



Franklin boys basketball in line for KLA A-East title

SPORTS, 1B

NORTHVILLE RECORD

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PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Redwood in Franklin could be largest of its kind in state

Susan Bromley
Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A tree grows in Franklin. But this is not just any tree.

Not only has this dawn redwood recently been named a potential state champion in the Michigan Big Tree Hunt, this tree is of an ancient species once thought to be extinct. When a dawn redwood was rediscovered in China in 1941, acorns from it were subsequently distributed around the world to save the species. Those efforts spread to Michigan and to the land Jamie Jacob now owns.

"You can only imagine, in the late 1940s when (my) tree was planted, it had to be one of the oldest in the U.S. and that's probably why it's one of the larger ones," Jacob said. "I am assuming I have one of the oldest dawn redwoods in the state."

Jacob's home in Oakland County was built in the 1950s. When he purchased it in 1997, the previous owner shared the history of the tree, also known as a Chinese dawn redwood in a nod to its origin.

According to the Arbor Day Foundation, "The dawn redwood is a living testimony to the surprises still to be

See REDWOOD, Page 2A



This dawn redwood tree in Franklin has been named a potential state champion in the ReLeaf Michigan Big Tree Hunt Contest.

COURTESY OF RELEAF MICHIGAN



I-96 west of Novi Road in Novi. The freeway will go back under construction later this year, focusing primarily on the eastbound lanes from Wixom Road to the I-275/I-696/M-5 interchange. DAVID VESELENAK/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Eastbound I-96 the focus of 2023 flex route construction

David Veselenak
Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Drivers who frequent eastbound Interstate 96 through Lyon Township and Novi will have some challenges to face in 2023. As the calendar changes over, the Michigan Department of Transportation prepares for the second year of work on the new flex route planned along the highway between Kent Lake Road and the I-275/I-696/M-5 interchange.

Work this year will focus on the eastbound section of the freeway from Wixom Road in Wixom to the freeway interchange in Novi.

Traffic going each direction will be maintained at all times, said Brian Travis, the project manager.

"We can basically expect to have two lanes maintained in each direction," he said.

Much like last year's work, the construction to build the new flex route will result in some exit and entrance ramp closures. This year, the entrance ramp

to EB I-96 from Wixom Road is expected to close during construction season, as will both ramps to and from Beck Road. The ramp from Novi Road onto EB I-96 also will close for the entire construction term, which is expected to begin March 1 and run through late fall. The EB I-96 exit ramp to Novi Road will remain open most of the construction season; there will be a period of a month or so when that ramp does close for some work.

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Northville schools asking voters for new bond

David Veselenak
Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

People living within the Northville Public Schools district will have an opportunity this spring to weigh in on a \$134 million bond proposal.

The school board for the district au-

thorized a bond measure to go before voters May 2, 2023, during its Dec. 13 board meeting.

The would be used to support capital improvement projects across the district, including infrastructure improvements such as upgrading HVAC systems; playground upgrades; adding STEAM/Innovation Centers at all ele-

mentary schools; multi-purpose/dining additions and upgrades; and more.

District leaders say the proposed bond would replace old debt being phased out. That would keep the tax rate at 3.4 mills annually for the next eight years.

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Chuck Waggin' keeps pets with families in hard times

Susan Bromley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Just days before Christmas, Patrice Johnson, Tracy Spencer and Melissa Hoffman arrived at Active Faith in South Lyon to pick up essentials to ensure happy holidays for their furry family members.

The women were greeted by friends from the Chuck Waggin mobile pet pantry.

"They are lifesavers," said Johnson, a Wixom resident and owner of a 9-month-old pit bull puppy named Princess who is her sole — and soul — companion. "They are a huge help. With everything that is going on, things are a little tight and I don't have to worry — I know she has food to last her the whole month."

Chuck Waggin also helps feed Kengi and Katara, two Akitas owned by Hoffman, a Commerce Township resident. It's one less thing to worry about for the mother of six, who has a 3-month-old son with Down Syndrome and a 5-year-old son who suffers from epileptic seizures.

"It means we didn't lose our animals," she said. "If it wasn't for them, I would have had to rehome our dogs. I was on bed rest and no income coming in. Everything was struggle, struggle, struggle."



Patrice Johnson, Melissa Hoffman, and Tracy Spencer pick up items from Chuck Waggin, a mobile pet pantry that makes visits monthly to Active Faith in South Lyon.

COURTESY OF APRIL TYLER

gle. Our pets mean everything to me, because they mean everything to the kids. Even though one of the dogs is a service animal, I would have had to get rid of her, because I wouldn't have been able to feed her."

April Tyler will celebrate Chuck Waggin's one-year anniversary on Jan. 1. She founded the nonprofit after seeing a need in her volunteer efforts with food pantries pre-pandemic. Clients getting food would often seek items that their pets could also eat.

It's been full steam ahead since March, but keeping Chuck Waggin

chugging along has not been without its challenges, including shortages in wet cat food and the general increases in pet food prices, which also drives more people to seek assistance.

"Pet food prices have skyrocketed, just like the grocery," Tyler said. "They are triple what they were and people have a hard time affording that."

At St. Joseph Catholic Church in Howell, where the mobile pantry sets up shop the first Saturday of every month, Tyler gave out enough food in three hours to feed 97 cats and 49 dogs for all of December. South Lyon has similar

numbers the third Monday of the month. On the second Saturday of every month, the pantry visits Arise Church in Pinckney, and after the start of the year, she will add a Genesee County pantry in Davison.

She only is able to do this because of donations from businesses and the efforts of private individuals, such as Wendy Velthoven and her two sons, Owen and Austin.

Velthoven, a real estate agent, and her boys knocked on the doors of about 225 homes in South Lyon recently, and the community generously responded.

Some handed over canned food and homemade dog treats on the spot. Others went shopping and dropped off items on Velthoven's front porch.

"I was surprised so many people cared enough and went out of their way to donate for the pets," Velthoven said.

On Monday, she loaded up all the items, which Tyler estimated at about 400 pounds worth, and helped distribute them.

Tyler is grateful; so is Spencer, who is able to keep Thor, a 7-year-old pit bull her son left behind when he went off to college.

"This is a blessing," Spencer said.

To learn more about Chuck Waggin pet food pantry and how you can give or receive help, visit www.chuckwaggin-pet.com.

Flex route

Continued from Page 1A

Also closing for the season for work this year is the WB I-96 entrance ramp from WB M-5.

Detours around the work will send drivers to Grand River Avenue to I2 Mile to M-5 to get back heading to either EB

I-696 or I-275/M-5, Travis said.

Once complete in 2024, the work in Novi, Wixom and Lyon Township will result in the state's second flex route, which will allow for an additional lane to open during congested times.

It will also lead to the state's first ramp metering, which will help space out vehicles entering the freeway. With those being new, Travis said MDOT will work to educate drivers on how to use

them.

"Other states have them. They never really took off here," he said. "It's going to be a big education piece."

Work in 2022 included reconstructing the eastbound lanes of the freeway from Kent Lake Road to Wixom Road.

Complicating the work along I-96 in 2023 will be the project to the east: EB I-696 will also see work this year through Farmington Hills and South-

field. Adding that additional work means drivers who routinely use the roads will need to be extra careful, especially in work zones.

"It's obviously going to be impactful," he said. "We want people to drive through as safe as possible."

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Redwood

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found in nature. When dinosaurs roamed the earth, it is believed that trees in the Redwood family were very abundant. Today, only 9 genera and 15 species exist. Dawn redwood was one of those known only as a fossil until 1941, when it was discovered growing in a remote valley of the Szechwan province of China. Seeds were collected by the Arnold Arboretum in 1947, and the species has been distributed worldwide."

Jacob has always enjoyed the deciduous conifer, whose bright green leaves turn bright orange in the fall. But he never considered its potential to get statewide recognition until he read about the 2020-2022 Big Tree Hunt contest.

Since 1993, ReLeaf Michigan has hosted the contest to encourage citizens to enjoy the outdoors while also observing and helping to identify the largest trees in the state, which are then entered into a state registry.

The dawn redwood in Franklin measured 149.5 inches in circumference, and is second in its species only to a dawn redwood in Jackson that has a circumference of about 183 inches.

As a potential state champion, the



The leaves of a potential state champion dawn redwood found in Franklin. COURTESY OF JAMIE JACOB

height of the tree and its crown spread will also be measured next year, and along with its circumference, will be tallied in a point system that would determine whether it is a runner-up or a new champion.

The 2020-2022 Big Tree Hunt contest had 650 entries from 79 of Michigan's 83 counties. Previous winning trees can not be entered.

Besides new potential state champion trees for various species, certificates and prizes were awarded for the largest tree in each county and the largest Eastern White Pine (Michigan's state tree); this year there was a tie for trees found in Marquette and Clinton counties, each of which measured 181 inches in circumference. Tom Hollis and granddaughter Payton Rue took the prize in Clinton County while Nicholas Hansen accepted the prize in Marquette.

Adrian Presnell won the grand prize for the largest tree in the contest submitted by a Big Tree Hunter under 15 years old. With help from his sister, Aidan found an Eastern cottonwood in Washtenaw County that measured 308 inches, more than 25 feet in circumference.

The grand prize for the largest tree submitted from a Big Tree Hunter 16 or older was a tie between Mike Antoszewski and Paul Funk, each of whom entered an Eastern cottonwood in Monroe County measuring 301 inches around.

Lindsay Lights Forintos, chair of the ReLeaf Michigan Big Tree Hunt, said those Eastern cottonwoods still are far short of the current standing record for largest circumference of a Michigan tree, currently held by a weeping willow tree in Grand Ledge that stands at 336 inches.

The tree with the highest point place-

ment in the Michigan registry is a sycamore in Adrian in Lenawee County that was last observed in July 2016 by a representative of the state tree program. At that time, the tree's circumference was measured at 315.6 inches, with a height of 120 feet and a crown spread of 81.5 feet.

The contest helps discover eligible trees for the National Register of Big Trees, updated every spring and fall by American Forests.

As recently as 2012, Michigan had 23 registered champion trees, but today only five are registered. A complete list of Michigan winners is available on www.BigTreeHunt.com.

Lights Forintos is looking forward to finding a sponsor for the next Big Tree Hunt, to continue a tradition that benefits both people and trees.

"The connection between each person and their tree was amazing," she said. "And as these trees live hundreds of years, it feels like the (contest participants) are the voices for these trees in their lifetime. Trees are important to the planet, but also to these people, who are the stewards."

"They are tracking vital, important living landmarks."

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Bond

Continued from Page 1A

"It'll stay at 3.4 (mills) until approximately ... through and including 2031 and then at that point, it would start to decline," said Mike Zopf, assistant superintendent for finance and operations.

Zopf said the bond maximum term is 22 years.

If approved, it would be the second bond Northville schools voters have passed in six years: voters approved a \$104 million bond proposal back in 2017.

The school board voted unanimously to approve sending the issue to voters in the spring. More details on the bond, including community engagement opportunities, are expected to come after the holidays when school returns, Zopf said.

Board member Lisa McIntyre said during the Dec. 13 school board meeting the proposed bond addressed many of the issues the district faces when it comes to facilities.

"We've done a lot of updates with



Members of the Northville school board Dec. 13 discuss placing a bond proposal before voters in May. DAVID VESELENAK/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

previous bonds. We've utilized the HVAC system as long as we possibly could," she said. "Certainly this bond stands out to me. Obviously, the infrastructure is what allows us to provide high quality education for our students."

The district's boundaries include Northville, Novi Township, most of Northville Township, the southern portion of Novi, the eastern portion of Salem Township and a small portion of southeast Lyon Township.

The May date for the election would allow the district to use funding from the measure if approved for summer

projects, one reason why the date was selected, Zopf said.

While the whole board supported putting the measure on the ballot, board member James Mazurek said he wrestled with the size of the bond, especially with the projections around the economy in the future.

"I was torn thinking about this for the last week and a half," he said. "I am going to support this. I do have a little bit of a gut check."

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Kung Fu Tea opens new location in Livonia

Shelby Tankersley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

There's no drink quite like bubble tea. The Taiwanese beverage adds tapioca or juice bubbles to iced tea. Fans say it tastes great and offers a one of a kind texture.

"It's just different," said Ed Buison, owner of the newly opened Kung Fu Tea in Livonia. "One of the trends these days is texture and when you think about it, the tapioca creates this chewiness while you're drinking. It doesn't really make any sense."

Buison, who owns two Biggby Coffee shops in Livonia, said he wanted to open a bubble tea store to bring something new to town. Livonia has one other bubble tea shop, Quickly Boba Café, that also opened this year. Buison's Kung Fu Tea recently opened at 11516 Middlebelt Road, right next door to one of his Biggby shops.

"We've been looking at bubble tea concepts because my wife Ileen and I enjoy that type of beverage," he said. "So we've been looking for a few years, and Kung Fu Tea kept coming up."

Kung Fu Tea is a bubble tea franchise that has locations all over the United States. Some of the company's nearby locations include those in Canton and Novi. Kung Fu Tea offers milk teas, punch, slushies, traditional bubble tea and more. Buison recommends first time drinkers give taro milk tea or a milk cap drink a try.

People who'd rather skip the bubbles can do that, too. Kung Fu Tea also offers punch and lemonade.

"We squeeze fresh lemons, oranges and grapefruit," Buison said. "So, when you add that to a lemonade, it really makes a difference because it's real fruit juice."



Duy Tran makes a drink at Kung Fu Tea in Livonia. SHELBY TANKERSLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Buison said he was excited to finally open earlier this month. He and his wife had been working on the Middlebelt location, which used to be a T-Mobile store, since July.

"We're just happy to finally be open," he said. "Our Biggby is community focused, and that's what we'd like to bring

to Kung Fu Tea. We want to reach out to the community and support different organizations. I grew up in Livonia, so this is obviously a special place for me."

In the future, Buison would like to explore offering authentic ramen at his shop. Kung Fu Tea recently started partnering with Token Ramen to offer food

at some of its Florida locations. The Livonia location has some space saved in the kitchen to hopefully adopt a similar business model.

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"The Iceland trip presented a unique opportunity to curate a different type of event," Greensky Bluegrass band member Paul Hoffman told Local Spins.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LOCAL SPINS

'The trip of a lifetime'

Camp Greensky Festival moves from MI to Iceland

John Sinkevics

Local Spins

KALAMAZOO - The band calls it a "carefully cultivated Greensky adventure."

Kalamazoo progressive bluegrass powerhouse Greensky Bluegrass has announced its popular annual Camp Greensky Festival will relocate from Michigan to Iceland in June 2023.

The three-day music festival, held last summer at Shagbark Farm in southern Kent County, will roll out more than 2,900 miles away in "the incredibly stunning" Eldborg Hall inside the Harpa Concert and Conference Centre in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Dubbing it "the trip of a lifetime," the three-night affair will feature keyboardist and Michigan native Holly Bowling as well as special guests Fruition, Neighbor and The Lil Smokies (the latter two of which feature Greensky members).

Tickets for the June 3-5 festival are being sold via a lottery system, with details online at greenskyiniceland.com. Pre-sale lotteries are underway for premium "full session" ticket packages — priced at \$629 plus service charges — and for regular ticket packages worth \$285-\$375 (based on seat location).

"The Iceland trip presented a unique opportunity to curate a different type of event," band member Paul Hoffman told Local Spins. "The venue is spectacular and we have heard glowing reviews from bands and fans alike."

Harpa Conference Centre hosts several music festivals every year. It's home to the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and Icelandic Opera.

Harpa's website describes the 11-year-old venue as "one of Reykjavik's most striking landmarks and a center of cultural and social life in the very heart of the city."

Bowling frequently joins Greensky Bluegrass on stage, and has even been regarded as the band's sixth member. The keyboardist, born in Ludington and raised in Grand Haven, played two sold-out shows with the bluegrass band last June on the rooftop at Pier 17 in New York City and is featured on the title track of Greensky's latest album, "Stress Dreams."

As for the festival's future at Shagbark Farm, property owner John Criss-

man said he's "still trying to sort this out."

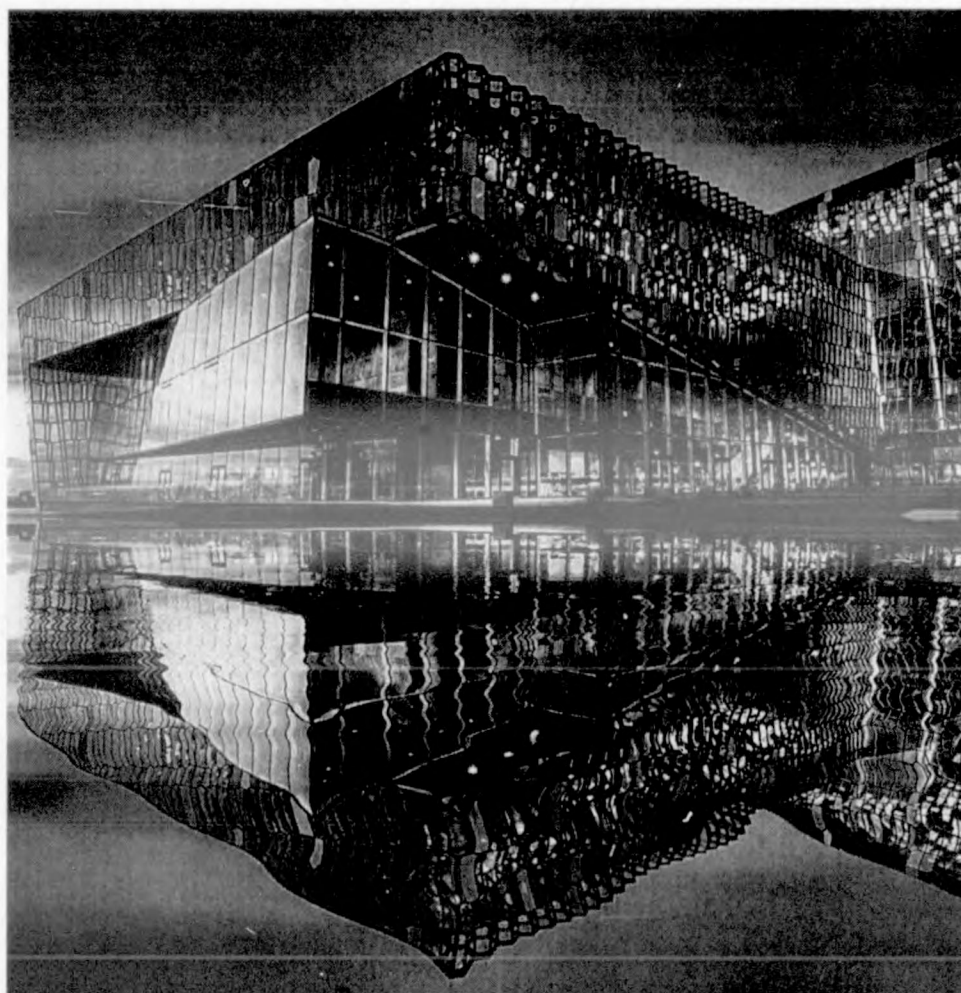
Hoffman said band members "will never forget our home and are already planning some new shows in the Mitten."

"Unfortunately, we were going to be unable to pull off Camp Greensky in Michigan, and since these dates aligned, we thought it would be fun to take it abroad for a year and try something different," he said. "The event is targeted more toward our fans traveling with us there, but I hope to attract some

Icelandic fans and definitely can't wait to check out the new place."

Fan reaction to the move on Facebook was mixed, with some toasting the novel idea of relocating to an "incredible country." Others said it's simply too expensive and "unattainable for many to most of the supporters ... to travel overseas" for the festival.

Find more Michigan music news and concert listings at LocalSpins.com. Email John Sinkevics at john@local-spins.com.



The annual Camp Greensky Festival will roll out more than 2,900 miles away in "the incredibly stunning" Eldborg Hall.

CITY OF NOVI VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO SERVE ON CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Notice is given that the Novi City Council will be interviewing applicants for appointment to the following Boards & Commissions

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- Construction Board of Appeals
- Corridor Improvement Authority
- Housing & Community Development Advisory Committee
- Library Board
- Zoning Board of Appeals

If you are a registered voter and interested in volunteering to serve on a City Board or Commission, information about the various Boards and Commissions is available at cityofnovi.org or by contacting the City Clerk's Office at (248)347-0456

The deadline for filing an application is Friday, January 27, 2023. Applicants will be contacted by the City Clerk's Office regarding the date and time of interviews.

Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

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Sunflour Bakehaus to reopen under new owner

Shelby Tankersley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Fans of Farmington's Sunflour Bakehaus will soon be able to buy their favorite fresh baked goods once again.

The longstanding bakery's core menu will live on at the new Sunflour Bakehaus at the Never Forgotten Bakery. Owner Michelle Ott is looking to open the new location — at the corner of 10 Mile and Orchard Lake roads near Greene's Hamburgers — within the next week or so.

"We're keeping the majority of the Sunflour Bakehaus' core products," Ott said. "Things we'll be adding in are more, I'd say, fun and trendy. I'm thinking of things like cookie tacos and putting a spin on cupcakes."

An expanded menu for every kind of eater

Ott said her new offerings will be geared toward people who aren't looking for the traditional items that were generally found at Sunflour. The bakery closed earlier this year as the previous owners looked to move on.

While working to reopen, Ott surveyed Sunflour's existing customer base about what they'd like to see more and less of.

"What I'm hoping to do is expand the selection," she said. "A lot of their stuff is traditional, and my teenage kids are never going to go into a bakery and pick a traditional German cookie. They want the one that's loaded with frosting and sprinkles. So, I want to take the best of their world and add in some of my own things."

Other new offerings will include birthday cakes, expanded sourdough options and more artisanal breads. Tried and true Sunflour favorites such as German pretzels, Swedish bread and old world bread will be on the menu, too.

Ott also wants to put more emphasis on Michigan vendors.

"I want to keep as much of the business as possible local or in Michigan," she said. "We have lots of ideas to do things with Michigan cherries and apples. It goes back to that hometown bakery feel."



Never Forgotten bakery owner Michelle Ott sets up a commercial mixer. PHOTOS BY SHELBY TANKERSLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



A sign for the new Sunflour Bakehaus at the Never Forgotten Bakery on Orchard Lake Road in Farmington.

For the first time, customers will also be able to order ahead or place a special order online by visiting neverforgottenbakery.com.

Ensuring great recipes are 'never forgotten'

The Never Forgotten Bakery is a tribute to Ott's late grandmothers and her fiancé's late mother, all of whom were bakers. Ott hopes to keep their love for baking alive right along with Sunflour's recipes.

And, while she's at it, she wants to give customers a way to remember their loved ones.

Never Forgotten will give people the opportunity to bring in family recipes that no longer get made. The bakery will test it out and put the item on sale for a limited period.

"Let's say you love Grandma Betty's cookies," Ott said. "You can give us the recipe, and we'll make it together in the bakery. Assuming the recipe turns out well, we would sell it as a special and do-

nate a portion of the proceeds to a charity of your choice."

If the recipe is a hit, Ott will offer to keep making it under a special name. To use her example, Grandma Betty's recipe would appear on Never Forgotten's menu as "Grandma Betty's cookies" and she'd live on through her creation.

"The cardinal that's part of our logo — it's said that when a cardinal is near, your loved ones that are passed on are represented," Ott said. "That's why the cardinal is there, to remind us of the people who came before us."

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Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at stankersle@hometownlife.com or 248-305-0448. Follow her on Twitter @shelby_tankk.



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After long wait, Bad Brads BBQ opens in Livonia

David Veselenak

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Motorists have driven by the new Bad Brads BBQ on Farmington Road for more than a year. They watched as the building renovations were finished, complete with new signage and a fresh new patio. And then, they waited.

More than a year after finishing the renovations and two years since the planning commission first looked at the project, the restaurant at 20300 Farmington Road has finally begun smoking meats and prepping cornbread. It opened after Thanksgiving.

The reason for the delay? The restaurant's leadership insisted on everything being perfect before the first customer walked through the door.

"What it ultimately comes down to is we have built a reputation and we have great quality. And people just love Bad Brads. And everything we have built and everything we have encountered ... we were not ready to just open up another location to grab another dollar," said Toni Novak, a regional manager with the restaurant group. "Our reputation and our team members feeling secure before we left (to open the Livonia restaurant) is very important."

So far, guests haven't minded the wait: the parking lot is routinely full with patrons eager to try the newest restaurant in town. Wait times can stretch 90 minutes or longer on weekends.

"It's been busy. It's been very busy," Novak said. "Every day is a Saturday."

The location is the fifth for the restaurant and the first in the Detroit's western suburbs. Other Bad Brads BBQ spots include Orion Township, Shelby Township, New Baltimore and Clinton Township.

The smell of smoked meats permeates as soon as guests walk in. In addition to smokers for dishes such as brisket and ribs, the restaurant has a wood-fired pizza oven, as well as lines of dried bacon made with cane sugar and chipotle (they call it pig candy).

The star of the restaurant is the meats, of which they've sold plenty, Novak said. Dishes such as the BBQ nachos have become huge hits, including in Livonia.



One of the dining areas inside Bad Brads BBQ on Farmington Road in Livonia. PHOTOS BY DAVID VESELENAK/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



While the centerpiece of the restaurant is the food, it also offers beer, wine and spirits, as well as some signature cocktails.

Accompanying the main dishes is a bar with beer, wine and spirits, as well as several signature cocktails. That in-

cludes an apple butter old fashioned, the Livonia restaurant's most popular drink.

"We cannot keep it in the cooler because we're running out of it all the time," she said.

The restaurant's interior sports a completely new look, with several murals done by Detroit artist Fel3000FT, including a massive mural on the back of the restaurant facing the parking lot. An outdoor patio made with a former shipping container is also ready for when the weather gets warmer. Inside is full of little "Easter eggs," that is, things hidden throughout to reward those with a keen eye.

One such example? The window sill in part of the dining room is made of poured concrete and has items such as coins, bottle caps and even a wristwatch

embedded in it. Small details like that can be found all over the restaurant (for fun, see if you can find the pencil sharpener hidden somewhere inside).

"People are excited. They're just excited to be here," Novak said. "It's the 'Wow' factor of what the place looks like."

The restaurant is currently only open for dinner during the week, though lunch hours are expected to come in mid-January. Also added was carryout service as well as online ordering. The restaurant is closed Mondays.

For information, including a menu, online ordering and updated hours, visit badbradsbbq.com.

Contact reporter David Veselenak at dveselenak@hometownlife.com or 734-678-6728. Follow him on Twitter @davidveselenak.

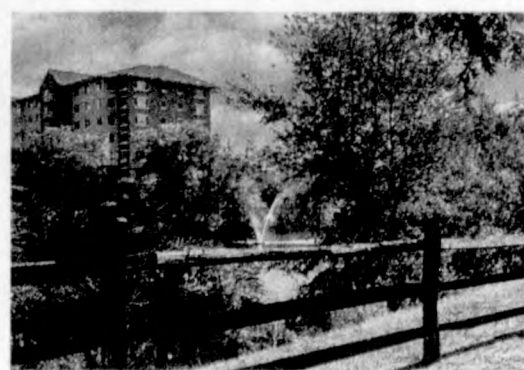


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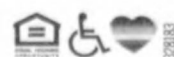
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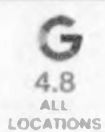
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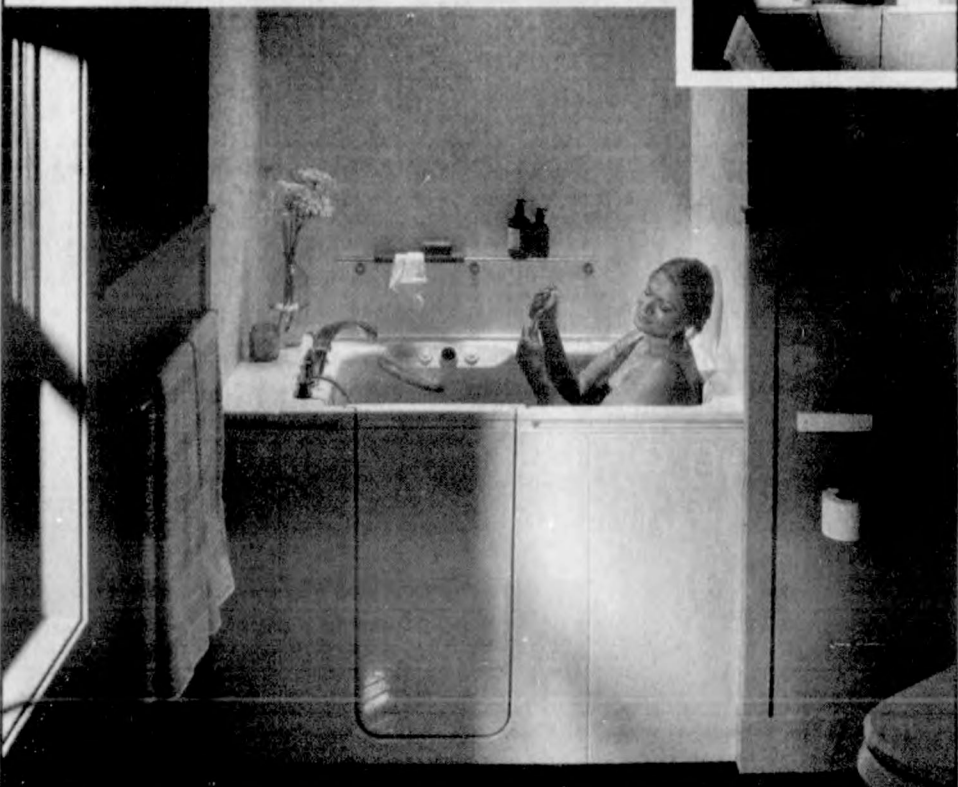
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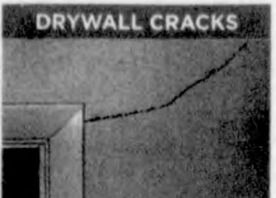
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SPORTS



Franklin's Adam Alokab goes up for a layup against Harbor Springs during a Northville holiday showcase game Dec. 28.
BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Chippewa Valley football inspired Black Hawks' soccer championship ring design

Brandon Folsom
Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Emma Merchant didn't need to look far for inspiration when the former captain helped pick a design for the Bloomfield Hills girls soccer team's new state championship rings.

In fact, she needed to only look down at her father's hand.

Scott Merchant coached the Chippewa Valley football team to a 31-30 victory over Clarkston during the Division 1 state championship in 2018.

His ring commemorating the Big Reds' second-ever state title was on hand when Emma met with fellow captains Drew Martin and Alice Spiegel at coach Alan Zakaria's office in Troy to design their own ring.

"We had a box of rings to go off, my dad's included, and we based ours a little bit off of his," the current Aquinas College defender told Hometown Life. "We took what we liked from some of them and made our own. We liked the shape of his ring because it's not a square, but it's also not a circle. It has white diamonds and silver. We liked the look of it, and we thought it would go well because our Black Hawk has silver in it, too."

The rest of the Black Hawks saw just what that design looked like for the first time during a special ring ceremony in Bloomfield Hill's main commons on Dec. 19.

The school celebrated the soccer team securing its first-ever state title, which included Bloomfield Hills winning 15 straight games after opening the season 0-2-3.

A highlight tape of the team's most significant moments was shown. From its victory over Rochester Adams that started its winning streak to rounding out its first district championship in three seasons with only 10 players on the field to upsetting Hartland, the defending state champions, to win its first regional title. And, of course, Ava Badallo's winning penalty kick over top-ranked Northville in the state championship was shown, too.

See RINGS, Page 3B

Franklin boys basketball in line for KLAA-East title

Brandon Folsom
Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Typically Livonia Franklin boys basketball coach TJ Hurley spends timeout breaks kneeling in front of his players with a whiteboard in one hand and an uncapped marker in the other.

He's always drawing plays, scenarios or what's coming next.

But not this timeout.

Sure, he had the whiteboard out, but this timeout, with 5:14 remaining in Wednesday's Northville holiday showcase, was more about reminding his Patriots to stay locked in — to stay focused — and close out their eventual 61-46 vic-

tory over Harbor Springs in the same relentless manner that has them 6-0 overall to start the winter.

They had led by 17 points at half-time, and now the Rams had cut the deficit to seven points.

"We just had to focus more on the

See FRANKLIN, Page 2B

Romulus is WWAC royalty, but league's queen is at Garden City

Brandon Folsom
Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

It makes sense why Hometown Life would be questioned at the front door.

The Romulus girls basketball team has dominated the Western Wayne Athletic Conference for years. And if its first four league games say anything about what's to come, the Eagles are likely to win another conference title.

They've already ripped off a 56-point win over Dearborn Heights Annapolis, beaten Dearborn Heights Robichaud by 53 points and (honest to goodness) downed Melvindale, 74-1.

The closest league game they've played so far was a 66-28 victory over Garden City. And while this isn't Cougars coach Michele Tyree's best squad,

mostly because of its inexperience and youth, it is a competitive one.

"What newspaper are you with?" Garden City's ticket taker asked Thursday night.

"Hometown Life. The Observer," we responded.

"Wait, why are YOU here!?" the ticket taker said, absolutely puzzled.

Yeah, Romulus is the crown jewel of the WWAC, everyone knows that, even the person who's admitting fans into Garden City's games, but the Cougars have the league's queen.

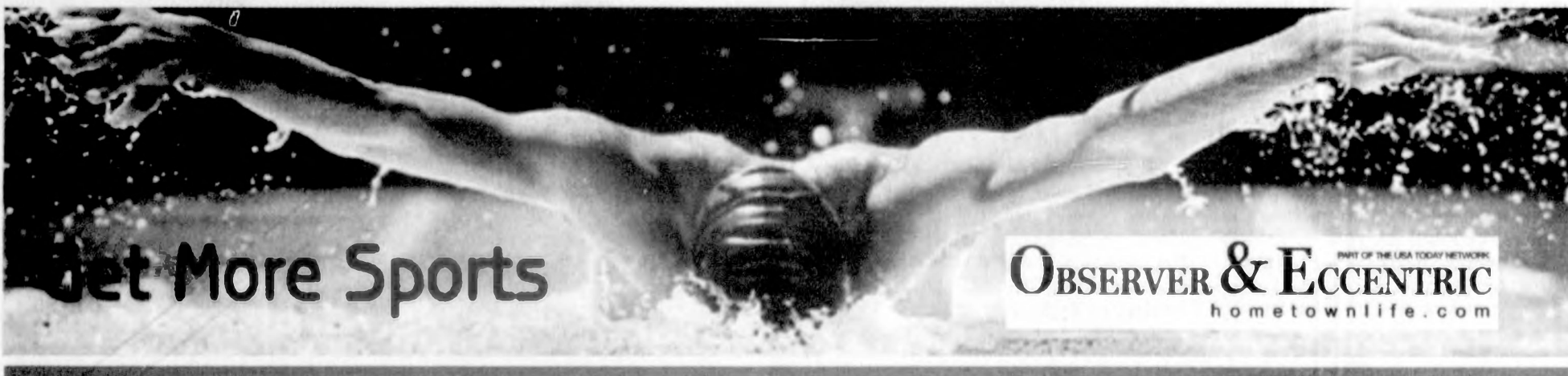
That's senior Siena McNitt, who's averaging 21.8 points per game, despite Garden City being just 3-4.

Hometown Life profiled the shooting guard in the off-season after she was

See QUEEN, Page 2B



Garden City's Siena McNitt goes up for a layup during a game Dec. 22.
BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



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Franklin

Continued from Page 1B

defensive end," Hurley said. "The way we were getting scored on was a problem, and it was just a real lack of focus. But our guys came out of that timeout fired up and got us back up to 12-14 points from there."

Yeah, the Patriots are undefeated entering January. No, seriously. This team isn't even a decade removed from back-to-back one- and two-win seasons and they've yet to drop a game. These guys rarely finish above .500, but now it's almost certain they'll end with a winning record.

They're about to enter the Kensington Lakes Activities Association-East portion of their schedule with the confidence they could actually win the league.

Wait, what? Sure, maybe in football. But in basketball?

Yet, it makes sense. They're coming off an 11-11 year where they return four standouts in guards Eric Hobson Jr., Robbie Wynn and Mitch Cronyn and big man Kevin Davis. They're incredibly deep, too. Sometimes they play as many as nine guys, from Adam Alokab to Owen Pittenger, Owen Phail and Drew Kelbert, among many more.

The one thing they have over other teams? Chemistry.

With the Michigan High School Athletic Association shortening pre-season practices by a week and adding two additional non-conference games, it's obvious some teams just haven't had enough practice to gel and find a rhythm.

But that's not Franklin, which is benefiting from already being a close-knit group.

The Patriots are probably in competition with rival Livonia Stevenson, Dearborn Fordson and Dearborn for the division crown. Two things should help them separate from the rest of the East elite.

One is that chemistry. Two is staying locked in, especially during the doldrums of the season.

"It comes down to that consistency," Hurley said. "It's that part of the season where people are dragging, and practices are starting to become a chore, and it's not so exciting. Things like keeping guys locked in is going to be the big thing. The major thing has been having competitive guys at practice, which we do, so they'll keep each other locked in and help us out."

So how are the Patriots getting it done?

It's been a total team effort.

It's Cronyn burying 3-pointers any time the team needs one. In fact, the junior sank a pair of 3s to open their win against Harbor Springs and finished with a game-best 24 points.

It's Hobson Jr. using both his size and speed to make an impact on the perimeter and down low. On most high school teams, his 6-foot-3 frame makes him a power forward, but don't be confused. He's a guard, that's for sure.



Livonia Franklin's Robbie Wynn shoots in traffic against Harbor Springs during a Northville holiday showcase game Dec. 28.

PHOTOS BY BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

It's Alokab, time after time, grabbing steals and finishing in transition.

It's Wynn pushing the ball up the floor and always looking for a wide-open scorer before the defense has a chance to realize they're about to be scored on.

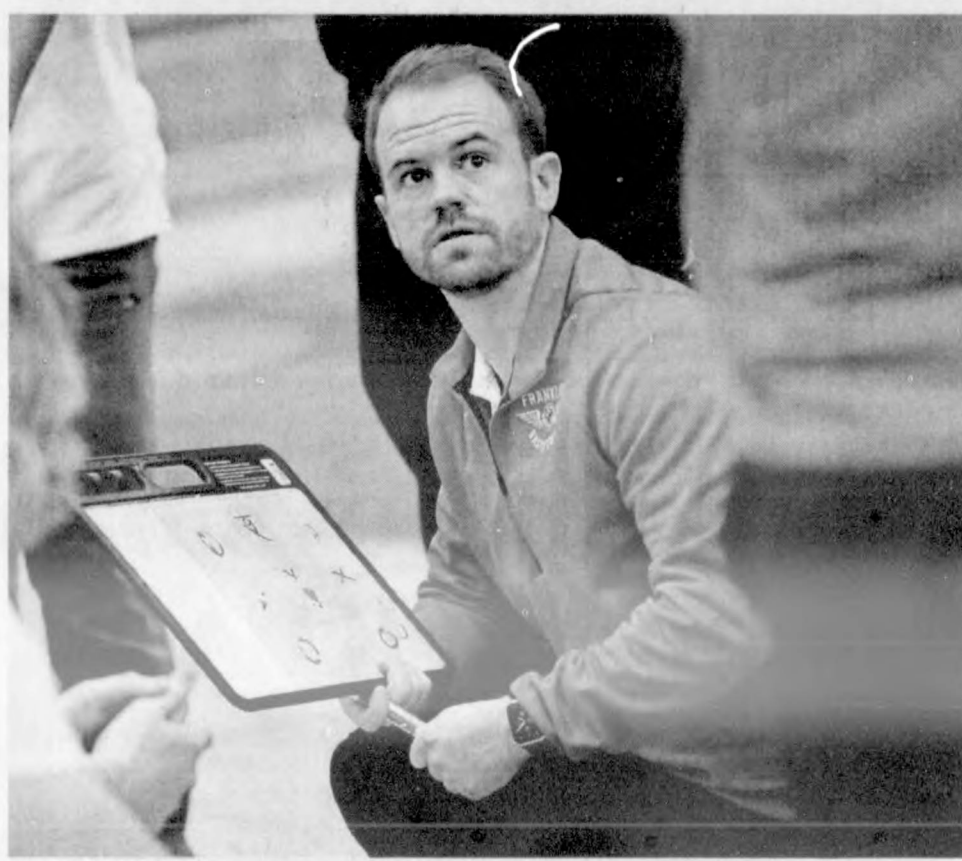
It's Davis (and when it's not Davis, it's Kelbert) battling under the rim for put-backs and rebounds.

If you were asked to point out Franklin's best player, you'd point at a different person after each game. Teams can try and shut down one option, but there are four others available at any given time. That makes them one of the best in the entire KLAA.

"We've put in all the work to go 6-0," Cronyn said. "It's a different feeling around here. Franklin has been a bad basketball program for a while. It's just time to turn it around. We're excited. Hopefully, we can get a district. Hopefully, we can go beyond that, too."

Only if the Patriots can stay focused. And it's going to take more than a late-game timeout from Hurley to keep them locked in once the KLAA action heats up after winter break.

Twitter: @folsombrandonj.



Franklin coach TJ Hurley draws up a play against Harbor Springs.

Queen

Continued from Page 1B

named a top-100 player in Michigan. Less than an hour after the story was published online, she received her first offer (from SUNY Canton in New York).

Now she has offers from Schoolcraft College and Oakland Community College to go with it.

Plus, she's been receiving interest from many, many other smaller schools. One local school even called her "the perfect fit for our team," despite her never meeting the coach in person or actually stepping foot on campus.

More offers will come. Her tweet thanking Hometown Life for stopping by Garden City's 58-26 win over Redford Thurston received likes from five other colleges who are pursuing her.

With the way McNitt has been playing, it's no surprise so many scouts are watching her closely this winter.

"Siena is doing everything you could've asked of her and more as a senior who's been on varsity since freshman year," said Tyree, an 11th-year coach. "She's scoring, and I was actually hoping she'd be able to average about 18, and she's up around 21 right now. She's doing a great job."

So how's McNitt getting it done?

Multiple ways.

Against Thurston, she buried a 3-pointer just 4 seconds after the opening tipoff. And she continued to show that range throughout the night.

But she gets most of her points by scoring in transition.

Many people around Garden City will tell you McNitt is a better soccer star



Garden City's Siena McNitt goes up for a layup during a game Dec. 22.

BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

than a basketball player, including her father, who played basketball at Redford Union but was a recreational league soccer player himself back in the day. Although she'd rather play basketball than soccer at the next level, she utilizes that soccer endurance to blow past defenders en route to layups.

The Cougars are probably the sec-

ond- or third-best team in the WWAC, and they're that good because of how well they play full-court, pressure defense. The long arms of Amia Sykes and Cheyenne Buhro make traps tough for opposing guards unfamiliar with handling that kind of pressure in the backcourt. And once Garden City secures that steal, away goes McNitt. Very few

are able to catch her.

"With the press, it really helps us," McNitt said. "It's been a great experience. It's been fun playing on the varsity. Now we're starting to bond together, and it's all coming together."

McNitt is also a steady passer and ballhandler herself. Try and determine which is her dominant hand. She uses both at a level unheard of by most high schoolers.

But she's best when she plays away from the ball. The way she shakes her defender to get open, whether that's outside or down low, is something only skilled players can do.

And the shooting guard is skilled, that's for sure.

In fact, she's just 140 points away from cracking 1,000 for her career.

Garden City might not get past Romulus in the league race. And in its district is Redford Westfield Prep, one of the favorites to win the Division 2 state title. Winning hardware is going to come at a premium. But getting that career record for McNitt should be doable, especially with the Cougars on a two-game winning streak and four winnable games coming up before the rematch with the Eagles. The younger players have been getting much-needed experience, and the rest of the starters are now understanding their roles. This team is starting to click.

So to answer the original question: Why is Hometown Life covering a Garden City game?

To see Queen McNitt score a career-high 34 points, of course.

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Follow him on Twitter @folsombrandonj.



Bloomfield Hills soccer players pose with their state championship rings Dec. 19. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Rings

Continued from Page 1B

And then there were speeches given by Bloomfield Hills administrators as well as one from Zakaria, who said making it to Michigan State for the title game wouldn't have been possible without the team's family-like culture.

"This is not unexpected," Zakaria said of holding a ring ceremony six months after his team won it all. "When you look at the culture that the girls

have, the great talent we had, the camaraderie and how hard they worked together and how physically fit they were when they came into the season, I don't think it was unexpected.

"Seeing them come together and how we went through the playoffs and on to the state championship, it wasn't unexpected."

As the players opened their ring boxes from Jostens in front of a crowd of parents and faculty members, they saw inscribed inside the ring was the team's saying, "One team, one dream, can't lose."

That saying was crafted by the captains during the spring and was said before matches and at halftime of each game.

"We met a year ago and told them to dream big," Zakaria added. "They really came in during the off-season, worked for it and believed all season. Great culture, great camaraderie. And this is what they deserved."

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Follow him on Twitter @folsom-brandonj.

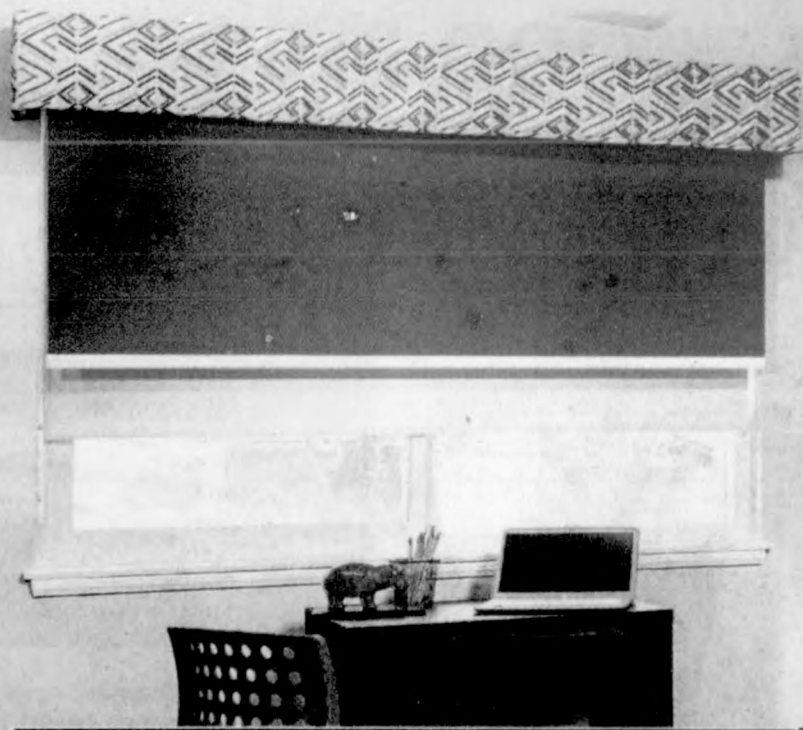
They really came in during the off-season, worked for it and believed all season. Great culture, great camaraderie. And this is what they deserved."

Alan Zakaria Bloomfield Hills coach



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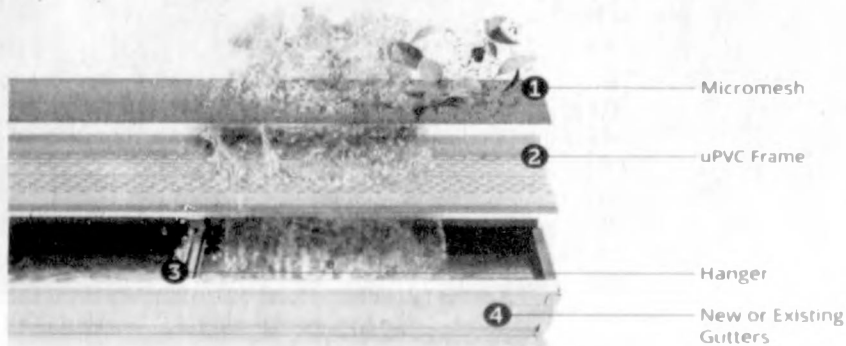
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All-State

Continued from Page 4B

Defense

DL: Drake Spickerman, Negaunee (captain)
DL: Collin Buchanan, Royal Oak Shrine
DL: Jake Punches, Clare
DL: Dave Milliman, Quincy
LB: Brandon Lehman, Clinton
LB: Charlie DeBruyn, Grand Rapids West Catholic
LB: Sam Kartes, Muskegon Catholic Central
DB: Gaborik Carlson, Houghton
DB: Seth Jackson, Reed City
DB: Brayden Riley, Sanford Meridian
DB: John Webb, Durand

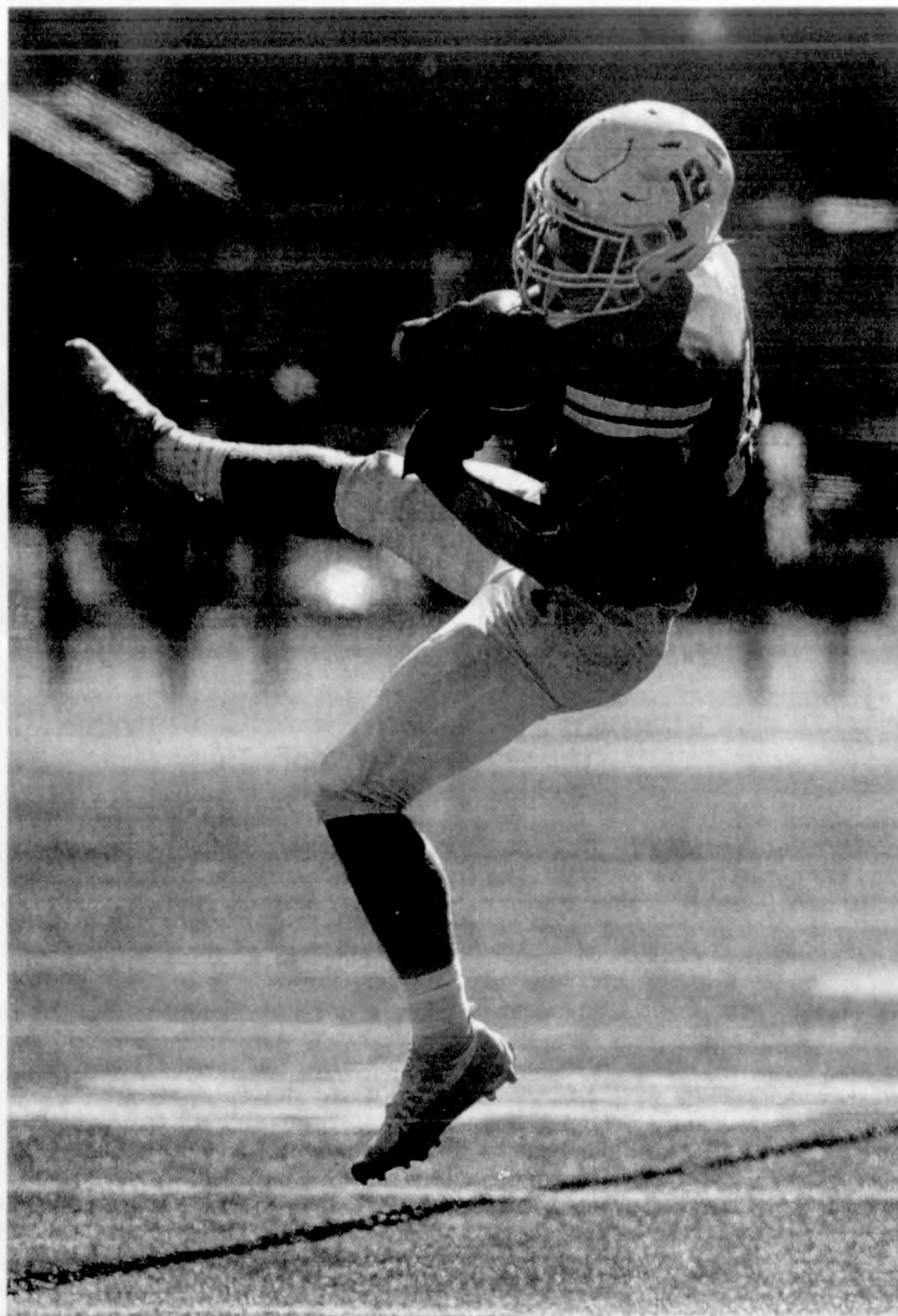
Division 7

Offense

Rec: Patrick Sterrett, Charlevoix
OL: Jaden Curry, New Lothrop
OL: Rowland Ball, Lake City
OL: Logan Love, Beaverton
OL: Ethan Morgan, Traverse City St. Francis
OL: Luke Braun, Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port
Rec: Jake MacPhee, Bad Axe
QB: Wyatt Nausadis, Traverse City St. Francis (captain)
RB: Dontel Hicks, Detroit Central
RB: Ethan Wissner, Elkton-Pigeon Bay Port
RB: Derek Walker, Jackson Lumen Christi
K/P:

Defense

DL: Grayson Orr, New Lothrop
DL: Michael Stevenson, Montrose
DL: Raylon Murry, Detroit Loyola
DL: Michael Humphries, Napoleon
LB: Conor Smith, Jackson Lumen Christi
LB: Joey Donahue, Traverse City St. Francis
LB: Tagg Gott, Schoolcraft
LB: Easten Strodttman, Hudson
DB: Diego Lebron, Homer
DB: Bronson Bupp, Ithaca
DB: Joe Lathers, Jackson Lumen Christi (captain)



Detroit Catholic Central wide receiver Brady Blakita makes a catch against Warren De La Salle in October. JUNFU HAN/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Division 8

Offense

Rec: Grayson Ackles, Carson City-Crystal
OL: Evan Curtiss, Fowler
OL: Seth Miller, White Pigeon
OL: Mack Bontekoe, McBain
OL: Marcus Verrette, Iron Mountain
OL: Dominic, Angle, Clarkston Ever-

est

Rec: David Matthews, Pottsville
QB: Shea Ruddy, Ottawa Lake Whiteford (captain)
RB: Luke Wolfe, Iron Mountain
RB: Brendan Haisenleder, Marine City Cardinal Mooney
RB: Mark Heilig, Ubly
K/P: Brayden Farragh, Iron Mountain

Defense

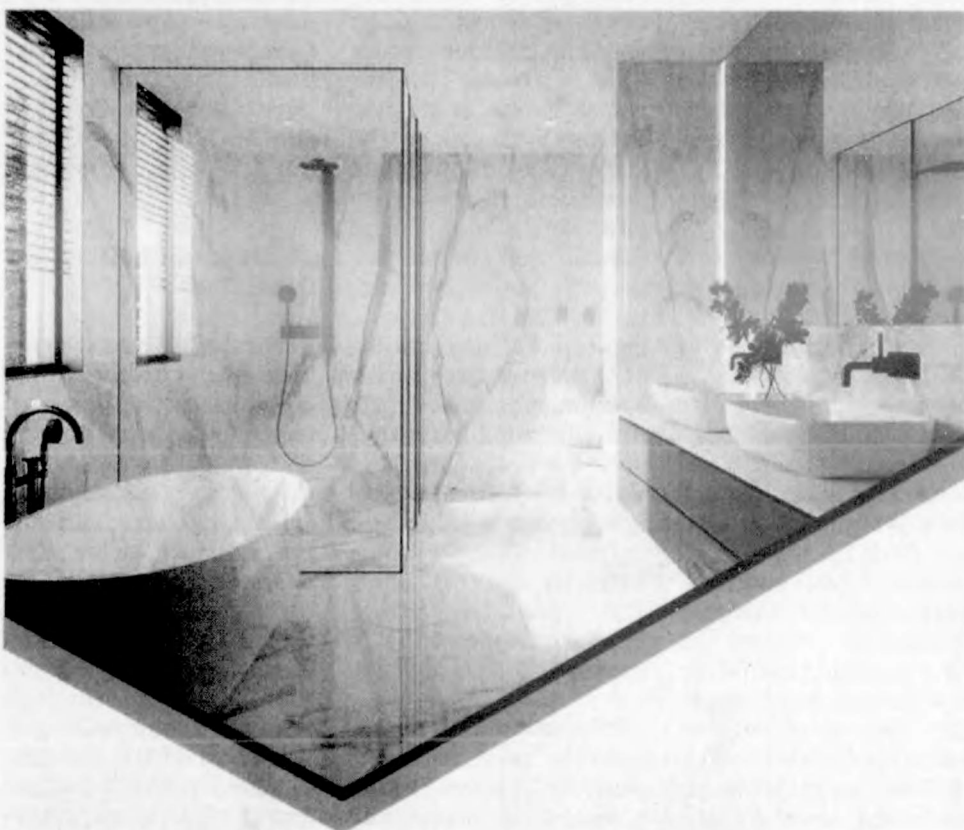
DL: Drew Powers, Sterling Heights Parkway Christian
DL: Audan Fulton, Johannesburg-Lewiston
DL: Brayden Luse, Ottawa Lake Whiteford
DL: Parker Peruski, Ubly
LB: Cole Hopkins, Evart
LB: Corbin Lafave, Bark River-Harris
LB: Jake Iott, Ottawa Lake Whiteford
DB: Brandon Thompson, Petersburg-Summerfield
DB: Cayden Smith, Beal City
DB: Evan Wakefield, Saginaw Michigan Lutheran Seminary
DB: Evan Peruski, Ubly (captain)

Honorable mention

Receivers: Zach Halfmann, Fowler; Ambrose Horwath, Hudson; Ethan Hull, Ithaca; Drew Hardy, St. Francis; Amariious Gaines, Mount Clemens; Brayden Sullivan, Standish-Sterling; Xavier Jones, Detroit Northwestern, Alan Bjorn, Calumet; Nate Smith, Clinton; Braiden Whitaker, Dundee; Parker Atkinson, Marine City; Trevor Soule, Crosswell-Lexington; Alex Thompson, Allen Park Cabrini; Jack Conley, Lake Fenton; Braden Hill, Charlotte; Ryan Mooney, Orchard Lake St. Mary's; Colin Nowak, Carleton Airport; Derek Badgley, Mason; Austin Toth, Trenton; Chris Little, Groves; Jayden Allen, Livonia Churchill; Elijah Dotson, U-D Jesuit; Connor LeCourt, Westland Glenn; Darius Whiteside, Troy; Eli VanderVeen, Hudsonville; Tommie Boyd, Utica; Owen Colpaert, Dakota; Roman, Laurio, Saline; Corey Sadler, Cass Tech; Jawon Jarrett, Southfield A&T; Dylan Mesman, Saline; Shamar Heard, Chippewa Valley; Scooter Polk, Mt. Pleasant;

Linemen: Shane Suchora, Whiteford; Rasheed Gregory, Detroit Community; Chris Jackson, White Pigeon; Ben Strauss, Beal City; Kameron Schlund, USA; Jon Brzezinski, Everest; Kruz Rumsey, Morley Stanwood; Tristan Duncan, Detroit Central; Grady Lobe, Union City; Jodh Pierce, Grosse Pointe Liggett; Aiden Pastoriza, Lumen Christi; Marquis Cribbs, Mount Clemens; Shamar Pressley, Clintondale; Bennett Vandenberg, Constantine; Mason Mayne, Lawton; Brock PeLong, Chippewa Hills; Noah Morgan, Reed City; Kenron Davis,

See ALL-STATE, Page 7B



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GIRLS BASKETBALL TOP 20

West Bloomfield fueled by Davis twins

Mick McCabe

Special to Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Free Press high school sports guru Mick McCabe selects the top 20 girls basketball teams in the state (Last season's records in parenthesis; all players are seniors unless noted.):

1. West Bloomfield (25-1)

The defending Division 1 state champs are overwhelming favorites to repeat. The reasoning is simple, the Lakers return junior twin sisters Indya and Summer Davis, who have both committed to Michigan State. Both are 5 feet 10, Indya averaged 14.9 points, Summer 14.7, and they are terrific players. Making it better is 5-11 Sydney Hendrix (Florida A&M), who is a physical inside player who finds ways to get things done. Her junior sister, Kendal (Loyola, Ill.), 5-11, missed most of last season with an ACL, and she can be effective at any position. Junior Destiny Washington is the team's defensive stopper and she can handle both guard spots.

2. Rockford (23-2)

The Rams were leading West Bloomfield midway through the fourth quarter in the semifinals last season and they are loaded again. Alyssa Wypych (Michigan Tech), 5-

10, hit six 3-pointers and scored 27 points against Byron Center, attacks the basket and plays good defense. Sophomore Ann Wypych, 5-11, is a natural scorer from the arc all the way inside and is a budding star.

3. Wayne Memorial (23-3)

An outstanding support player on successful teams in the past, Mayla Ham (Georgetown), 5-10, is the main focus of this team. She averaged 14.7 points and 9.8 rebounds as a junior and is more aggressive this season. She can hit the perimeter jumper and rebounds well. Sophomore Colleen Bryant is much more comfortable heading into her second season as the point guard. Paris Bass (North Dakota), 5-11, will become a better scorer and rebounder this season.

4. Grand Rapids Christian (17-6)

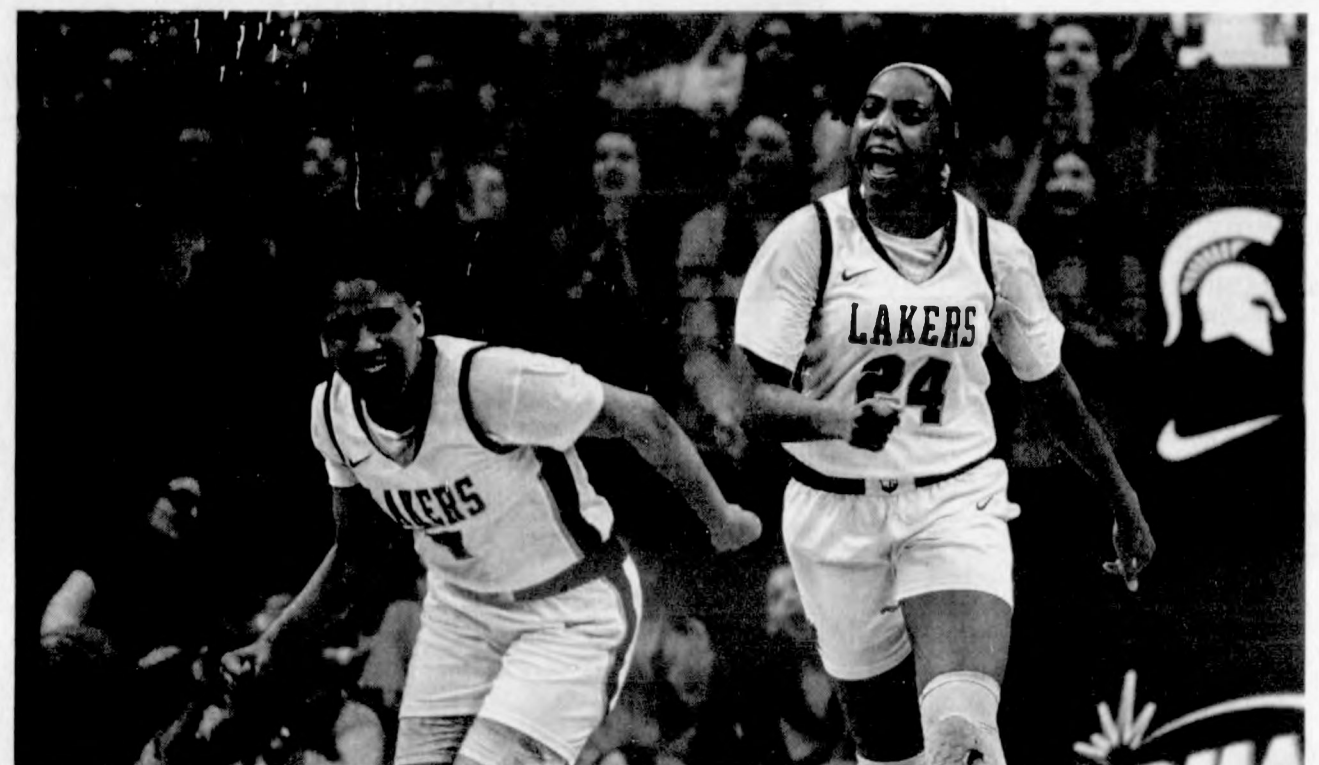
This team had no seniors last season and added Pace Rickard (Rice), who had moved in before last season but tore her ACL. She is fine now and is a tremendous creator, fitting passes into a small pockets and knows how to draw the defense to her and find a teammate. Kaitlyn Larue averaged 16 points last season and can penetrate and shoot from the outside and is at her best in transition. Twins Hannah and Lydia Sall, both 6-2, are the inside players and with their long arms they shrink passing lanes and block shots.

5. Holt (13-6)

Kent State-bound Janae Tyler, 6-0, is coming off a terrific junior season in which she averaged 18.7 points 14 rebounds. She is even stronger this season and her perimeter shooting has improved drastically. Junior Rhema Dozier is a good shooter and excellent defender, Junior Claire Tobias is a classic point guard and she can shoot. Sophomore Allison Metzger was on the varsity last season and knows how to get to the basket. Kaylin Howard, 6-2, operates inside, but can float out to the perimeter and hit open jump shots.

6. East Grand Rapids (12-10)

Macy Brown (Michigan), 6-0, is coming off a season in which she averaged 22.6 points, 5.7 rebounds and 3.5 assists. She runs the point, but also scores from 3-point range and is big enough to be effective in the post. Reagan Weaver, 5-10 sophomore, has expanded her range to the 3-point line, and has the footwork to play in the post. Jasmine Honicutt, 5-10, adds a physical presence inside where she will rebound and play strong defense.



West Bloomfield's Myonna Hooper, left, and Indya Davis celebrate after beating Rockford in the Division 1 state semifinal March 18 at the Breslin Center in East Lansing. NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

7. Detroit Renaissance (19-5)

First-year head coach DaShaun Wood inherits the best team in the Public School League and it will be even better next season. Junior point guard Christian Sanders can shoot from the perimeter, finish at the basket and get her teammates involved. Junior Nevaeh Otis, 5-10, is a fine combo guard and defends the other team's best player. Junior Anaya Hardy, 6-3, is a rim runner, racing down the floor for layups. She can score inside, protect the paint and block shots. Junior Makayla Johnson, 6-1, is a stretch-four and scores in bunches.

8. Grand Rapids West Catholic (25-2)

Abbey Kimball, who led West Catholic to last season's D-2 final, is at Michigan State now, but there is still a wealth of talent here. Cadence Dykstra (Toledo), 5-10, is a tough-as-nails defender. Her outside game is developing and she takes the ball to the basket with the best of them. Elisha Dykstra, 6-0 sophomore, averaged 12 points a year ago and she is capable of playing four positions. Junior Reese Polega, 5-11, comes off the bench and puts her long arms to good use keying the press.

9. Ann Arbor Richard (15-7)

The Irish employ a five-guard offense and that fits this team perfectly. Sophomore Charlotte Miller averaged 15 points as point guard and is a good passer and has improved her defense. Freshmen twins Vanessa and Ava Rodriguez are fearless in the way they attack the basket and let it fly from 3-point range. Mikaela Waroway (Calvin soccer), 5-10, is an outstanding athlete. Danielle Hehmann, who had been homeschooled the last three years, will make an immediate impact with her dribble-drive game.

10. Detroit Edison (19-3)

Since 2016, Edison has won four state championships and been knocked out of two tournaments by COVID-19. It has also produced the last four Miss Basketball winners, but that streak should end this season. Dakota Aiston (Morgan State) can play three perimeter positions and has be-

come a better defender. Junior Devin Hagemann will add scoring to her point guard duties. Junior Myana Cooksey showed her potential last season with a few breakout scoring games. Junior Bailey Pickens is a lockdown defender and will pick up her scoring this season. Freshman Mariana Jones, 5-11, will provide rebounding and solid defense.

11. Byron Center (19-3)

There are some new pieces here, but another successful season is on the horizon. Lily Zeinstr, 6-0, averaged 16.6 points and 7.9 rebounds last season and now takes over the point guard spot. She has excellent vision which allows her to push the tempo and create shots. McKenna Ferguson (Wayne State) plays on the wing and can shoot, drive and slash her way to the basket. McKenna Crandall is aggressive and physical and can be an inside force even at 5-7.

12. Chelsea (20-4)

One of the best one-two scoring combinations in the state — junior Leila Wells (16.5 points) and Meg McCalla (19.5 points) — lead the Bulldogs, who are talented enough to compete for the D-2 state title. Wells is a strong point guard who plays good defense and scores when needed. McCalla (Saginaw Valley) is a knock down shooter. Sophomore Avery Lay, 6-1, averaged 10 points and 10 rebounds as a freshman and can play the point.

13. Flint Carman-Ainsworth (18-5)

Chicago Sky assistant coach and former Flint Northwestern legend Tonnya Edwards is Ainsworth's head coach and she has a talented group. Armoni Strozier (Bradley), 6-1, has the size and strength to dominate inside. But she can also roam outside and hit jumpers. DeAndre Smith is a slasher and is now able to finish at the rim. Sierra Robinson is the floor general and defends the opposition's best player. Junior Ravyn Guy is a knockdown three-point threat.

14. Dearborn Divine Child (19-5)

Behind the play of Kennedy Blair (Bowling

Green), the Falcons will contend for the Catholic League title. Blair averaged 20 points, 8 rebounds, 4 assists and 4 steals and is stronger now and absorbing contact and still finishing. Cecilia Vitti (Howard lacrosse) is a lockdown defender who will become a better scorer. Sydney Bourdon (Ferris soccer) has a tremendous work ethic and will be a good defender. Hannah Glowinski is finishing better inside and will block shots. Junior Emma Brewis will take some pressure off the rest of her teammates with her perimeter shooting.

15. Saline (17-5)

The young Hornets are going to be a lot better than people think because of their 3-point shooting abilities. Junior Kate Stemmer (Northwood) is one of the top defensive players in the state. She can dictate games with her defensive efforts. She also shares the ball well and has improved her offensive game. Taylor Kangas is explosive off the dribble and is a creative passer. Freshman Keira Roehm is a prolific shooter from beyond the arc. Sophomore Kadya Maida is an athletic wing who is at her best in transition and slashing to the basket.

16. Farmington Hills Mercy (18-5)

The Marlins will have quite a post presence from 6-2 Maya White (Grand Valley State), who is a pass-first player, which makes Mercy better balanced. Sophomore Aizlyn Albanese, 5-10, had oodles of potential and is a solid shooter and tough on drives to the basket. Returning point guard Lauren Smiley is experienced and makes good decisions with the ball. Fran DeNardo is capable of playing either guard spot. Junior Ava Lorraine, 5-10, is fundamentally sound and will help inside. Sophomore Emily Walker is a good shooter and capable of playing four positions.

17. Grosse Pointe North (18-6)

Anabel Ayrault (Wayne State), 6-0, averaged 15.3 points last season and will add to that this season. She scores in every way possible and is especially good attacking the basket. Junior Natalie Babcock, 5-10, runs the floor like a deer and gets a lot of points that way. She has improved her perim-

eter shooting and making her a threat outside. Sophia Borowski, 5-11, is an absolute workhorse and it shows up in her rebounding and the way she does all of the little things to help North win games.

18. Ypsilanti Arbor Prep (24-2)

Prep graduated the best player in school history, Mya Petticord, but it will be in position to defend its D-3 state championship. The team will revolve around the Utomi twins, who are juniors. Stacy, 5-10, averaged 11 points and is physical and aggressive and a standout defender and rebounder. Stephanie, 5-11, averaged 10 points and is a strong inside force and rebounder who will defend the other team's top inside player. Junior Taylor Wallace is a shooting guard who is one of the top 3-point shooters around.

19. Detroit Country Day (13-8)

Former all-stater Amber Deane returns to coach her young, but extremely talented alma mater's team. Jayla Jackson is a tremendous freshman who could be the real deal in all that she does. Junior Emma Arico is the emotional leader of this team that has advanced to the D-2 semifinals the last two seasons. She can run the point and is the best on-the-ball defender. Junior Jaidyn Elam, 5-10, is quick in transition and can block shots. Naiya Kristin is another standout freshman who is a ball handler and a fine shooter.

20. Birmingham Marian (15-7)

Former assistant Michelle Lindsey replaces Mary Lillie after 39 years running the Marian show. Lindsay inherits a young team, which she hopes will continue playing Marian's tough defense. Mackenzie Swanson, 6-2 junior, will start in the post, but the plans are to move her outside a bit to take advantage of her shooting touch. Sophomore Charlie Bingham, 5-10, is another perimeter shooting and she will share a lot of the ball handling duties with sophomore Molly McLeod, who nailed four 3-point shots in the opener. Sophomore Ruby Jansen, 6-1, is developing into a fine post player.

Obituaries



Kevin Mark Tallant

WIXOM - Kevin Mark Tallant, 62, of Wixom, Michigan passed away peacefully on Friday, December 23, 2022.

Beloved son of the late Paul and Janet Tallant. Dear brother of Brian Tallant and the late Dale Tallant. Also survived by several cousins, aunts, uncles, and friends.

Services were held at Lynch & Sons Funeral Home 404 E. Liberty St. Milford, MI 48381.

Interment took place at Milford Memorial Cemetery in Milford, Michigan.

Memorials are asked to American Diabetes Association or the American Heart Association in Kevin's memory.



**Due to the holiday,
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obituary placement
times may vary.**

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Top 100 girls basketball players in the state

Mick McCabe

Special to Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Free Press high school guru Mick McCabe gives his list of the top 100 girls players in Michigan for the 2022-23 season:

Top 25

1. Faith Carson, 6-4, senior, Buchanan
2. Indya Davis, 5-10, junior, West Bloomfield
3. Macy Brown, 6-0, senior, East Grand Rapids
4. Kennedy Blair, 5-10, senior, Dearborn Divine Child
5. Summer Davis, 5-10, junior, West Bloomfield
6. Lexi Boyke, 6-0, senior, Frankenmuth
7. Macey Fegan, 5-11, senior, Standish Sterling
8. Cadence Dykstra, 5-9, senior, Grand Rapids West Catholic
9. Janae Tyler, 6-0, senior Holt
10. Armoni Strozier, 6-1, senior, Flint Carman Ainsworth
11. Mayla Ham, 5-10, senior, Wayne Memorial
12. McKenna Macon, 5-8, senior, Lawton
13. Lily Zeinstra, 5-11, junior Byron Center
14. Annabel Ayrault, 6-0, senior, Grosse Pointe North
15. Mary Copple, 5-8, senior, Brighton
16. Maddie Petroelje, 6-1, senior, Hudsonville
17. Dakota Alston, 5-7, senior, Detroit Edison
18. Ava Scanlon, 6-2, senior, Grand Ledge
19. Zarla Mitchell, 5-7, senior, Saginaw Heritage
20. McKenna Ferguson, 5-7, senior, Byron Center
21. Jada McCree, 5-8, senior, Grand Blanc
22. Maya White, 6-2, senior, Farmington Hills Mercy

23. Brooke Simpson, 5-9, junior, Belding
24. Danielle Hehmann, 5-8, senior, Ann Arbor Richard
25. Desrae Kyles, 6-4, senior, Benton Harbor

The next 75 (in alphabetical order)

- Riley Abney, 5-8, junior, Ortonville
Brandon
Maya Anderson, 5-10, senior, Detroit Cass Tech
Samone Andrews, 5-6, junior, Macomb Dakota
Emma Arico, 5-5, junior, Birmingham Detroit Country Day
Braxcynn Baker, 5-11, junior, Lowell
Zoie Bamm, 6-1, senior, Brooklyn Columbia Central
Katelyn Baney, 6-1, junior, Paw Paw
Kara Bartels, 6-3, senior, Zeeland West
Paris Bass, 5-10, senior, Wayne
Mackenzie Bell, 5-7, senior, Sault Ste. Marie
Maddy Benard, 5-8, sophomore, Grosse Pointe South
Mari Bink, 5-8, senior, Escanaba
Alie Bisballe, 6-2, junior, Lake City
Kate Borseth, 5-6, senior, Ewen-Trout Creek
Lexie Bowers, 5-7, senior, Kent City
Makenna Clement, 6-0, senior, Lake Fenton
Molly Deurloo, 5-9, senior, Howell
Elisha Dykstra, 6-0, sophomore, Grand Rapids West Catholic
Jaidyn Elam, 5-10, junior, Country Day
Claire Erickson, 6-0, senior, Sault Ste. Marie
Regan Finkbeiner, 5-6, senior, Hemlock
Olivia Flynn, 5-7, sophomore, Harbor Springs
Kamari Forrest, 5-10, senior, Saginaw
Sydney Gillett, 5-10, senior, Corunna
Emily Grulke, 5-11, Rochester Lutheran Northwest
Reece Guyton, 5-9, junior, Williamston
Devin Hagemann, 5-5, junior, Edison



Holt's Janae Tyler goes up for a shot against Grand Ledge on Dec. 16 in Holt. AL GOLDIS/FOR THE LANSING STATE JOURNAL

- Bella Hebert, 5-10, junior, Hancock
Kendal Hendrix, 5-11, junior, West Bloomfield
Sydney Hendrix, 5-11, senior, West Bloomfield
Morganne Houk, 5-7, senior, Plymouth Christian
Jayla Jackson, 5-7, freshman, Country Day
Corina Jahfetson, 5-3, senior, Baraga
Samyah Jefferson, 5-1, senior, Detroit Mumford
Elyssa Kincaid, 5-11, senior, Riverview
Tara Kurncz, 5-6, sophomore, DeWitt
Jordyn Lawrence, 5-7, senior, Durand
Sela Lefler, 5-6, senior, North Farmington
Liv Linden, 5-8, senior, Hartland
Meghan MacPhee, 5-9, senior, Marquette
Jenna Maki, 5-9, junior, Ishpeming
Keira Maki, 5-9, senior, Escanaba
Layla Marshall, 5-8, junior, Redford Westfield
Ella Mason, 5-8, junior, Negaunee

- Meg McCalla, 6-0, senior, Chelsea
Mia McLaughlin, 5-9, junior, Frankenmuth
Adelyn Moore, 5-10, senior, Caro
Javyn Montgomery, 5-8, senior, East Kentwood
Madison Morson, 5-9, junior, Plymouth Salem
Kayla Mount, 6-1, junior, Cass Tech
Maddux Overweg, 5-9, junior, Springport
Alexcis Parker, 5-9, senior, Flint Powers
Riley Place, 5-7, senior, Goodrich
Lena Pleaugh, 5-5, senior, Gwinn, 5-5
Shamya Reid, 5-5, senior, Redford Westfield
Rachel Reiso, 5-6, senior, Saginaw Swan Valley
Gabrielle Reynolds, 5-10, junior, Holland West Ottawa
Kaitlyn Sanders, 6-1, senior, Birmingham Groves
Danica Shamion, 5-7, junior, West Iron County
Cola Sisk, 5-9, senior, Lake Fenton
Kate Starkey, 5-4 sophomore, Grass Lake
Kate Stemmer, 5-6, junior, Saline
Mckenzie Swanson, 6-2, junior, Birmingham Marian
Meghan Trehwella, 5-6, senior, Houghton
Stephanie Utomi, 5-11, junior, Arbor Prep
Stacy Utomi, 5-10, junior, Arbor Prep
Madi Uyl, 5-6, sophomore, DeWitt
Ashley Weller, 5-10, junior, Jackson Northwest
Leila Wells, 5-8, junior, Chelsea
Jordan Wedaw, 6-0, senior, Portage Northern
Stella Wickstrom, 6-0, senior, Houghton
Alyssa Wypych, 5-10, senior, Rockford
Anna Wypych, 5-11, sophomore, Rockford
Alli Zajac, 6-2, sophomore, Tecumseh
Ryleigh Zinn, 5-11, senior, Genesee
Mick McCabe is a former longtime columnist for the Detroit Free Press.

All-State

Continued from Page 5B

Denby; Zaly Martin, Bridgeport; Zander Forbes, Hastings; Bo Skidmore, Vicksburg; Darrin Strey, Paw Paw; Hunter Carey, Lake Fenton; Alex Smith, Cranbrook-Kingswood; Matthew Neff, DeWitt; Denzel White, Avondale; James Brown, St. Clair Shores Lake Shore; Brendon Wasilewski, Walled Lake Central; Justin Lynch, Livonia Churchill; Bryan Williams, Chandler Park; Carlo Aybar, Caledonia; Jamael McKinney, Clarkston; Jason Wilson, Hartland; Rocco Orsini, Rochester Adams; Bruce Williams, Ann Arbor Huron; Carter Herriman, Davison; D'Andre Hudgins, Muskegon; Brandon Felts, Clinton; Luke Hazelton, Maple City Glen Lake; Nolan Collins, Lawton; Zac Affholter, Reading;

Quarterbacks: Zion Yoder, Flint Beecher; Mason Smith, Carson City-Crystal; Preston Wallace, Evart; Trevor Gleeson, Vassar; Joe Colavecchi, Iron Mountain; Zack O'Neal, Montrose; Kannon Duffing, Manchester; Grant Bradley, Napoleon; Jack Kulhanek, New Lothrop; Bryan Convertini, Muskegon Catholic Central; Carson Bradley, Allen Park Cabrini; Xavier Allen, Reed City; Cade Coquillard, Essexville Garber; Eddie Cesar, Macomb Lutheran North; Graham Junge, Flat Rock; Jacob Tuttle, Notre Dame Prep; Anthony Benard, Grosse Pointe South; Caleb Quake, Three Rivers; Robert Lalain, Dearborn Divine Child; Gavin Espinoza, Crosswell-Lexington; Kyle Stratton, Whitehall; Jake Burns, Tecumseh; Casey Carswell, Mason; Jack Reisbig, Lowell; M'Khi Guy, Muskegon; Kalieb Osborne, Waterford Kettering; Nigel Johnson, Flint Carman Ainsworth; Ryan Allen, Milford; Cane Mack, Portage Northern; Mason McKenzie, Caledonia; Luke Kameg, Utica Ford; Adam Saleh, Dearborn; Ethan Hamby, Dakota; Braylen Himmelein, Davison;

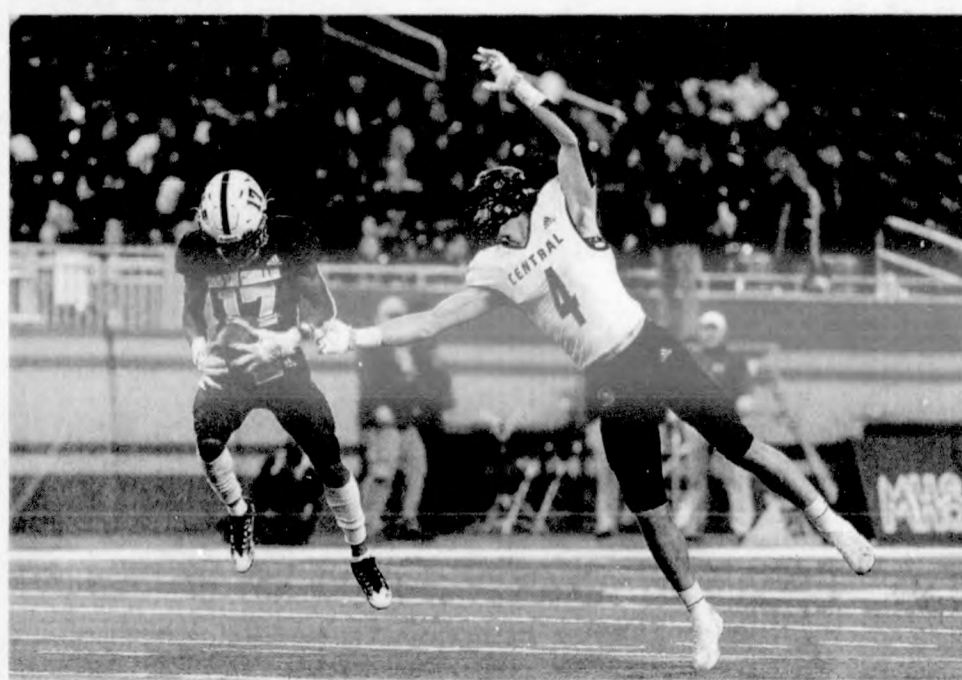
Running backs: Hunter Debarr, Whiteford; Vincent Martin, Bark River-Harris; Kevin Harris, Everest; Bart Laretz, Napoleon; Garrett Hathaway, Traverse City St. Francis; Isaac Noora, Schoolcraft; Cole Potier, Gladstone; Kaeden Calcari, Menominee; Bryson Hughes, Reed City; Gabe Lynn, Durand; Isaiah Clemons, Detroit Southeastern; Kahleel Brown, Birch Run; Kyle Coenen, Armada; Nathan Francis, Whitmore Lake; Anthony Ruffino, Marine City; Zach Myenek, Notre Dame Prep; Trent Behrenwald, Tri County; Lanny Teunessen, Hastings; Carter Plannger, Paw Paw; Paschal Jolman, Fruitport; Jack

Mills, Carleton Airport; Nakai Amachree, Haslett; Jake Nichols, Fenton; Andrew Petty, St. Clair Shores Lake Shore; Destin Piggee, Muskegon; Brett Roeser, Warren De La Salle; Elias Kendra, Groves; Joseph Spencer, Swartz Creek; Devlin Lorincz, Swartz Creek; Thomas Churchill, Saginaw Heritage; Cordell Mabins, Livonia Franklin; Niko Johnson, Sterling Heights; Gavin Troy, Port Huron; Cameron Pettaway, Farmington; Sean Hodges, Cass Tech; Evan Haeger, Detroit Catholic Central; Noah Dobert, Dearborn; Tommy Donovan, South Lyon; Eli Graves, Kingsley; Bradlee Uhlmann, Bath; Spencer Brown, Addison; Maverick Messenger, Reading; Paschal Jolman, Fruitport;

Linebackers: Dakota Kohn, Petersburg-Summerfield; Cheven Lesko, Vassar; Will Eubank, Saginaw MLS; Aiden Mackowiak, Ubly; Zayne Moore, Morley Stanwood; Mike Good, Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port; Landon Swanson, Charlevoix; Tyler Filingier, Almont; Eli Van Buren, Negaunee; Ramsey Bousseau, Olivet; Cooper Buhl, Dundee; Terrance Hayes, Detroit Southeastern; Johnathan Jackson, Bridgeport; Kaden Proctor, Yale; Lukas Sleboda, Armada; Karter Schmitt, Ogemaw Heights; Grant Anderson, Vicksburg; Easton Phipps, Goodrich; Landon Heavy, Parma Western; James McDonald, Warren De La Salle; Caiden Bolduc, Reeths-Puffer; Brandon Wheeler, Chandler Park; Graham Doman, Country Day; Ryan Polisei, Utica Eisenhower; Samuel Goethals, Kingsley;

Defensive backs: Keaton Braun, Bad Axe; Jaxon McGuigan, Manchester; Dwight Bush, Loyola; Wendell Smith, Detroit Pershing; Noah Montgomery, Detroit Northwestern; Luke Matusik, Millington; Joe Debski, Grand Rapids West Catholic; Phil Nelson, Negaunee; Ethan Burrows, Essexville Garber; Eli Craig, Livonia Clarenceville; Griffin Mabery, North Branch; Kevin Lebron, Allen Park; Caden Oliver, Parma Western; Ke'Waun Farnum, Mona Shores; Dylan Lepkowski, Country Day; Damon Powers, Westland Glenn; Ar'Jon Thompson, Livonia Stevenson; Jason Skoczylas, Chelsea;

Kickers/punters: Brett Mueller, Ubly; Nate Brinks, Grand Rapids South Christian; Adam Barcome, Fenton; Avery Kucharski, Portage Northern; Jackson Burkholder, Rockford; Eli Meylan, Bay City Western; Riley Behrman, Saline; Colin Timko, Rochester Adams; Zach Penozo, Troy; Andrew Novay, Forest Hills Central; Eli Meylan, Bay City Western; Troy Wertman, Pewamo-Westphalia; Rease Teel, Perry;



Warren De La Salle defensive back Jamari Allen (17) intercepts a pass intended for Traverse City Central's Grant Schmidt (4) in November 2021. JUNFU HAN/DETROIT FREE PRESS

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