

Tecumseh and Flint Holy Rosary dominated the girls basketball scene in 1974, and Holy Rosary followed with an encore in 1975



Legends of the Games

In an effort to promote educational athletics by showcasing some of the great teams of past years, the Michigan High School Athletic Association instituted a program called "Legends Of The Games" in 1997. This year, the 1974 Tecumseh team and the 1974 and 1975 Flint Holy Rosary teams will be honored at halftime of the Class C Final.

Over the years they've scattered from coast to coast. Susie Brown and Jane Faulkner landed in Ohio; Janice Stevens in California; Grace Burns in Massachusetts; Peg Upell in South Dakota. Others, like Julie Murphy, Barb Henning, Connie Younglove and Rebecca Stormes moved only a short distance from home. Coach Diane Nelson, Julie Anderson and Kris Underwood still reside in **Tecumseh**.

They were a family that believed – in themselves, in their goals, and in the concept of team. A rotating cast of characters who shared the spotlight and embraced Coach Nelson's rally cry, "We Believe."

Together, they overcame the obstacles

and established team chemistry. Henning, the leading scorer in Tecumseh's 1974 MHSAA Class B title game and one of only two senior starters, was forced to the sidelines for half the season with a broken hand. So Stevens stepped in and evolved from "a fragile, lady-like performer to one with all the fire of the other starters," according to sportswriter John Viges.

Individually, they developed unique characteristics that defined a family. Murphy, the other senior, was known for her dramatic two-handed shots from the baseline. Anderson, along with Henning, was recognized for polished performances under the boards. Brown's magnificent play and one-handed shots – a rarity during these early days of the tournament –



Tecumseh Herald

Tecumseh head coach Diane Nelson (left) accepts the 1974 Class B trophy following her team's 57-29 win over Harper Woods Regina.



Photo courtesy of Barbara Henning

1974 Tecumseh Indians

Front (left to right): Susie Brown, Barbara Henning, Laura Purkey, Becky Stormes, Julie Murphy, Jane Faulkner. **Second Row:** Kris Underwood, Connie Younglove, Tori Iffland, Peg Upell, Melinda Ternak, Julie Anderson. **Third Row:** Grace Burns, Janice Stevens, Deb Steadley.

– highlighted the team's versatility.

Completing the family was the loyal support of the Tecumseh residents who wrapped their collective arms around this team that finished the year with the finest basketball performance in city history.

The five starters, Brown, Henning, Anderson, Murphy and the team's quick little guard, Melinda Ternak, played

the entire game on only one occasion. Otherwise, the remaining 10 members of the squad shared time on the floor with their unselfish friends. That lone occasion, a 49-32 win over Jenison in the Semifinal round, insured the team a chance at perfection.

The squad's 57-29 blowout of Harper Woods Regina in the Class B Final sealed it – a flawless 22-0 season. Henning ended the title game with 25 points, including a 13-of-15 performance at the free-throw line, as the Saddlelites tried desperately to shut her down and get in the game. Defensively, Brown and Ternak stymied Regina's top player, Teresa Orban. After scoring 31 in the Semifinals, Orban was held to 17 points, including 7-of-20 from the field.

"From the start of that season, the goal was to be State Champions," said Murphy recalling that magical season.

"Our coach instilled in us the most important lesson of all: to believe in our-

selves individually and collectively," added Brown. "This experience changed my life forever."

Flint Holy Rosary's 62-35 win over reigning champions Ewen-Trout Creek in the 1974 Class D championship game capped a perfect 23-0 season for little parochial school and Coach Jo Lake. The win was the beginning of an incredible roll for the Wolverines.

Lake's softball team earned the MHSAA's Class D softball crown later that school year. The team then returned to the basketball court to win it all again in the fall of 1975, followed by volleyball honors in the winter, and a second consecutive softball trophy in the spring of 1976. Sporting the same nucleus of players, the feat of five MHSAA crowns is a source of great pride among Rosary alumni. The school, which closed following the 1991-92 school year, had opened in 1963.

Much like Tecumseh, the Rosary family was built around a strong figurehead. Coach Lake had worked to build the girls program from the early days of the school's opening.

"The girls themselves wanted to become involved," said Lake in an interview years later. "They wanted something to do. At Flint Holy Rosary in 1964 there was absolutely nothing for the girls to do. The girls knew I had played (sports) in high school. They asked me if I would open up the gym. It was very contagious. Soon they were asking if they could play games against other schools."

During those years, Lake had done everything from driving the bus to road games to sewing team uniforms. With the arrival of the MHSAA girls tournaments, her teams had the chance to showcase the program that had been built through years of hard work.

Lake pushed her players hard, stressing an aggressive style of play, and her practices were intense.

"There were consequences for not being aggressive," said Karen Lehoux, recalling those days in a *Flint Journal* article years later. "Double laps, triple laps. It didn't matter how hard we played or how much we won by. We went back the next day and practiced as if we had not played to our potential."

Sandy Histed, standing nearly six feet tall, was the center for the Wolverines on the cage title squads in 1974 and 1975.

"We knew how to work together to accomplish our goal," said Histed. "We were always there for each other."

Featuring a pressing defense and the fastbreak on offense, the Wolverines trounced most of their opponents in 1974, but the team had its hands full in a 67-65 Regional win over Fowler. Forward Kelly Girard's buzzer-beater kept the hopes alive for an MHSAA title, and the team cruised through the rest of the tournament with relative ease.

Junior Pat Bentoski finished with 19 points

while classmate Sally Lipp kicked in 14, including 10 in the first half, in the win over defending champ Ewen-Trout Creek in the Final. The team hit 56 percent of its shots from the field.

Lehoux, MaryAnn Hodack, and the rest of the starting five returned in the fall of 1975 to defend the title. Again the team cruised through the season with relative ease, as the team's balanced scoring attack that focused on Histed, Girard and Bentoski kept teams at bay. Rosary found few challenges during the regular season and emerged unbeaten as it entered the tournament. However, the Wolverines led by only two points, 16-14, at halftime of their Final game against Allendale. The team regrouped at the intermission, and Rosary's aggressive defense hounded the Falcons into nine turnovers in the third quarter to take control of the game, 32-19. Lehoux grabbed 10 rebounds while Histed and Bentoski each finished with 12 points in the 45-32 win.

"I just think we had superior coaching," Girard told the *Journal* when asked about their success. "I think Jo Lake loved us all as her own kids, and she brought out the best in everybody. We wanted to please her, and we knew if we did our job, we would win."

— Ron Pesch

Ron Pesch is the historian for the MHSAA. To submit story ideas and statistical records, write to Pesch at 1317 Lakeshore Drive, Muskegon, MI 49441.



Photo courtesy of Jo Lake

1974 Flint Holy Rosary Wolverines

Front (left to right): Shaun Lake, Brenda Turchi, Elizabeth Mangett. **Second Row:** Karen Lehoux, Pat Bentoski, MaryAnn Hodack, Sally Lipp. **Third Row:** Manager Therese Bentoski, Sue Berta, Carol Ratzka, Teresa Shaheen, Head Coach Jo Lake. **Fourth Row:** Judy McCarty, Kelly Girard, Sandy Histed, Pat Berta, Cathy O'Connor.

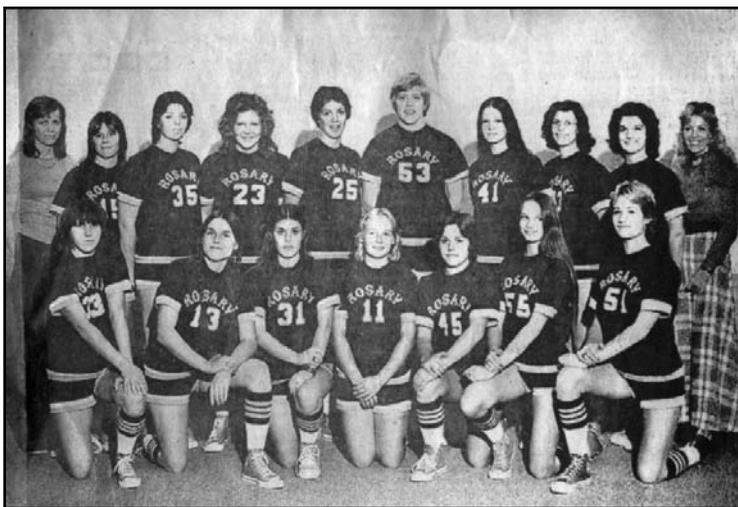


Photo courtesy of Jo Lake

1975 Flint Holy Rosary Wolverines

Front (left to right): Pat Bentoski, MaryAnn Hodack, Elizabeth Mangett, Madonna Fairman, Shaun Lake, Linda Roster, Clare Tuttle. **Second Row:** Manager Theresa Keener, Sally Lipp, Jill Ignace, Karen Lehoux, Kelly Girard, Sandy Histed, Teresa Shaheen, Noel Gilmour, Janice Fitzgerald, Head Coach Jo Lake.