

The Swami



Trail Trash, Issue #98-1, February, 1998

David L. Spengler, publisher of Trail Trash (he also has access to the copier), is honored to announce the return of the Swami for an unprecedented fifth consecutive year. The Swami, Northwest Ohio's self-proclaimed expert on high school basketball has just concluded his exhaustive research on the 1998 tournament trail. This research includes scouting trips, reviewing game tapes, pouring over numerous publications, consulting with other experts, and breaking out his ouige board. Why all the trouble you ask. It certainly isn't to entertain. It certainly isn't to heap accolades upon the publisher. It certainly isn't the money although the publisher was heard to say at last year's state tournament "...money is no object." Could it be that the Swami really cares about the readers of Trail Trash? Highly doubtful. It must be that the Swami has no life and has nothing better to do with his time.

Enough of the drivel. Let's go to the predictions.

DIVISION I

A big change in the format with the traditional BG/UT format being scrapped and three NW Ohio teams advancing to the regionals. District semi-final games will be played at the sectional sites (Willard, L-B, Waite, Libbey) with a district final tripleheader scheduled for UT's Savage Hall. Those three winners will be joined at the UT regional by the Grafton Midview winner (#1 St. Edward). Trail Trash would like to thank the Waite site manager, Bob Utter, for his assistance in deciphering the new format.

SECTIONALS

Willard: Mansfield Senior and Sandusky are seeded. Madison will beat Columbian in the only

first round game but lose to an extremely quick Sandusky in one final. Mansfield Senior advances over Ashland in the other final.

Liberty-Benton: Lima Senior and Celina are seeded. Certainly a better group than a year ago when both winners were smoked in the first round of the district. Findlay will win big over Wapak in the only semi-final game. Lima Senior blew out Findlay when they met earlier in the season. This time it will be much closer but Lima will squeeze by the Trojans. A junior dominated Celina team will triumph over an improved Defiance club in the other final.

Waite: Whitmer and St. John's are seeded. Four teams could have been seeded but for reasons unknown to the Swami, only two got seeds. This results in a sectional stronger than the Libbey site with seven very solid clubs. In first round action, Central will stop Mike Vannett's BG Bobcats and Clay, led by Tom Clay, will drop Springfield for the second time this season. Fremont Ross over Northview, St. John's over Central, Bowsher over Woodard, and Whitmer over Clay take sectional final games. The St. John's/Central matchup features two teams that will be state powers in 98/99.

Libbey: Scott and Libbey are seeded. Why only two seeds? Last year Libbey coach LeRoy Bates complained that the officials had ties to Whitmer and cost his Cowboys a win against the Panthers in their sectional opener even though the game was played at Libbey. Come on LeRoy, must have been filling out all those papers for student loans. This year Libbey gets a bye in the opening round and then gets the Maumee/Souhview winner (five combined wins) at Libbey in a sectional final. If the

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Cowboys can manage a win, they will play the Start/St. Francis winner (two sub .500 clubs) in a district semi-final at Libbey. Let's hope that LeRoy doesn't complain this year that his players can't find the gym where the tournament games are being played. Seriously, why does Libbey have the opportunity to play a sectional and district semi-final on its home floor? Not having a strong district semi foe can be attributed to the seeding (or lack of) process. Look for AW to squeak by Rogers and Southview to edge Maumee in first round action. The Rogers loss will mark Bart Schroeder's final game as coach of the Rams. Bart coached Toledo Macomber-Whitney (featuring Jimmy Jackson of the Golden State Warriors and Myron Bell of the Pittsburgh Steelers) to the '89 Division I state championship. Scott over Waite, AW over Perrysburg, St. Francis over Start, and Libbey over Southview in sectional final play.

DISTRICT

Under the new format, district semi-final games will be played at the sectional sites with all district final games at UT. In the semi-finals, the Swami likes Sandusky over Mansfield Senior; Lima Senior over Celina; St. John's over Fremont; Whitmer over Bowsher; Scott with Jeremy King over AW; and Libbey over St. Francis. In district final play, Sandusky will defeat Lima Senior; St. John's (assuming they're at full strength) will have too much for Floyd Campbell and friends and will upset the Panthers; and the now media friendly Ben Williams will continue his coaching career for at least another game as Scott drops Libbey. All bets are off if the Toledo schools (Scott, Libbey, Waite, Bowsher, Woodward, Rogers, Start) go on strike.

DIVISION II

Not much depth in Division II for 1998. Elida, Shelby, and Ottawa-Glandorf have been state ranked for the majority of the season with Bellevue and Napoleon also getting some votes. There is not much else after those five clubs. The two NW Ohio district winners will be joined by winners from Lorain (Benedictine?) and Columbus at the BGSU regional.

SECTIONALS

Lima Senior: Elida and Ottawa-Glandorf are seeded. Bath over Paulding, O-G over St. Marys, and Shawnee over Van Wert take first round wins. In the finals, Elida will win easily over Bath while Shawnee will be out to prove that their earlier season win over O-G was no fluke. O-G nips Shawnee in a squeaker.

Souhview: Napoleon and Oak Harbor are seeded. Not much of a sectional this time around. Three of the six teams were 3-14 at the time of the draw. Too bad that Anthony Wayne and Clay both moved up to Division I this year. Napoleon looked like a regional contender after defeating Ottawa-Glandorf at O-G, but stumbled badly against Archbold and Wayne Trace and lost an overtime thriller to Edgerton. The Swami likes Rossford over Fostoria in a real tossup. Another stumbling team, Oak Harbor, will ease by Bryan in the other first round game. Napoleon will bounce Rossford in one final while an Oak Harbor team that has been woeful on the road will nip Otsego in the other.

Sandusky: Bellevue and Clyde are seeded. Bellevue has on a roll this season but has surprising road losses to Bucyrus and Clyde. The Redmen, led by

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6'7" three point ace and widebody David Falknor, skipped a first round bye and will top rival Norwalk in the opener. On the other side of the bracket, Perkins will drop Vermilion but it will be much closer than their first meeting. In the finals, Bellevue will have trouble keeping the margin under forty points against Port Clinton which is probably the state's worst Division II team. Perkins has found a way to lose close games and Clyde has found a way to win close games all season. The sectional final will be no different as the Pirates lose to Clyde.

Mansfield Madison: Shelby and Galion are seeded. The Swami likes Bucyrus over Upper and Lex over Willard in the first round. Bob Haas certainly knew when to get out of coaching at Willard. State ranked Shelby will whip Bucyrus in one final. Galion has an easy win over Lexington earlier in the season and the Minutemen have stumbled down the stretch. Look for Lex to upset Galion in the other final.

DISTRICT

BGSU: Elida will easily handle Oak Harbor in the first game with O-G and Napoleon being too close to call in the other semi. Elida's win will be so easy that the Bulldog fan who resembles Dave Letterman and usually wears his best sweats and t-shirt to the game will remain seated for the entire evening. Since we have to pick someone in the other game, let's assume that the Wildcats will be back at full strength and prevail over the Titans. In the final, Elida will defend their district crown with a win over Napoleon.

Ashland University: Bellevue will eliminate Lexington in the first game with Shelby dumping Clyde in a low scoring affair. The Whippets better not be

looking ahead to Bellevue. In the final, look for Bellevue to gain a measure of revenge with a win over NOL champ Shelby and join Elida as a repeat district winner.

DIVISION III

Division III basketball statewide is usually a running joke. There have been several teams at the state tourney with losing records and fans have seen some ugly basketball with interesting (?) officiating. Division III basketball in NW Ohio is no joke in 1998 with defending state champ (did the basket count?) Patrick Henry, Ontario, Evergreen, and two of the state's most underrated teams, Huron and Wayne Trace. The three district winners advance to UT after a one year stop at BGSU. They will be joined by the winner of a relatively weak Elyria district (Lutheran West?).

Elida: Parkway and Bluffton are seeded. Nothing outstanding here. The Swami likes an inconsistent Coldwater team over Kenton in one semi-final with LCC defeating Allen East in the other. In the finals, Coldwater upsets a young Bluffton club that will be heard from in the future, and LCC edges Parkway in the lower bracket.

Defiance: Wayne Trace and Patrick Henry are seeded. Best Division III sectional in the state (again). The Swami likes a fast improving Archbold club over Columbus Grove in the first game with Fairview stopping Tinora in a teacher versus pupil matchup in game two. In one final, the Raiders take on Archbold. Just win baby as Wayne Trace prevails. Fairview takes on PH in the other final. One of the Swami's sources says take Fairview. Patrick Henry has struggled on the road. The Green Mead-

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ows Conference has been strong in '98. All good reasons to take the Apaches. But no, PH prevails when Fairview hits the potential winning shot after the buzzer in a game officiated by the Marquette brothers and watched by the Krauss brothers.

Northview: Evergreen and Delta are seeded. Liberty Center wins over Swanton in the first game. Liberty has been tough at home with a win over Waite and tough losses to PH and Evergreen but has struggled on the road. Swanton has struggled period. Wauseon has faded down the stretch but has enough to get by Northwood in the other semi-final. Evergreen has had a habit of playing at the level of their competition. Winning (except at Wauseon early in the season) but still playing at the level of their competition. That can be very dangerous at tournament time. The Vikings will overlook Liberty but have just enough to nip the Tigers. Delta should be able to beat Wauseon with two wins already over the slumping Indians but the Swami has a hunch that Wauseon will advance.

Old Fort: Gibsonburg and Genoa are seeded. An all SLL field. Need we say more? The Swami likes no one except Gibsonburg in this field but must pick someone in order to fulfill his contractual obligation. Look for Lakota to top Lake and Elmwood to top Eastwood. Gibsonburg is a lock over Lakota in one final. Genoa has found a way to lose to people like Lake, East wood, and Otsego but has a win over Clay. Royals Coach Tim Murray gave the Comets enough good bulletin board material after an earlier game for Genoa to win again.

Norwalk: Huron and Ashland Crestview are seeded. A good Huron club and a lot of mediocrity at this site. Huron has gotten barely a sniff in the Division

III polls with only a close early season loss to Bellevue marring their record. The Tigers have won a number of close games but do own an easy victory over a good Division I Mansfield Madison club. Huron has a February 21 showdown with Sandusky which will show whether the Tigers are for real. Take Margareta and Edison in semi-final games. Huron will stop the Polar Bears in a relatively close game in one final with Edison dropping Crestview in the other.

Bucyrus: Ontario and Wynford are seeded. This sectional features the state's top ranked Division III squad, undefeated Ontario. In the first round, Clear Fork defeats Mohawk with Carey eliminating Seneca East. In the finals, Ontario advances with a win over the Colts while Wynford continues along the trail by defeating Carey.

DISTRICTS

Napoleon: One of two district tournaments to be held at the once Grand Canyon. In the first game, the Swami likes the chances of Patrick Henry and their trio of 1,000 point scorers against Coldwater. In the nightcap, look for Wayne Trace to handle the LCC T-Birds. The final has '91 state champ Wayne Trace taking on '97 state champ Patriots. Five players that can score are able to more than offset PH's big three with Wayne Trace holding off the Pats.

Waite: The first game pits Evergreen against Genoa. The Comets need to utilize their height advantage if they are to stop the Vikes. They don't and Evergreen advances to the final. In the second game, Wauseon faces off against Gibsonburg. The Swami's bias against the SLL rears its ugly head again with the Indians nipping the Golden Bears. In

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the final, Evergreen avenges a December loss to Wauseon and takes the district crown back to the Big House on County Road 6.

Ashland University: Huron can't afford to look ahead in their opener against a solid Wynford club. The Tigers continue to follow their '98 script and defeat Wynford in a close battle. Edison has the dubious task of taking on the undefeated Ontario Warriors. Ontario is too strong for the Chargers. The final is a tough call for the Swami. Undefeated clubs have a habit of losing in the district final. Huron has the size to match up with Ontario, experience, and a veteran coach in Dino Caporini. But the Tigers have always had a tough time at Ashland. Ontario has size, tradition, and plenty of experience from the '97 regional runners-up. Take Ontario in a barnburner.

DIVISION IV

Division IV basketball in NW Ohio for 1998 takes on a different look. For the past several years, there was a powerhouse team in NW Ohio. A team ranked at or near the top that was either the odds-on favorite to win it all or at least had a great chance. You know what I mean. Lincolnview in '97 and '96; Liberty-Benton in '95; Upper Scioto Valley in '94; LCC in '93 and '92; St. Henry in '91. This year there are a number of good Division IV teams in NW Ohio but no dominant team. Norwalk St. Paul is probably the only team that has been ranked week in and week, but I don't think anyone will confuse them with those past powers. In a nutshell, Division IV in NW Ohio for '98 is wide open. The district winners at Elida, Napoleon, Archbold, and Fostoria advance to the UT regional. The winner at Wapak heads to Wright State while the Galion winner goes

to the beautiful Columbus Fairgrounds site.

SECTIONALS

Coldwater: New Bremen and Minster are seeded. An all MAC sectional which means that nothing will be considered an upset. The upper bracket features three 12-6 (at the time of the draw) teams. Let's go with St. Henry over Fort Recovery in the opener followed by Marion Local over New Knoxville. In the finals, St. Henry will "upset" Minster and New Bremen will stop Marion.

Upper Scioto Valley: Hardin Northern and Ada are seeded. Ugh. Five teams with one winning record. Where are the Triad Local Cardinals when you need them? Riverdale destroys Ridgmont in the semi-final. Hardin Northern over Riverdale and Ada over Waynesfield in the finals. Avoid.

Van Wert: Fort Jennings and Delphos St. John's are seeded. Probably a safe bet that Lincolnview will not defend their '97 state crown, but Lancers will nip the Crestview Knights in the opener. The Swami was heard to say that he would pick anyone who was playing Ottoville. Delphos Jeff? He lied. In the finals, Fort Jennings over Lincolnview and DSJ rips Ottoville.

Bath: Lima Perry and Lima Temple Christian are seeded. Why do they call it Lima Perry? Comparable to the USV sectional. The Swami is clueless (wouldn't be first time). In the upper bracket, take USV over Arlington. In the final, take Perry over the Rams. In the lower, Spencerville over Cory-Rawson. Temple Christian advances with a win over the Bearcats in the final.

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Ottawa-Glandorf: Kalida and Continental are seeded. In the first game, McComb stops Leipsic while Miller City drops Pandora-Gilboa in game two. In the upper bracket final, Kalida takes its umpteenth sectional title with a win over McComb. The Swami has survived a great deal of lobbying by the Continental people. The Pirates defeat Miller City in the thriller at the Hermiller.

Springfield: Emmanuel Baptist and Woodmore are seeded. AKA the Reverend Michael Pitts Invitational.

Rumor that the Reverend Pitts is willing to bet his pants that Toledo Christian will prevail. Pitts loses pants as Woodmore beats Christian in the first game. Allegedly throws in undershorts for good measure. Probably not the first time. Typical of those zany guys from Lima. Ottawa Hills dumps Stritch in other opening round action. In the finals, Woodmore wins easily over MVCDS while Lionel Armstead scores a zillion points as Emmanuel tops the Hills.

Bryan: Edgerton and North Central are seeded. Antwerp avenges loss to Edon and Montpelier decks Hicksville in first round games. In the finals, the Archers upset North Central while Edgerton, coming off a regular season victory over Napoleon, rocks the Locos.

Wauseon: Pettisville and Stryker are seeded. What happened here? Ayersville is still getting votes in the state poll yet doesn't get a seed. Pilots beat Fayette, and Holgate bops Hilltop in the semi-finals. In the finals, the Swami likes Ayersville over Pettisville and Holgate over Stryker. Do you see some pattern with these Green Meadows teams?

Findlay: Liberty-Benton and North Baltimore are seeded. Take St. Wendelin over Vanlue and Van Buren over Arcadia in the first round. Liberty-Benton beats St. Wendelin easily in one final. North Baltimore was ranked in the top ten for several weeks but is fading quickly. Tigers could be eliminated quickly from the tourney, but NB hangs on to nip VB.

Hopewell-Loudon: New Riegel and Tiffin Calvert are seeded. Upper bracket is very strong. Swami likes Buckeye Central over St. Joe and Old Fort over Bettsville in first round games. In the finals look for Buckeye Central to upset New Riegel with Old Fort holding off Calvert.

Port Clinton: Norwalk St. Paul and South Central are seeded. Good opening round games. 1997 state semi-finalist Norwalk St. Paul faces a solid Sandusky St. Marys team while Danbury Lakeside faces Hopewell-Loudon. D-L has quietly put together a solid season out on the peninsula with wins over Gibsonburg and Oak Harbor. The state ranked Flyers defeat St. Marys while Danbury edges H-L. In the finals, St. Paul has no problem defeating Monroeville bringing out all sorts of recruiting rumors while South Central squeezes by the Lakers.

Lexington: Plymouth and Colonel Crawford are seeded. Go with Crestline over Mansfield St. Pete and Mansfield Christian over Lucas in first round games. Christian is not to be confused with Mansfield Temple Christian which has been receiving mention in the state polls. Mansfield Temple Christian is not a member of the OHSAA. In the finals, Plymouth edges Crestline and Colonel Crawford defeats Mansfield Christian.

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DISTRICTS

Wapakoneta: Take the Coldwater winners, St. Henry and New Bremen, over Ada and Hardin Northern respectively. In the final, St. Henry upsets New Bremen with 6'9" Denny Wendell leading the way. Redskins advance to Wright State.

Elida: Take the Van Wert winners, Fort Jennings and Delphos St. John's, over Lima Temple Christian and Perry respectively. In the final, Delphos St. John's stops Fort Jennings with 6'7" Greg Grothaus leading the way. This is easy.

Napoleon: A traditional site with a new format. Has matched Wauseon and Bryan winners for years even back to the days when the publisher had a full head of hair. Now features O-G and Springfield winners that have traditionally played at Findlay. In the opener, Emmanuel Baptist shoots a zillion three's and doesn't play a lick of defense, as Kalida wins despite EB's Lionel Armstead (headed for West Virginia University on a basketball scholarship) scoring a bunch of points. In the nightcap, Continental and Woodmore is a good matchup. Need to factor in the Swami's attitude about the SLL along with those strong lobbying efforts as Continental prevails. In the final, take Continental over Kalida in a mild upset.

Archbold: The new kid on the block. Holgate stops Antwerp 20-19 in first game resulting in petitions being circulated for shot clock in high school basketball. The nightcap is too close to call. Swami never goes against Ayersville, but really likes Edgerton this year. Let's go with Edgerton. In the final, Edgerton prevails over Holgate 35-31. Shot clock?

Fostoria: LB, NB (or VB?), BC, and OF (or TC?). In the first game, Liberty-Benton eases by Old Fort. as Coach Steve Williman defeats his alma mater. In the nightcap, Buckeye Central ends North Baltimore's season. In the final, look for Liberty-Benton to defeat Buckeye Central in a close, low-scoring affair.

Galion: By now, you might think that the Swami doesn't care who wins. He is hungry and tired, but he has a job to do. But that doesn't really matter because you stopped reading long ago. The publisher, David L. Spengler, has promised me that he will hand out free tickets to game #2 at the state tournament to anyone who tells him they read about the Galion district in Trail Trash. He's pretty cagey though. Those are tickets from game #2 of the 1995 state tournament. Norwalk St. Paul defeats Colonel Crawford and Plymouth edges South Central in the semi-finals. St. Paul's gains another trip to the Columbus regional with a win over the Big Red in the final.

Fame is a vapor, popularity is an accident, and money takes wings. The only thing that endures is character. White shoes are back. Dipsey do, dunkaroo.