results are the same as the Dogs give O-G a run but the Titans are too tough. In the other semi, Elida and Napoleon are almost too evenly matched to predict a winner. Elida uses their tournament experience to nip the Cats. In the final, Elida avenges a January loss and upsets Ottawa-Glandorf.

Ashland University: A big Bellevue team led by David Falknor drops Galion in a battle of NOL clubs while Lexington has no trouble in defeating Perkins. Always a Swami favorite, Lex was considered at the beginning of the season to be a contender for a Division II state title by the Swam. The Minutemen have struggled to seven losses. Bellevue and Lex meet in a repeat of the '96 finale. Once again, Lex moves on to the regional.

DIVISION III

The 1997 season has not exactly been a vintage year for Division III basketball in NW Ohio. Patrick Henry and Ontario have gotten the most recognition on a statewide basis although PH has struggled during the second half of the season. The Division III regional has been moved from BGSU to UT for '97. The three NW Ohio district winners will be joined by the Elyria winner at Anderson Arena.

Sectionals:

Elida: Only five teams make the trek to the Elida Fieldhouse. In the semi, Coldwater hangs on to defeat Kenton.

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Kenton has only four wins but took O-G into overtime. In the finals, top seed Wayne Trace is dropped from the trail by Coldwater. LCC wins another sectional title with a win over Parkway.

Defiance: This was a terrific sectional last year. Archbold moved all the way to the state championship in '96 where they lost to Miami East. Their hopes for the title may have been dashed by the infamous "shot taken after the horn but called good anyway" call that allowed Miami East to advance to the finals against the Streaks. In one semi, Liberty stops Archbold with Fairview beating Delta. In the finals, PH wins over Liberty while the Tinmen of Tinora nip the Apaches in a GMC matchup.

Northview: Evergreen opens up the Northview sectional with a close win over '96 regional runnerup Genoa. Lake wins the other semi by beating a weak Stritch club. In the finals, Aaron Lawniczack leads Eastwood to a tight win over Evergreen while Lake repeats their '96 sectional championship with a win over Otsego,

Old Fort: Fremont St Joe lost a coin flip for the second seed and ends up in the same bracket as top seed Woodmore. St Joe drubs Elmwood but does not have enough to beat a Woodmore club that has been hot down the stretch. In the other bracket, Carey beats Lakota in the semifinal and pushes Mohawk before falling to the Warriors.

Norwalk: This sectional features the Firelands and Sandusky Bay Conferences. Look for New London to beat Ashland Crestview and Edison to drop Western Reserve in semifinal action. The finals are tossups. Huron has gone undefeated in the SBC but it is a down year for that conference. Huron will have just enough to nip New London. Meanwhile, Edison will upset Margaretta in the other final.

Bucyrus: Although seldom incorrect, the Swami generally gets a large amount of abuse for this sectional. Upper has improved as the season has progressed but won't have what it takes to defeat the Pride of the Valley while Colonel Crawford can mail it in against Seneca East. In the finals, Ontario edges by Clear Fork while Wynford disposes of Colonel Crawford.

Districts:

Napoleon: The Grand Canyon AKA Swami's favorite venue...right. Coldwater knocks off Tinora in the first game with Big Board Friday's favorite team, Patrick Henry, beating LCC in the second game. In the final, Coldwater sends PH back to brat country after an upset win over PH.

Waite: Probably the only tournament site where there are voting machines in the men's restroom. The Swami refuses to discuss what might be voted on in those surroundings. Our publisher spotted Toledo Mayor Carty Finkbeiner in that room and was heard to ask "Aren't you that guy from Oak Harbor?". You had to be there; it really loses something in the translation. Eastwood stops Mohawk in a high scoring affair while Woodmore easily defeats Lake in the other contest. In the final, look for Woodmore to advance with a win over the Eagles.

Ashland University: Winners from the Bucyrus sectional dominate as Wynford defeats Huron and Ontario handles the Edison Chargers. In the final, Wynford earns a trip to the BGSU regional with a win over Ontario.

DIVISION IV

We've said it before but the best Division IV basketball in the state year in and year out is in Northwest Ohio. Good teams and great fans; it doesn't get any better than that. 1997 is no exception with top ranked Lincolnview and a number of other strong clubs. New sectional sites this year are at Coldwater and USV replacing St Marys and Parkway. The Wapak and Galion district winners advance to the Columbus regional with other district winners headed to UT.

Sectionals:

Coldwater: An all MAC field in a MAC gym. Look for New Bremen in one semi with Marion Local edging Minster in the other. In the finals, the seeds prevail with St Henry winning over New Bremen and New Knoxville defeating Marion.

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USV: The sectional tournament heads to the new gym in McGuffey. Riverdale and Ada are victorious in semifinal contests. In one final, the Swami likes Perry over Riverdale. The other pits undefeated and state ranked Waynesfield Goshen against Ada. The thought of the upset crossed the Swami's mind, but look for W-G to nip the boys from Ada.

Van Wert: This sectional features two state ranked teams in Lincolnview and Delphos St. John's. Fort Jennings takes Delphos Jeff in one game with Crestview edging the Big Green of Ottoville in the other. Lincolnview and Delphos St. John's move on to district play with wins over Delphos Jeff and Crestview, respectively.

Lima Bath: Two year's after being voted as the worst sectional by the Swami, there is some improvement in this field. Allen East beats Cory-Rawson in one semi with LTC prevailing over Spencerville in the other. In the finals, take Bluffton over Allen East and USV over LTC.

Ottawa-Glandorf: Two more state ranked clubs highlight this all PCL sectional. Continental in a low scoring affair and Miller City win first round contests. In the finals, it's impossible to go against the state ranked clubs as Leipsic sinks Continental and Kalida wins over Miller City.

Springfield: Okay Trail Trivia fans, when was the last time a team from this sectional won a game in the district. It hasn't happened often. Just a hunch, but there might be seats available at Springfield. Take Gibsonburg over TCS and Emmanuel Baptist over MVCDS in the first round. The Swami likes Gibsonburg to stop Ottawa Hills in one final and top seed Northwood to prevail in the other.

Bryan: Archers stop the Locos in the Swami's top nickname game for 1997 in one semifinal. In the other first round game, a young Edon squad tops the Aces. In the finals, take North Central over Antwerp and Edgerton over Edon.

Wauseon: In the first game, Holgate defeats Stryker. In the other semifinal game, the Danny Neff rule is invoked. In the one final, take the Blackbirds over Holgate. In the other final, the Neff rule prevails as the Pilots stop the Cadets of Hilltop.

Findlay: In one semi, take North Baltimore over Arlington while in the other semifinal somebody has to win. The finals have 1995 state champ Liberty-Benton taking North Baltimore and McComb advancing with a win over Van Buren.

Hopewell-Loudon: The Swami looks for New Riegel to upset St. Wendelin in one game with Calvert beating Bettsville in the other. In the finals, the Swami looks for Arcadia to edge New Riegel in one game with Calvert losing to Old Fort in the other.

Port Clinton: The top seed passed up a first round bye in order to open tournament action at the Jefferson Street gym. After St. Paul wins the opener against Sandusky St. Mary's, Hopewell stops Monroeville to move to the finals. In championship games, St. Paul bests the Danbury Lakers while South Central drops Hopewell-Loudon. Danbury's mascot is dressed as a wave and recently body slammed an opponent's mascot causing significant damage not only to the opposing mascot but also to the opposing mascot's costume.

Lexington: Crestline follows Norwalk St Paul's lead and beats Lucas in the first game. Plymouth over a once powerful Mansfield St. Peter's program. In the finals, look for Crestline to top BC and Mansfield Christian to edge Plymouth.

Districts:

Wapak: In game one, St Henry sends Waynesfield-Goshen home with their first loss of the year while New Knoxville tops Cridersville Perry in the other tilt. In the final, look for St Henry to advance to the regional with a hard fought victory over New Knoxville.

Elida: In one semi, Lincolnview has too much firepower for 1994 state champ USV. In the other game, Delphos St. John's gets a scare from Bluffton but prevails. The Elida Fieldhouse is jammed for the finale as Lincolnview with Brandon Pardon and Wes Dudgeon leading the way knocks off the Blue Jays.

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Findlay: In the preliminaries, Leipsic trips Northwood while Kalida blasts Gibsonburg. In the championship bout, the Swami's heart is saying Leipsic and his head is saying Kalida. Let's go with the Wildcats. No, that doesn't work. The heart prevails as Leipsic avenges its 1996 district championship loss and defeats Kalida.

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Napoleon: A busy week at the Grand Canyon. North Central knocks off Ayersville in the first game with Pettisville defeating Edgerton in game two. In an all BBC championship game, North Central advances to the regional at UT with a win over the Blackbirds.

Fostoria: This district promises to be a wild scramble. Liberty-Benton stops Old Fort in one semi with McComb edging out Arcadia in the other. In the championship game, Liberty-Benton takes their third district championship in the past four years by beating McComb.

Galion: The crystal ball is fading rapidly as is the Swami. In one game, Norwalk St. Paul defeats Mansfield Christian with Crestline prevailing over South Central in the other. In the championship game, Crestline nips Norwalk St. Paul for the district crown.

The Swami has left the building. As you head out on the trail this year keep in mind that fame is a vapor, popularity is an accident, and money takes wings. The only thing that endures is character.