

Trail Trash

**for the 2000 OHSAA Boys High School
Basketball Tournament**

Published exclusively by Dave Spengler

Featuring Commentary & Predictions by ...

The Swami



For the seventh consecutive year, Trail Trash is privileged to bring you the opinions of the Swami, Northwest Ohio's self-proclaimed high school basketball expert and guru. Nowhere else will you find such an in depth preview of Northwestern Ohio high school tournament basketball. Few have even dared to try. No one else has succeeded.

In reality, the Swami had a mediocre year in 1999. As a result, the Swami has reinvented himself for 2000. Sure there were still the scouting trips but reviewing game tapes and scouring over various publications became a thing of the past. Experts were nowhere to be found although the Swami thinks an alleged expert walked past him at a game in Archbold. Sadly, the Swami's ouija board was traded for a month's supply of Spam as part of his Y2K contingency plan. Instead of watching Big

Board Friday, the Powers Pack, and Friday Frenzy for the information they provide, the Swami began viewing them for their artistic value.

Speaking of those three shows, the Swami has endorsed Big Board Friday as the best of the lot. Despite having the geeky Dan Cummins and the indescribable Joe Rychnovsky, the show provides the most coverage and has presented some excellent feature stories without any references to Chopper 11. Friday Frenzy runs a close second although John Weinert on a big screen late at night can frighten even the most grizzled veteran. Meanwhile, our biggest gripe with the sometimes annoying Powers Pack has been the large number of games where no score is reported.

Enough of the bull. Let's get it on. It's Swami time.

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DIVISION I

Top-ranked and undefeated Toledo Libbey heads the field. '99 state qualifier Mansfield Senior, Lima Senior, and Toledo St. Francis have also been fixtures in the top ten throughout 2000. There is not a great deal of depth coming out of Toledo with St. John's Jesuit and Scott, although respectable, in reloading years. Of the non-Toledo teams, Sandusky, Fremont Ross, Ashland, Celina, and Findlay are all capable of making plenty of noise. Several changes will mark Division I tournament play for 2000. Three teams rather than two will qualify for regional play with the additional team being from the Toledo area. Neither the Waite nor Libbey field houses will be tournament sites this year. That means no more teams playing on their home floors and no more parking headaches. Instead the Toledo area teams will make the trek to BG's ancient Anderson Arena for sectional play. District semi-final games will once again be played at the sectional sites with district final games to be played at UT's Savage Hall. The three district winners will remain at UT to be joined by the Grafton Midview winner. With no clearcut winner coming out of Grafton, look for a NW Ohio team to make it to the state tournament in 2000.

SECTIONALS

Willard: Mansfield Senior and Fremont Ross are seeded. Excellent sectional with four strong teams. Senior's only loss was to Libbey by a large margin in December. Sandusky over Columbian and Ashland stopping Madison in the first round. Two great finals. In the upper bracket, the Blue Streaks upset Mansfield with Ross nipping Ashland in the lower bracket. For Sandusky to succeed, they'll need to have point guard Brock Alexander available. He has missed some action lately due to academic deficiencies and was recently indicted for complicity to commit aggravated robbery. Without Alexander, Sandusky can not beat the Tygers.

Liberty-Benton: Lima Senior and Celina are seeded. BG with Northwest Ohio's top player, Josh Almanson, defeats Wapak and Findlay bests Defiance in the semis. Lima Senior is too quick, too deep, and too good for the Bobcats in one final. Celina has had an excellent season given that only

one returning player, Brian Dorsten, received a significant playing time on last year's top-ranked team. Look for the Ben Rothlisberger led Trojans to stop Celina for the second time this season in the other final.

BGSU I: Toledo St. Francis and Sylvania Northview are seeded. This probably was not the best year for the Toledo area to have two district winners. A lot of parody exists and there are a number of good sophomores and juniors, but there just aren't eight district caliber teams. In the only semi, Whitmer with OSU football recruit B.J. Barre eliminates Clay. In the finals take Northview over rival Southview, St. Francis over Start, Scott over Central Catholic, and Whitmer over the Woodward Polar Bears. St. Francis Coach Joe Suboticki recently raised the ire of the politically correct when he told one of America's great newspapers that he had a "typical white team."

BGSU II: Toledo Libbey and Toledo St. John's Jesuit are seeded. Other than close wins over Sandusky and East Liverpool, Libbey hasn't really been pushed. The Cowboys own wins over state-ranked Mansfield, St. Francis, and Cleveland South. In the only semi, Springfield defeats the Waite Indians. In the finals take Bowsher over AW, Libbey over Rogers (the Rams are coached by former Libbey assistant Charles Gibson), St. John's over Pburg, and Springfield over Maumee. The Johnnies with only one senior and plenty of depth will be a major force in 2001.

DISTRICT

District semi-final games will be played at the sectional locations with the finals scheduled for a tripleheader at UT's Savage Hall. At Willard, Sandusky will oust rival Fremont Ross while Lima Senior will defeat Findlay at Liberty-Benton. At BGSU, Scott will eliminate junior-dominated Northview while St. Francis will beat Whitmer handily. Also at BG, St. John's will nip Bowsher and Libbey will handle Springfield and Jon Keller. St. John's defeated Bowsher in triple overtime during the regular season in a game the Rebels had no business losing. This time around, the Rebels will need a better effort from Keith Triplett to challenge the much-improved Titans. In the finals look for Lima Senior to edge Sandusky and for Scott to ease by the Frannies. In the third championship game, Libbey and St. John's will meet for the third

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time this season. Once again it's Libbey time as Eyuless Palmer, Jamaal Mays, and Marquis Fobbs lead the Cowboys.

DIVISION II

Division II in NW Ohio for 2000 again lacks a marquee team. Willard and Otsego, two schools with very different basketball pasts, are NW Ohio's highest ranked teams. Willard was consistently state ranked in the seventies, eighties, and early nineties under Bob Haas. The Flashes fell on hard times when Haas retired and haven't survived a sectional since '93. Under Coach Greg Nossaman, Willard is back. Otsego has been a middle to bottom team in the Division III and IV dominated SLL for years. Despite its lofty ranking, the Knights have their detractors who cite the Knights' less than stellar schedule. Many assumed coming into the season that Lima Shawnee would be NW Ohio's premiere Division II team. The Indians, with four returning starters from a team that was a shot away from winning the regional in 1999, have been plagued by inconsistency. Perennial power Ottawa-Glandorf was briefly in the top ten but has also been plagued by inconsistency and parity in the WBL. Both could make a run in tournament play. Only one new venue for 2000 with the sectional site being shifted from Mansfield Madison to Bucyrus. The two NW Ohio district winners will be joined at BG by district winners from Lorain (Olmsted Falls?) and Columbus (Columbus Eastmoor?). NW Ohio has not had a Division II team at the state tournament since O-G in '96. Don't look for that to change in 2000.

SECTIONALS

Lima Senior: Ottawa-Glandorf and Lima Shawnee are seeded. O-G and Shawnee both have been hard to figure. Van Wert started strong but has faded of late while Elida has improved significantly since the start of the season. The Swami likes Bath over the St. Marys Roughriders, Van Wert over Elida, and O-G big over Paulding in first round games. O-G defeated VW in overtime earlier in the season. This time around should be just as close with the same result. The Titans seldom miss out on the district two years in a



row. When Shawnee defeated Bath in February, the Indians won despite scoring only 5 points in the first half. Shawnee will score a few more this time around in defeating the Wildcats.

Sylvania Southview: Otsego and Napoleon are seeded. Excellent sectional. Otsego is state-ranked, Napoleon has been en fuego of late, Wauseon has clinched the NWOAL, Bryan has been a major surprise, Oak Harbor has big Nathan VanderSluis, Fostoria has defeated Otsego, Lake's season has gone up in smoke, and Rossford isn't very good. Where do we start? Both Otsego and Lake had high expectations coming into the season. Otsego has met those with only a loss to Fostoria. Lake's season has been marred by a court battle when leading scorer Nick Fitzpatrick refused drug testing. Fitzpatrick played off and on between injunctions but has recently left the team. So far, he has not shown up at Maumee as rumored. Take Otsego. Bryan and OH are an excellent first round match. Take the Rockets over the surprising Bears in their third consecutive sectional matchup. Wauseon will have no trouble with Rossford while Napoleon better not get caught looking ahead against Fostoria. In the finals, Otsego will trip Oak Harbor. The Knights better get the lead early to avoid the upset against the deliberate Rockets. Napoleon will stop Wauseon in the other final.

Sandusky: Sandusky Perkins and Norwalk are seeded. Mediocre sectional. In the semis, the Swami likes Bellevue over Clyde and Vermilion over Port Clinton. The Sailors will benefit from their league schedule that includes Mansfield, Ashland, and Lexington. In the finals, Bellevue and Norwalk is a pick 'em game. Take the Truckers. Perkins will squeeze by Vermilion in the other championship game.

Bucyrus: Willard and Lexington are seeded. Willard, led by freshman point guard Nick Dials, has lost only to Ontario and Sandusky. The Flashes should breeze with wins over Galion and Upper Sandusky. Shelby will defeat Kenton in the other semi. The 1999 district champ Whippets have come on strong late in the season but will not quite have enough to get by perennial Swami favorite Lex.

DISTRICTS

(Continued after Division II Brackets)

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BGSU: Should be a bit more competitive than the past two years when the teams coming out of Lima Senior ripped the Southview winners. Playing a schedule that includes just two DI teams (BG and AW) and two DII teams (Fostoria and Lake), it's difficult to believe that Otsego is ranked so highly in the state. Maybe it isn't so hard to believe when you consider that one of America's great newspapers gave the Knights their first place vote after Otsego struggled to defeat Eastwood. In the opener Shawnee with Mike Marshall will be too quick for Napoleon and their high-scoring guard, Chad Bostelman. Look for O-G to defeat Otsego in the other semi in a close contest. In the final, it is usually a safe bet in this district to pick whichever team is playing Elida. With no 'Dogs at BG this year, we'll take O-G in overtime over Shawnee for the district crown.

Ashland University: It will be a major surprise if Norwalk, Perkins, or Lexington can handle Willard. Lexington should not have too much difficulty with Norwalk while Willard advances with a win over Division IV football champ Perkins. In the final, take the Flashes over Lex. Don't expect Willard to overpower the competition at Ashland but do expect them to advance to the regional at UT.

DIVISION III

Every time you think you have Division III figured out, guess again. Last year the Swami took the collar when Coldwater, Evergreen, and Huron won district titles. Expect more of the same in 2000. Liberty-Benton and Lima Central Catholic have been state-ranked throughout the year. L-B, one of the smallest Division III schools in the state in terms of enrollment, returns the nucleus from its '99 district finalist team. The Eagles recently suffered their initial loss of the season in a tight battle with Bluffton. Lima CC always plays a difficult schedule, and this year is no exception. Despite surprising losses to Miller City and Lincolnview, look out for the T-Birds in the tournament. Bluffton, Wayne Trace, Coldwater, Patrick Henry, and Ontario could also cause plenty of trouble. Location changes for 2000 include Galion replacing Bucyrus as a sectional site and

Alumni Hall at Owens Community College replacing the Waite Field House for district competition. The three NW Ohio district winners will again be joined by the winner from the relatively weak Elyria district (Lorain Clearview?) at the UT regional. There will be a NW Ohio team at the state tournament in 2000.

SECTIONALS

Elida: Bluffton and Lima Central Catholic are seeded. The greatest suspense at this sectional was where unseeded Coldwater would fall on the bracket. The Cavs are always tough in the tournament and made it all the way to the state finals in '99 before losing. In one semi-final, take Delphos Jeff over Grove but don't take it far. Coldwater will defeat MAC rival Parkway in the other semi. Bluffton recently won their first outright league crown in over forty years. The Pirates stop Delphos Jeff in one final. Coldwater and LCC are always tough in the tournament, and the Swami keeps waffling on this one. Look for Coach Seg's T-Birds to edge the 1999 state runners-up in the other final.

Defiance: Wayne Trace and Patrick Henry are seeded. Archbold easily defeated Tinora late in the regular season out on Domersville Road so expect the Streaks to again prevail over the Rambos. Junior dominated Wayne Trace has little trouble with Archbold in one final. PH edged Fairview in Hamler when the Apaches were still looking for their first win of the season. The Apaches are greatly improved, but the Pats should be able to take home another sectional crown. PH's success will depend on the health of center Kent Creager.

Sylvania Northview: Evergreen and Swanton are seeded. Only one team with a winning record. Ouch. Swanton and Northwood are both greatly improved after a combined one win season a year ago. Genoa has been extremely inconsistent but will avenge a February defeat by Northwood. In the finals, Genoa sneaks by Swanton and Evergreen makes the short trip from the Outhouse on County Road 6 to the big city and trounces lowly Delta.

Old Fort: Liberty-Benton and Elmwood are seeded. L-B, led by sharpshooting Brady Hoane, has only a two point loss to Bluffton marring their record. The rest of the field consists of SLL teams. In the only semi-final game, look for Woodmore to defeat Eastwood. The Eagles are two years away from

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being a power. Elmwood has a home victory over PH but was handily defeated twice by SLL king Otsego. Defense prevails as Woodmore edges the Royals for the third time this season. L-B destroys Lakota in a mismatch in the other final.

Norwalk: Ashland Crestview and Margaretta are seeded. Crestview has only three losses on the season including one to top-ranked Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary. Huron's chances will depend on the health of Michigan football recruit Jim Fisher. In first round action, Huron will defeat New London while Milan Edison will edge Western Reserve. In the finals, Fisher leads Huron to an upset win over Crestview while Margaretta easily defeats SBC rival Edison.

Galion: Ontario and Wynford are seeded. This sectional features good first round games. In one semi, Clear Fork defeats Seneca East. Bucyrus has dropped to Division III for the first time and takes on neighboring Wynford in the other semi. Bucyrus has been hot of late, but Wynford wins in a struggle. In the finals, Ontario sends Clear Fork back to the corral while Wynford advances after beating up Mohawk.

DISTRICTS

Napoleon: Excellent field for this district at the not so grand canyon. In the opener, Bluffton with Mike Kingsley and Kyle Lowry is just too strong for PH with or without Kent Creager. Wayne Trace has a strong group of juniors and a sophomore long-range bomber in Jake Sinn. The Raiders should be one of the teams to beat in the state in Division III for 2001. The Raiders nip LCC in the other semi. Bluffton has been knocking at the door the past two years and finally get in with a win over Wayne Trace in the district final.

Owens Community College: First time at Owens after a twelve year run at the beautiful Waite Field House. Owens will soon vacate Alumni Hall and move into their new 4000 seat facility. We should see plenty of tournament action there in the future. Nobody is going to touch Liberty-Benton in this one. In the opener, L-B has an easy time with Genoa. In the nightcap, Evergreen edges Don

Christie's Woodmore club. This is the Vikes' fourth consecutive trip to the district. That is quite an accomplishment given the school's lack of past basketball success. In the final, Liberty-Benton easily defeats Evergreen to avenge last year's district final defeat and advance to the UT regional.

Ashland University: Almost the same cast as a year ago with Margaretta replacing Ashland Crestview. Wynford trips Huron in the opener with Ontario defeating Margaretta in the other semi. In the final, Ontario earns a trip to the UT regional after a one-year absence by holding on to defeat the Wynford Royals in a battle of NCC teams.

DIVISION IV

So there's not a powerhouse team in NW Ohio in 2000 like the Brandon Pardon led Lincolnview club from 1997 or the A.J. Grainger/Andy Butler led Liberty-Benton team from 1995 or even this year's Worthington Christian team from Central Ohio. NW Ohio still has plenty of strong Division IV teams and will again be a factor in this year's state tournament. Division IV basketball in NW Ohio is tradition and fan support. Half of the most recent Associated Press state poll consists of NW Ohio teams in Marion Local, Tiffin Calvert, Fort Jennings, St Henry, and Lucas. In addition to those clubs, there are a number of other teams poised to do some damage including Kalida, Ayersville, Delphos St. John's, and New Riegel. Waynesfield-Goshen, wherever that might be, has replaced Upper Scioto Valley as a sectional site. Liberty-Benton is a new district location. The Elida, Liberty-Benton, Napoleon, and Fostoria district champs advance to the UT regional while the Wapakoneta winner advances to the Dayton regional and the Galion champ moves on to the Columbus regional. Expect two Northwest Ohio teams to make the state tournament in 2000.

SECTIONALS

Coldwater: Marion Local and St. Henry are seeded. Always a tough sectional consisting of MAC teams. Marion Local and St. Henry are state ranked. Minster is respectable while disappointing Fort Recovery was the '99 state runner-up. Minster defeats New Knoxville and Fort Recovery eliminates New Bremen in opening round action. In the finals the state ranked teams advance with Marion Local defeating Minster and St. Henry dropping Fort Recovery from the tournament.

Waynesfield-Goshen: Upper Scioto Valley and

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Ridgemont are seeded. The opposite of the Coldwater sectional. At least USV, the 1994 Division IV state champ, has a winning record. Look for Spencerville to stop Ada and Allen East to "upset" Ridgemont in first round competition. In the finals, USV advances with a win over Spencerville while Allen East outlasts Hardin-Northern.

Van Wert: Fort Jennings and Delphos St. John's are seeded. Good sectional. Division VI football champ Delphos was state-ranked earlier in the season but has dropped all the way to .500. Convoy Crestview defeats Lincolnview in the only semi-final game. In the finals, state ranked Fort Jennings stops Crestview with DSJ eliminating the Big Green of Ottoville in the nightcap.

Lima Bath: Lima Temple Christian and Arlington are seeded. The Bath sectional has improved considerably the past couple of years. In the first round, Cory-Rawson destroys Waynesfield-Goshen with Lima Perry eliminating Riverdale. In the finals Lima Temple Christian defeats Cory-Rawson while Perry gains a district berth with a win over the Arlington Red Devils.

Ottawa-Glandorf: Kalida and Miller City are seeded. McComb has the best record in this sectional but has a loss to Miller City. Miller City also has recent impressive wins over Holgate and LCC. In the upper bracket, the Continental Pirates eliminate PCL rival Leipsic. In the final, Kalida edges a young Continental team. The lower bracket features an excellent first round game between McComb and '99 district champ Pandora-Gilboa. McComb hangs on to defeat P-G. In the final, the Panthers "surprise" Miller City to advance to the district.

Springfield: Liberty Center and Gibsonburg are seeded. Liberty was at .500 at the time of the draw with the other teams having losing records. Gibsonburg features Jeremiah Diebler who has scored over forty points several times this season with a high of sixty against Eastwood on February 11. LC passed up the bye but survives against Cardinal Stritch in the opener. Toledo Christian tops Maumee Valley Country Day in the other semi. In the finals, LC advances with a win over

Ottawa Hills while Gibsonburg moves on with a win over the Toledo Christian Eagles.

Bryan: Hicksville and Edgerton are seeded. Edgerton advanced all the way to the state tournament in 1999 and return two of their leading scorers from that team in Derek Sito and Brent Van Horn. Hicksville may be the only team in the state with co-head coaches. In the opener, North Central ends the season for the winless Antwerp Archers while Edon stops neighborhood rival Montpelier. In the finals, Edgerton eliminates North Central while Hicksville edges the Edon Bombers.

Wauseon: Stryker and Ayersville are seeded. Good sectional with five of the teams having winning records and the sixth, Pettisville, having a big time scorer in Justin Riegsecker. Stryker has recently stumbled with league losses to Hilltop and Edon. Improved Hilltop opens sectional play with a win over Fayette. Holgate defeats the Pettisville Blackbirds in the other semi. In the finals, the Swami likes Ayersville over Hilltop and Holgate in a low-scoring battle over junior dominated Stryker. Look out for the Panthers in 2001.

Findlay: Van Buren and Vanlue are seeded. No teams have winning records. Seven wins is as good as it gets. Van Buren does have a recent win over Kalida. Take Carey over Fostoria St. Wendelin and inconsistent North Baltimore over Arcadia in the first round. In the finals, it will be Van Buren over Carey and North Baltimore over Vanlue.

Hopewell-Loudon: Tiffin Calvert and New Riegel are seeded. Calvert is state ranked with its only loss to Fremont St. Joe. Buckeye Central nips Bettsville in the opener and St. Joe stops Old Fort in the other semi-final. Calvert breezes into the district with an easy win over Buckeye Central while New Riegel holds on to edge past Fremont St. Joseph.

Port Clinton: Norwalk St. Paul and Danbury are seeded. Picking the winners at PC is always a challenge. In the upper bracket, take Norwalk St. Paul over Hopewell-Loudon. In the upper bracket final, St. Paul eliminates Firelands Conference rival South Central. In the lower bracket, take Sandusky St. Mary's over Monroeville in the semi.

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The championship game between Danbury and St. Mary's is too close to call. SMCC over the stonecrushers in overtime.

Lexington: Lucas and Colonel Crawford are seeded. Lucas won the district in '99 and has been state-ranked throughout 2000. Look for Plymouth to edge Mansfield Christian in the opener with one-time power Mansfield St. Peter's handling Crestline in the other semi. We'll go with the seeded teams in the finals with Lucas and Colonel Crawford advancing with wins over Plymouth and Mansfield St. Peter's respectively.

DISTRICTS

Wapakoneta: State-ranked Marion Local and St. Henry are on a collision course at Wapak. Marion Local big over Allen East in the opener. Upper Scioto Valley puts up a bit more resistance in the nightcap but the Swami has to go with St. Henry. In the final, the Redskins gain revenge for a regular season loss. St. Henry to the regional in a nailbiter.

Elida: Same quartet as a year ago at the Elida Field House. Fort Jennings over Lima Perry in the lidlifter. Delphos St. John's over Lima Temple Christian in the second game. Fort Jennings and DSJ is a repeat of the 1999 district final. Fort Jennings makes their second consecutive trip to the UT regional with a win over the Blue Jays.

Liberty-Benton: The Springfield winners normally don't fare too well at the district. Moving this district from Napoleon to L-B makes little difference. Kalida bops Gibsonburg in the opener while McComb drops the Liberty Center Tigers in the other semi-final. In the championship game, McComb builds on being snubbed at the sectional drawing and advances to UT with a win over Kalida.

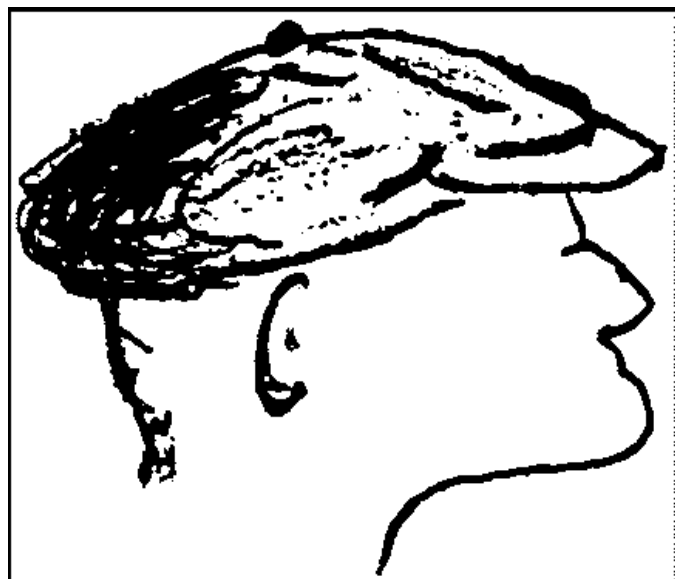
Napoleon: This district is back to the grand canyon after being played at Defiance in 1999 and Archbold in 1998. The field is all GMC although the Swami would have really liked to see Stryker get in. Holgate eliminates Edgerton in the opener. Ayersville follows suit with a win over the Hicksville Aces in the nightcap. In the final, Ayersville advances with a win over Holgate.

Fostoria: Let us hope the lighting has gotten a little better at FHS since the Swami's last visit. Don't expect much in the semi-final games although New Riegel better not be looking past Van Buren. Take the Blue Jackets over VB. Calvert big over North Baltimore in the other semi. Tiffin Calvert captures the district crown with a win over New Riegel

Galion: Come on now. You really didn't read all of this. This is no library. The Swami can not express his happiness in finally getting to Galion. The Swami likes Norwalk St. Paul in the opener over Colonel Crawford. Lucas wins big over Sandusky St. Mary's in the second game. In the final Cubs win, Cubs win. Lucas handily over Colonel Crawford

See you on the trail. All records and rankings are as of February 14, 2000. The opinions expressed in Trail Trash are not necessarily those of David L. Spengler or the staff at the Mini Mall Beauty Salon.

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"The Publisher," an original drawing by Kent Lincoln.

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