

County teams ready for playoff push

After three straight months of fierce conference rivalry games and a full slate of top-notch non-conference opponents, the boys varsity hockey teams in the county can now look forward to the start of the state playoffs.



Fred Costello

SLAP SHOTS

games to watch when they take a look at the pairings.

On the surface, Division 1 Pre-Regional #14, hosted at Suburban Ice Macomb looks to be the most dramatic bracket.

That's because there is the potential for MAC Red champion Dakota to meet Utica in the post-season for the fourth consecutive year. While the Cougars dominated most of their competition en route to their first-ever division title, they went winless against the Chieftains. Utica is also responsible for knocking Dakota out of the playoffs three seasons in a row.

Of course, both teams will need to take care of business for the matchup to occur. Dakota (10-1-3 in the Red) faces Eisenhower (2-9-2) on Feb. 25 at 5:30 p.m. The winner of that game will face the winner between Utica (8-3-2) and Chippewa Valley (6-7-1), who also face off on Feb. 25 at 7:45 p.m.

Even though Dakota hasn't lost a game since Dec. 22, Cougars coach Dave Koons isn't taking anyone lightly at this point.

"Everybody talks about us and Utica, but Chippewa Valley is a scary team," Koons said. "And we're definitely not overlooking Eisenhower. They've gotten better and improved all season. All it takes are a couple bad breaks and you're fighting for your life."

Koons clearly would like his team to get its shot at revenge against Utica, however.

"Honestly, I'm looking forward to playing them," Koons said. "We haven't had much luck

against them and you want to measure yourself against those teams. Everybody should be ready to go, but it's not going to be easy."

Mike Bartoy feels that the Big Reds have as good an opportunity as anyone to come out of this very competitive bracket.

"I think our chances are good," Bartoy said. "Everybody's healthy now and we match up really well with Utica. We're very similar teams. We both use a lot of forechecking and speed-wise I'd say it's probably pretty close."

The Big Reds split their season series with Utica and managed a tie and a loss against the Cougars. Clearly, this has the makings of the most entertaining bracket as all four teams come from the MAC Red.

PICKS: Semifinals - Dakota def. Eisenhower; Utica def. Chippewa Valley. Final - Dakota def. Utica.

AT TROY SPORTS CENTER Stevenson (9-5-1 in the White) will battle Ford (9-3-3) on Feb. 27 at 8:45 p.m. The winner will face the Troy/Troy Athens winner on Feb. 28 at 6:45 p.m.

Ford went 1-0-1 against the Titans this season. Falcons coach Lee Jenkins expects an intense first round.

"I think it'll be a knock down, drag out contest," Jenkins said. "It's really a toss up. It'll be anybody's hockey game. We have to be strong defensively and on the penalty kill."

PICKS: Semifinals - Troy def. Troy Athens; Ford def. Stevenson. Final - Ford def. Troy.

AT ST. CLAIR SHORES CIVIC ARENA

Some bizarre scheduling has both MAC representatives playing against teams from the Michigan Interscholastic Hockey League - which is noted for its high level of play.

Warren-Sterling United (10-1-4 in the White) will play U-D Jesuit from the MIHL on Feb. 25 at 6:30 p.m. The winner of that game faces the St. Clair Shores Unified/Grosse Pointe North winner. Those teams face off on Feb. 25 at 9 p.m., while the pre-regional final is Feb. 27 at 7:30 p.m.

The Thunder needs only a tie on Saturday to claim its first MAC White title. The team has put together a season to be proud

Boys Ice Hockey Pre-Regionals

DIVISION 1 Pre-Regionals (At Troy Sports Center) Semifinals

Feb. 27: Troy vs. Troy Athens, 6:35 p.m.; Stevenson vs. Ford, 8:45 p.m.

Championship Feb. 28: TBD, 6:45 p.m. (At Suburban Ice Macomb) Semifinals

Feb. 25: Eisenhower vs. Dakota, 5:30 p.m.; Utica vs. Chippewa Valley, 7:45 p.m.

Championship Feb. 26: TBD, 7 p.m. (At St. Clair Shores Civic Arena) Semifinals

Feb. 25: U-D Jesuit vs. Warren-Sterling United, 6:30 p.m.; St. Clair Shores Unified vs. Grosse Pointe North, 9 p.m.

Championship Feb. 27: TBD, 7:30 p.m.

DIVISION 2 Pre-Regionals (At Glacier Pointe and Suburban Ice Macomb) Semifinals

Feb. 26: Romeo vs. Rochester Hills Stoney Creek, 6 p.m.; Port Huron vs. Anchor Bay, TBD

Championship Feb. 28: TBD, 8:45 p.m. (At City Ice Arena)

Participating teams: Berkley, Grosse Pointe South, Royal Oak, Warren-Mott (At Great Lakes Sports) Semifinal

Feb. 26: L'Anse Creuse North vs. De La Salle, TBD

Championship Feb. 28: L'Anse Creuse vs. L'Anse Creuse North/De La Salle winner, 7 p.m.

of and coach Andy Peraino is ready for the playoffs.

"I haven't seen Jesuit play, but they play a very strong schedule," Peraino said. "We're going to bring a strong defensive effort. That's when we're at our best. If we can limit the other team's shots and keep the game low-scoring, we'll do fine."

If Warren-Sterling or St. Clair Shores is able to make it out of their pre-regional, they'll face the winner of Pre-Regional #16, which includes Canton Salem, Livonia Churchill, Livonia Stevenson and Redford Union.

The Lakers have come on of late, on the strength of their defense. They did not face the Thunder this season, yet both team's emphasis on defense would make for an entertaining battle.

PICKS: Semifinals - Warren-Sterling United def. U-D Jesuit; Grosse Pointe North def. St. Clair Shores. Final - Grosse Pointe North def. Warren-Sterling United.

DIVISION 2

AT GLACIER POINTE & SUBURBAN ICE MACOMB In Division 2 Pre-Regional #24, Romeo (6-6-2) will take on Rochester Stoney Creek on Feb. 26 at 6 p.m. at Glacier Pointe. The

winner gets the victor between Anchor Bay (5-8-1) and Port Huron. Those teams face each other Feb. 26 at a time and location to be announced.

Should Anchor Bay or Romeo get through, they'll face the Pre-Regional #23 winner on March 1 at 6:15 p.m. at Suburban Ice City-placeMacomb.

PICKS: Semifinals - Romeo def. Rochester Hills Stoney Creek; Anchor Bay def. Port Huron. Championship - Anchor Bay def. Romeo.

AT GREAT LAKES SPORTS

Pre-Regional #30 features an all-Macomb bracket, hosted at Fraser.

L'Anse Creuse (10-4-2) received a first-round bye.

L'Anse Creuse North (8-2-4) will face De La Salle of the MIHL on Feb. 26. The time is still to be announced. The winner of that game faces the Lancers on Feb. 28 at 7 p.m.

Of course, the potential is there for one of the MAC's greatest rivalries to renew itself in the playoffs. The Lancers and Crusaders had yet another epic two-game season series, with L'Anse Creuse winning once, while the second game ended in a tie.

PICKS: Semifinal - De La Salle def. L'Anse Creuse North. Cham-

State Poll Girls Basketball Final

The top 10 teams in the Associated Press high school girls basketball poll, with records in parentheses. Totals are based on 15 points for a first-place vote, 14 for second, etc.

- CLASS A 1. East Lansing (19-1) 2. Grosse Pointe North (18-2) 3. Rochester (19-1) 4. Detroit Pershing (18-1) 5. Ladywood (17-3) 6. Benton Harbor (17-2) 7. Hudsonville (18-2) 8. Grand Haven (18-2) 9. Saginaw Arthur Hill (15-5) 10. Detroit King (11-4)

Also receiving votes: Lake Orion (18-2) 22; North Farmington (17-2) 19; Plymouth Salem (18-2) 15; Chippewa Valley (19-1) 13; Temperance-Bedford (18-2) 12; Marian (14-6) 6; Lansing Sexton (17-3) 5; Mattawan (16-4) 3; Walled Lake Western (17-3) 2.

- CLASS B 1. Beverly Hills Detroit Country Day (17-1) 2. Detroit Community (19-0) 3. Portland (20-0) 4. Midland Bullock Creek (20-0) 5. Ludington (19-1) 6. Flint Powers (18-2) 7. Grand Rapids South Christian (17-3) 8. Comstock Park (18-2) 9. Chesaning (17-2) 10. Detroit Renaissance (16-4)

Also receiving votes: Warren Woods Tower (18-2) 21; Lansing Waverly (17-3) 16; Richland Gull Lake (18-2) 15; Almont (20-0) 9; Plainwell (18-2) 8; Ida (17-2) 7; DeWitt (17-3) 6; Grand Rapids Catholic Central (16-4) 6; Wyoming Park (15-5) 5; Holland Christian (16-4) 2; Tawas (17-3) 1; Buchanan (18-2) 1; Grand Rapids West Catholic (16-4) 1.

- CLASS C 1. Saginaw Nouvel (17-1) 2. Ishpeming Westwood (20-0) 3. Watervliet (20-0) 4. Flint Hamady (18-2) 5. Saginaw Valley Lutheran (8-2) 6. Morley Stanwood (18-2) 7. L'Anse (18-2) 8. Houghton (18-2) 9. Bangor (18-2) 10. Clare (17-2)

Also receiving votes: Kingsley (17-3) 28, Napoleon (18-2) 21, McBain (17-3) 7, Hanover Horton (17-3) 6, Grandville Calvin Christian (15-5) 4, Sandusky (16-3) 3, Elkton Pigeon Bay Port (16-4) 2, Marlette (15-5) 1.

- CLASS D 1. Roeper (20-0) 2. New Lothrop (19-1) 3. Cedarville (19-1) 4. Portland St. Patrick (18-1) 5. Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart (18-1) 6. Burton Genesee Christian (18-2) 7. Cardinal Mooney (18-2) 8. Iron Mountain North Dickinson (18-2) 9. Big Rapids Crossroads Academy (18-2) 10. Central Lake (18-2)

Also receiving votes: St. Joseph Lake Michigan Catholic (17-3) 22, Johannesburg Lewiston (17-3) 20, Eben-Superior Central (17-3) 17, Muskegon West Michigan Christian (15-3) 14, McBain Northern Michigan Christian (15-5) 5, Ontonagon (16-4) 4, Kingston (15-5) 3, Brimley (14-4) 1.

Boys Basketball

The top 10 teams in the Michigan Associated Press high school boys basketball poll, with records in parentheses. Totals are based on 15 points for a first-place vote, 14 for second, etc.:

- CLASS A 1. Saginaw (17-1) 2. Ann Arbor Pioneer (19-0) 3. Saginaw Arthur Hill (16-2) 4. Romulus (15-3) 5. Clarkston (16-2) 6. Lansing Sexton (16-2) 7. Westland John Glenn (18-1) 8. Detroit Northwestern (14-4) 9. Kalamazoo Central (16-2) 10. Detroit Finney (13-4)

Also receiving votes: Detroit Pershing (11-4) 29, Detroit Henry Ford (14-4) 28, Jackson (15-3) 15, Grand Rapids Christian (17-2) 12, Orchard Lake St. Mary (14-5) 8, Flint Camman-Ainsworth (15-3) 7, Holt (14-4) 4, Romeo (16-2) 3, Detroit Cody 2.

- CLASS B 1. Beverly Hills Detroit Country Day (14-4) 2. Stevensville-Lakeshore (17-1) 3. Detroit Renaissance (14-4) 4. Grand Rapids Forest Hills Northern (16-2) 5. Wayland Union (16-1) 6. DeWitt (17-1) 7. Hudsonville Unity Christian (16-2) 8. Frankenmuth (18-1) 9. Wyoming Park (16-2) 10. Goodrich (17-1)

Also receiving votes: Madison (17-1) 21, Zeeland East (15-3) 17, Clarenceville (17-1) 14, Birch Run (15-3) 12, Grand Rapids Central (12-3) 10, Bridgeport (15-4) 5, Allendale (16-2) 4, Flint Powers (11-7) 4, Muskegon Heights (15-4) 3, Lincoln (17-1) 1, Ida (17-2) 1.

- CLASS C 1. Kalamazoo Christian (18-0) 2. Negaunee (19-0) 3. Reese (18-0) 4. Bangor (17-1) 5. Carson City Crystal (16-2) 6. Flint Hamady (16-2) 7. Napoleon (17-1) 8. Charlevoix (16-2) 9. Albion (15-3) 10. Bath (16-2)

Also receiving votes: Adrian Madison (17-1) 24, McBain (16-2) 21, Rhaca (15-3) 12, Ottawa Lake Whiteford (16-2) 11, Houghton (15-3) 5, Montague (15-3) 2, Unionville-Sebewaing (14-3) 2, Hillsdale (14-4) 1, Schoolcraft (13-4) 1.

- CLASS D 1. Cedarville (18-0) 2. Climax-Spitts (18-0) 3. Wyoming Tri-Unity Christian (17-2) 4. Ewen Trout Creek (19-0) 5. Lawrence (16-1) 6. Detroit City (14-3) 7. Bear Lake (16-2) 8. Crystal Falls Forest Park (17-1) 9. New Lothrop (17-1) 10. Ellsworth (16-2)

Also receiving votes: Bellaire (17-3) 24, Mackinaw City (15-3) 22, Muskegon Western Michigan Christian (15-3) 17, Webberville (15-2) 14, Painesdale Jeffers (16-3) 10, Pellston (12-8) 4, Lansing Christian (15-4) 3, Cooks Big Bay de Noc (14-4) 1.

PANTHERS: Team faces Detroit Crockett in semis Wednesday

Continued from Page 1B

day's game, it appeared that Morse would be giving the 'Get ready for Wednesday's game' speech, as Madison led by as many as eight points. However, the Panthers out-scored their visitors 10-2 in the final stretch to eke out the win.

"It didn't look good for us," Jenkins said. "During a timeout with 2:15 to play) I told them to calm down, settle down. I don't think we settled into our offense the entire game; I was just trying to get them focused."

Trailing 38-32 at that point, Center Line mounted its quick comeback as Mikaela Burch sank two free throws, and Jennifer Warack and Stephanie Lee hit three-pointers to tie the game 40-40 with 39 seconds to play.

But Madison (13-8) was whistled for an over-and-back call, and Center Line (12-8) had the opportunity to take its first lead since the final minute of the third quarter.

Madison's defense prevented the Panthers from getting a shot off, and Center Line took time out with 9 seconds remaining, drawing up another play. Lee took the inbound pass, drove the base line and dished off to Warack, who banked in a 5-footer while falling down and only 2.4 seconds were left on the clock.

Warack also intercepted the Eagles' ensuing inbound pass at half-court, but was called for traveling in the process, giving Madison another last-second chance. However, the Eagles could not connect on a three-point shot before the buzzer sounded.

"If we're up six with 1:50 to go in the game, we expect to win," Morse said. "It's unfortunate that's the way it turned out. I thought we played very well for four minutes of the quarter, but we had mistakes and turnovers, things you don't expect. It was a great year and this is a great group of kids to be with, and it all

ended so quickly, so that's the unfortunate thing."

Center Line's Lee paced all scorers with 20 points, including three triples, while Warack added nine, all but one of those coming in the second half. For Madison, Autumn Cantrell and Courtney Pappas scored 10 apiece.

In the first game of the night, Warren Fitzgerald downed Warren Lincoln, 50-39. Fitzgerald advances to play St. Clair Shores South Lake on Wednesday before the Center Line-Crockett match-up.

Center Line 42, Madison 40
Madison 8 14 8 10 - 40
Center Line 8 10 10 14 - 42
MADISON (13-8): Jill Melchert 8, Autumn Cantrell 8, Courtney Pappas 10, Meesha Nolen 3, Katie Malak, Heather Baker 8, Ashley Olsen 1, Alicia Sweeney 2. Totals: 16 (2) 6:15 40.

CLASS B (Host Center Line) FITZGERALD 50, LINCOLN 39: Kristian Hines had 11 points and dished out eight assists as the Spartans pulled away late to advance to the district semifinals.

Fitzgerald will square off against South Lake Wednesday at 5:30.

Ajai Meeks had 10 points, 10 rebounds and eight blocks in the win.

Kirsten Rude and Charlaya Irving had 10 points each for Lincoln.

Fitzgerald 50, Lincoln 39
Fitzgerald 9 18 9 14 - 50
Lincoln 5 20 7 7 - 39

FITZGERALD (18-3): Kristian Hines 11, Ajai Meeks 10, Courtney Dyer 6, Shant'anique Tolbert 6, Davina Draughn 6, Desaray Goodman 2, Mariah De'Nooyer 9. Totals: 16 (2) 16:26 50.

LINCOLN (3-18): Kirsten Rude 10, Kelsey Ginther 1, Ashley Brimm 2, Charlaya Irving 10, Samantha Murnrock 4, Arica Eggleston 7, Taylor Halperin 3, Carmen Medina 2. Totals: 14 (5) 6:17 39.

(Host St. Clair) ST. CLAIR 44, MARINE CITY 33: Kelsey Rood had 15 points and Sarah Davis added 11 points and nine rebounds as the Saints pulled away from the Mariners and into the district

Girls basketball district results

CLASS A (Host Cousino) Feb. 18: Quarterfinals - Fraser 52, Warren Woods-Tower 49; Cousino 50, Warren-Mott 21. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Regina vs. Fraser, 5:30 p.m.; Roseville vs. Cousino, 7:30 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host East Detroit) Feb. 18: Quarterfinals - Grosse Pointe South 53, East Detroit 35; Grosse Pointe North 61, Detroit Finney 16. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Lake Shore vs. Grosse Pointe South, 5:30 p.m.; Lakeview vs. Grosse Pointe North, 7 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host Romeo) Feb. 18: Quarterfinals - Troy vs. Rochester Hills Stoney Creek, 5:30 p.m.; Rochester 55, Romeo 39. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Troy Athens vs. Troy/Rochester Hills Stoney Creek winner, 5:30 p.m.; Rochester Adams vs. Rochester, 7:30 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host Ford) Feb. 18: Quarterfinals - Eisenhower 65, Sterling Heights 46; Ford 54, Utica 30. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Stevenson vs. Eisenhower, 5:30 p.m.; L'Anse Creuse vs. Ford, 7:30 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host St. Clair) Feb. 18: Quarterfinal - Marysville 44, Algonac 41; St. Clair 44, Marine City 33. Feb. 20 Semifinals - Richmond vs. Marysville, 6 p.m.; Mount Clemens vs. St. Clair, 8 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host Beverly Hills Detroit Country Day) Feb. 18: Quarterfinal - Beverly Hills Detroit Country Day 73, Clintondale 14. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Lamphere vs. Beverly Hills Detroit Country Day, 5:30 p.m.; Bloomfield Hills Andover vs. Cranbrook Kingswood, 7 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host Almont) Feb. 18: Quarterfinals - Anchor Bay 51, Port Huron 41; Dakota 54, L'Anse Creuse North 27. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Port Huron Northern vs. Anchor Bay, 5 p.m.; Chippewa Valley vs. Dakota, 7 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host Almont) Feb. 18: Quarterfinals - Almont 61, Lutheran North 43; Notre Dame Prep 44, Imlay City 30. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Armada vs. Notre Dame Prep, 6 p.m.; Capac vs. Almont, 7:30 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host Sandusky) Feb. 18: Quarterfinals - Burton Bentley 50, Dryden 37; Sandusky 35, Brown City 27. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Memphis vs. Burton Bentley, 6 p.m.; Marlette vs. Sandusky, 7:30 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 7 p.m.

(Host Immaculate Conception) Feb. 18: Quarterfinal - Parkway Christian 62, Immaculate Conception 27. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Macomb Christian vs. Conner Creek East, 5:30 p.m.; Roeper vs. Parkway Christian, 7 p.m. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 6 p.m.

(Host Almont) Feb. 18: Quarterfinals - Almont 61, Lutheran North 43. Feb. 20: Semifinals - Almont 61, Lutheran North 43. Feb. 22: Championship - TBD, 6 p.m.

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St. Clair 44, Marine City 33
Marine City 7 7 9 10 - 33
St. Clair 11 7 14 12 - 44

MARINE CITY (17-4): Kassie Snyder 17, Aubrey Smith 5, Morgan Gould 9, Jessica Rombach 2. Totals: 13 (3) 46 33.

ST. CLAIR (12-9): Kelsey Rood 15, Alex Bernardi 1, Megan Johnson 7, Gina Vito 9, Karly Starbuck 1, Sarah Davis 11. Totals: 11 (2) 16:35 44.

MARYSVILLE 43, ALGONAC 40: Julianna Dobney had 14 points to lead the Vikings.

Kim Deland had 13 points and 10 rebounds and Lauren Davis added 10 points and four steals in the win.

Marysville 44, Algonac 40
Algonac 6 12 13 9 - 40
Marysville 13 6 3 22 - 43

ALGONAC: Castler 2, Ruhlman 3, Lapacl 1, Bracken 2, Valle 23, J. Highstreet 5, H. Highstreet 4. Totals: 10 (2) 14:22 40.

MARYSVILLE (11-10): Lauren Davis 10, Mallory Kopa 7, Kim Deland 13, Julianna Dobney 14. Totals: 17

Power Five

The county high school power rankings wrapped up school's first Red title

- 1. Dakota - Cougars wrapped up school's first Red title
2. Warren-Sterling - Can clinch first White title with a tie on Saturday
3. L'Anse Creuse North - Still has outside shot at the White crown
4. Saint Clair Shores - Lakers have a chance to finish second after a magnificent second half
5. L'Anse Creuse - Lancers showing strength as regular season draws to a close

- FRED COSTELLO

pionship - De La Salle def. L'Anse Creuse.

AT CITY ARENA

The winner of the pre-regional will face the winner of Pre-Regional #30, which includes first-year program Warren-Mott. The complete bracket has not been finalized, but will also include Berkley, Grosse Pointe South and Royal Oak. All games will take place at Detroit City Arena.

FAVORITE: Grosse Pointe South.

No MAC teams were able to win a regional title last season, though the league was able to capture at least one in both 2005 (St. Clair Shores) and 2006 (Eisenhower and St. Clair Shores). Both the MAC Red and White have proven themselves competitive with some of the best competition in the state. All of the practice time and rivalry games provide the foundation for a long playoff run - and it appears the MAC is ready for a run in 2008.

Games of the Week

The county's best matchups this week

L'Anse Creuse North vs. Stevenson; Wednesday; 8 p.m. at Troy

St. Clair vs. St. Clair Shores; Thursday; 8 p.m. at St. Clair Shores

Romeo vs. L'Anse Creuse North; Friday; 8 p.m. at Mount Clemens

Warren-Sterling vs. Port Huron; Saturday; 6 p.m. at McMorran

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