

The Swami



Trail Trash, Issue #98-2, March, 1998

In the first edition of Trail Trash for 1998, the Swami hit 70% (104-44) of his picks. This is a major drop off for the Swami from 1997 when he picked 111 winners. First the Swami thought it might have something to do with El Nino. After all, isn't El Nino the reason for everything that has occurred this winter? No it can't be El Nino. The Swami doesn't know anything about El Nino other than he has a sister. Then the Swami concluded that his performance had something to do with using a ouige board in the first edition instead of a ouije board. Spell checking finds neither word. Then in a moment of deep thought, the Swami decided to bring this into perspective. After all, this isn't like when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor. This is high school basketball, and the Swami did pick 9 district winners in 1998 as opposed to only 4 winners in 1997.

What would the Swami do if he couldn't whine a little bit? Once again in 1998, Northwest Ohio hosts four regional tournaments (at two sites). Once again, there is a scheduling conflict between two finals. Once again in 1998, Dayton hosts four regional tournaments. Once again, there are no scheduling conflicts among any of the finals. If anyone at the Ohio High School Athletic Association reads this, what is the deal?

With the complaining out of the way, let's move on to the picks as we get ready for the final Boys State Basketball Tournament at St. John Arena.

DIVISION IV

Seven of the seventeen teams ranked in the final Associated Press poll have reached regional play. Only Norwalk St. Paul from last year's final four remains in contention. Jackson Center held AP's #1 ranking throughout the year with only a late season loss to Fort Loramie marred their season. The Tigers avenged that loss in district play.

REGIONAL

University of Toledo: This regional normally features one or two marquee teams and has produced three of the past four state champs in Lincolnview, Liberty-Benton, and Upper Scioto Valley. 1998 is an exception with #13 Liberty-Benton being the only state ranked club. Looks to be a very balanced and competitive regional. Look for L-B to stop the Pettisville Blackbirds while Delphos St John's will defeat Continental. In the final, 1997 Division IV football champ St John's advances to Columbus with a win over L-B.

Fairgrounds Coliseum: #4 Norwalk St. Paul and #7 Richmond Dale Southeastern lead this group which includes one of the two sub-.500 still remaining in the tournament in 10-13 Trimble. Southeastern and St. Paul face off in the first game which appears to be the championship with Southeastern prevailing. Grandview stops Trimble in the nightcap. Southeastern can not take Grandview too lightly in the regional final as Grandview has already eliminated #3 Worthington Christian. Southeastern advances to the final four.

Canton Fieldhouse: #8 Berlin Hiland heads this group which also includes 11-13 Bloomfield. Independence already has eliminated #6 Dalton and has no trouble with Bloomfield in the opener. Lowellville is no match for Hiland which eliminated #5 Zanesville Rosecrans in district play. In the final, Hiland advances to the state tournament with a win over Independence. Can Junior Raber be far behind?

Wright State: Best of the Division IV regionals with #1 Jackson Center, #10 Dayton Jefferson, and #14 Cincinnati Seven Hills. Look for Jefferson to nip Seven Hills in the first game with Jackson Center being tested but winning over Minster in the nightcap. The final matches two teams that were big names in the eighties but haven't been heard from lately. 1985 Class A champ Jackson Center defeats Jefferson in the final to advance to Columbus.

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Delphos St. John's, Richmond Dale Southeastern, Berlin Hiland, and Jackson Center comprise the final four for 1998. Delphos and Southeastern kick off the 76th Boys State Tournament with the Blue Jays pulling off a mild upset over Southeastern. In the second game, Jeff Reese and Travis Elsass lead Jackson Center past Hiland. In the final, Jackson Center is able to neutralize big Greg Grothous as the Tigers defeat Delphos St. John's. Jackson pulls off a rarity in leading the A.P. poll wire to wire and winning the state tournament championship.

DIVISION III

Nine of the seventeen teams ranked in the final Associated Press poll have reached the regional level including the top five teams. Only Dayton Christian remains from the 1997 final four. Division III features the only remaining undefeated team in Youngstown Liberty.

REGIONAL

University of Toledo: #1 Ontario and #10 Rocky River Lutheran West head this field. 21-2 Wayne Trace somehow went unranked and eliminated 1997 state champ and #6 Patrick Henry in the district final. The Raiders from Haviland and Ontario play in the lid lifter, and this could be a classic. Ontario, with only a late season loss to Mansfield Madison marring their record, was eliminated in the regional final in 1997. The Warriors are able to edge Wayne Trace. In the nightcap, Lutheran West advances to the finals with a win over Gibsonburg. In the final, Ontario has too much for Phil Argento and the rest of the Longhorns and gains a trip to the final four.

Ohio University: An excellent field with #3 Sparta Highland, #5 Chesapeake, #12 Martins Ferry, and 21-2 Coal Grove. In the opener, the Swami likes Highland (barely) over Coal Grove. Martins Ferry has a district win over #9 Sugarcreek Garaway and upsets Chesapeake in the nightcap. In the final, Highland gives Coach Mike

Hoyng his third trip to the state tournament as the Scots defeat Martins Ferry.

Canton Fieldhouse: Another outstanding field with #2 Liberty, #7 Bedford Chanel, #12 East Palestine, and 20-3 Massillon Tuslaw. This is another tough regional to pick. The Swami really has an urge to pick Chanel in the opener given the Firebirds defeat of perennial power Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph in the district along with Liberty's struggle to defeat Girard. Liberty's experience will be too much for a very young Chanel team. Take Liberty in a squeaker. East Palestine has been impressive thus far in the tournament and will defeat Tuslaw. In the final, look for Liberty to advance to Columbus with a perfect record as they nip East Palestine.

University of Dayton: #4 Dayton Christian heads this field. Wyoming gained valuable tournament experience in their 1997 regional tournament run, and the Swami likes the Cowboys over Indian Hill. Dayton Christian once again has benefited from the arrival of transfers. The Swami likes Dayton Christian over Canal Winchester although CW is capable of pulling off the upset given their strong tournament run. In the final, Wyoming will avenge their 1997 regional loss with an upset win over the Crusaders.

STATE

Division III has been marred by controversy the past two years. In 1996, Miami East defeated Seaman North Adams in a semifinal when a Miami East three point field goal attempt that appeared to leave the hand of the shooter well after the final horn was ruled good. Some even questioned whether the shooter was beyond the three point arc. Miami East went on to win the state championship. In 1997, a Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph field goal at the final buzzer that would have tied their game with Patrick Henry was ruled no good. Patrick Henry won the state championship. Let's not make jokes about getting the officials from the Varsity Club. Let's hope that the 1998 championship can be decided by

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the players on the floor and not by the officials.

The state's three top ranked Division III clubs by A.P. will comprise the 1998 final four with Ontario, Youngstown Liberty, and Sparta Highland joined by Cincinnati Wyoming. In the opener, look for Ontario to defeat Sparta Highland with Liberty winning over Wyoming. The Ontario/Highland game will be a hot ticket while the Liberty/Wyoming ticket will not. In the final, look for Liberty to edge Ontario and finish off an undefeated season as state champs.

DIVISION II

Seven of the twenty teams ranked in the final Associated Press poll have reached the regional level. #1 Canal Fulton Northwest lost its sectional opener to Orrville. Hamilton Badin, Cleveland Benedictine, and Columbus Mifflin remain alive in Division II from the 1997 final four while 1997 runner-up Akron Buchtel is playing in the Division I regional.

REGIONAL

Bowling Green State University: #7 Ottawa-Glandorf, #9 Columbus Mifflin, and #15 Cleveland Benedictine are joined by 21-3 Bellevue in a strong regional. Those attending this regional may be intrigued by the signs above the urinals in the men's restroom (note singular). Not only do the signs ask that the user flush, but they instruct the flusher that the handle is on the left. Hopefully this is not a commentary on the current educational system. Both Mifflin and Benedictine return several key veterans from their 1997 state tournament runs. With the exception of University of Toledo recruit Albert Wilson, the Benedictine team consists of underclassmen. Ottawa-Glandorf replaced all five starters from their 1997 state ranked club that faltered in the tournament. The Titans look better in 1998 without the hype. The Titans dropped #5 Elida in a district final. Bellevue reached the regional in 1997 and eliminated #10 Shelby in their district final.. The Redmen are big and boast Akron recruit David

Falknor. Mifflin will have too much quickness for Bellevue in the opener and will edge the Redmen. In the nightcap, Benedictine underestimates O-G, and the defending state champion Bengals return to Cleveland with a loss. In the Final, O-G turns the friendly BG confines into a home court advantage as they defeat the Punchers.

Wright State: This regional features #3 Cincinnati Roger Bacon and #13 Hamilton Badin. Good opener featuring tournament tough Cincinnati McNicholas against Badin. Badin slumped in the second half of the season and the tailspin continues as McNicholas drops the Rams. Beechcroft has made a surprising run to the regional, but Roger Bacon has too much for Beechcroft. In the final, Roger Bacon led by Eugene Land and Brandon McIntosh overpowers McNicholas.

Ohio University: This regional features #8 Dover. Flip a coin in the first game. Take New Lexington over Miami Trace in a close, low scoring affair. Dover will top the Philo Electrics in the nightcap in another game dominated by defense. Dover moves on to the final four in Division II with a win over New Lex in the final.

Canton Civic Center: #6 Youngstown Mooney heads this group. Hoban has been on fire since the beginning of 1998 and the regional opener is no exception as the Knights stop West Geauga. In the nightcap, Mooney gets all they can handle from Akron St Vincent-St Mary with Mooney prevailing. The final goes into overtime with Hoban advancing to Columbus with an upset win over Cardinal Mooney.

STATE

Ottawa-Glandorf, Cincinnati Roger Bacon, Dover, and Akron Hoban make up the field for 1998. Game 5 becomes a hot ticket as half of Putnam County invades Columbus. Roger Bacon has too much for O-G. In the other semifinal, Dover squeezes past upset minded Hoban. The final falls victim to the NCAA tournament with ticket availability not a problem. In a battle of contrast-

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ing styles, Roger Bacon defeats Dover.

DIVISION I

Seven of the sixteen teams ranked in the final Associated Press poll have reached regional play. Only nationally ranked Lakewood St. Edward remains alive from the 1997 final four although Akron Buchtel reached the Division II championship game in 1997. 1997 Division I state champ Cleveland Heights was state ranked throughout 1998 but lost to Cleveland South in a sectional final.

REGIONAL

University of Toledo: #1 Lakewood St Edward heads this field. For 1998, this regional consists of the three Toledo district winners along with the Grafton Midview winner. Toledo City League rivals Libbey and St. John's Jesuit meet for the third time in the opener. St John's, coming off a district final win over #7 Whitmer, won the first two meetings with Libbey at the buzzer and in overtime. They make it three in a row with another narrow win over the Cowboys. St Edward defeats Sandusky in the nightcap. St Edward advances to Columbus with a win over the junior dominated Titans in a game that is only slightly closer than Ed's December victory over the Titans.

University of Dayton: #13 Dayton Colonel White is the only ranked team, but the field also features 23- 1 Princeton. This regional is wide open. The Swami is going with Princeton over Colonel White in the opener. In the nightcap, the Swami likes Aiken over Withrow. In the final, look for an Aiken team led by Janerio Spurlock and Lonnie Berry to upset Princeton.

Fairgrounds Coliseum: #6 Canton McKinley, #8 Columbus Brookhaven, and #12 East Liverpool are joined in this field by Westerville North. Brookhaven opens up regional play with a win over Coach Nick Aloï's East Liverpool Potters. In the other semifinal, Canton McKinley holds on to eke out a victory over Westerville

North. In the final , Brookhaven's run of five consecutive tournament victories at the Fairgrounds Coliseum ends as McKinley stops the Bearcats .

University of Akron: #2 Akron Buchtel and #3 Shaker Heights head up this group. East Cleveland Shaw was hit by tragedy when junior starter David Parker died during the early minutes of Shaw's opening tournament game. The Cardinals were able to persevere and have advanced to the regional. In the opener, Cleveland St. Ignatius defeats Shaw. The other semifinal is an outstanding matchup between Akron Buchtel and Shaker Heights. Junior dominated Shaker Heights pulls off the mild upset of Buchtel. In the final, Shaker Heights earns a trip to the final four with a narrow victory over St. Ignatius.

STATE

Division I will write the final chapter in St. John Arena for the Boys State Basketball Tournament. The field consists of Lakewood St. Edward, Cincinnati Aiken, Canton McKinley, and Shaker Heights. For McKinley, this will be their twenty-fourth trip to the state tournament but their first since 1992. St. Edward makes their third consecutive visit while both Aiken and Shaker are making their initial trips. In one semifinal, St. Edward captures their initial victory in St. John Arena with a win over Aiken. In game #8, McKinley is led by Keith McLeod in a win over Shaker Heights. In the Division I final, nationally ranked Lakewood St. Edward wins their first state championship with a win over Mckinley.