

Post-season races are building in area high school sports circles

By JIM HUDNUT

With less than two weeks remaining to be played in the regular season, area high school basketball players, swimmers and wrestlers are busily prepping for an extensive and grueling post-season schedule.

Swimming and wrestling begin post-season competition first, with league championship action taking place the weekend on Feb. 20-21. Basketball follows with pre-quarterfinal round games beginning Feb. 26 and quarterfinals the next day.

With wrestling and swimming placing their emphasis on the individual, basketball's post-season journey takes the form of a long and somewhat complicated system of match-ups pitting the top teams from no less than four leagues. The Niagara Frontier League, which ranks third in size with 11 schools fielding teams, will send seven entries into the draw.

Of those seven, they are broken down into four classes. Kenmore East, Kenmore West, North Tonawanda and Lockport comprise the large-school or A-1 division while smaller schools such as Tonawanda, LaSalle, Niagara Falls, Niagara-Wheatfield and Lewiston-Porter represent the A-2 classification. Grand Island is the NFL's lone B-1 and is assured a place in the lottery as is Trott Vocational, the league's only B-2 school. There are no C or D entries in the NFL.

As it stands right now, Kenmore East and Kenmore West have locked up the NFL's A-1 berths. All that remains to be seen is which quintet winds up with the best record to determine the No. 1 and No. 2 seeds, which in turn has a bearing on who they play. The NFL No. 1 is slated to play the No. 4 team from the Erie County Interscholastic Conference while the No. 2 NFL squad pairs up

with the winner of a pre-quarterfinal game between the ECIC No. 6 and Buffalo's Seneca Vocational.

In A-2, three area schools can advance to the playoffs. Defending co-champion LaSalle appears to have secured the No. 1 seeding and will play the third best team from Buffalo's Yale Cup while the NFL No. 2 will play the top-ranked Buffalo school with both games on Feb. 27. Niagara Falls at 10-2 is currently the NFL No. 2 with Niagara-Wheatfield (8-5) and Tonawanda (6-6) battling for the third seed, which will open with a pre-quarterfinal contest Feb. 26 against the ECIC No. 3 team.

Only Grand Island and Trott have an "easy" path to follow. Grand Island will host the ECIC No. 4 Feb. 26 in B-1 while Trott will play Grover Cleveland of Buffalo Feb. 26 at LaSalle High School in B-2 action.

From there, the winners advance to the semi-finals starting March 3 with finals in the five classes following on March 7. The champions from A-1 and A-2 will then meet to determine Section VI's A titlist with B-1 and B-2 winners doing the same. C and D will also play all to determine the three schools which will face the top three teams from Section V (Rochester area) for the Far West championships March 13-14. Those winners will then advance to the "Super 16" State playoffs March 28 in Glens Falls.

Wrestling begins with the NFL tourney Feb. 20-21 at Tonawanda High School. Each of the 10 NFL teams will send one entry from each of 14 weight classes for more than 140 wrestlers vying for a championship. The top four in each class will be seeded by the coaches with the remaining entries filled in against the seeds by a draw.

The NFL will then send two wrestlers per class plus seven wild cards, selected by the coaches, to the Sectionals Feb. 27-28 at Sweet Home High School. There, the 35 NFL wrestlers will go up against top opponents from the ECIC, Niagara-Orleans, Tri-County, Southern Tier and Chautauque-Cattaraugus leagues to determine the 14 individuals that will carry Section VI's hopes to the state tournament March 6 in the Syracuse Onondaga War Memorial.

This also marks the first year private and Catholic schools will be included in the Section VI tourney, making both the sectional and state tournaments more representative of the entire wrestling picture in New York State.

Swimming also gets its share of the post-season hoopla, beginning with the ECIC and NFL championships (at Niagara-Wheatfield) Feb. 20-21. Originally both were to be conducted Feb. 26-27-28, but were moved back one week to allow some schools to participate in the Eastern High School Championships in New Jersey.

Entries are determined by selected cut-off times for each event.

From there, the top two in each individual event (NFL only) plus the top relay advance to the sectionals March 5-7 at Buffalo State College. The ECIC, by virtue of its 26 teams, gets more entries while the Niagara-Orleans and other leagues are held to one entry per event due to their smaller sizes. The state tourney follows March 13-14 in Syracuse.

But, wrestling, basketball and swimming aren't the only sports that will be in playoffs in late February and early March. Girls' basketball, ice hockey, bowling, indoor track, gymnastics, skiing and rifle will also be involved in various playoffs to determine the "best" in each.

SH wins at buzzer

Sophomore guard Ken Pawlak hit a 25-footer at the horn to power the Sweet Home Panthers to a 43-41 triumph over the host Lancaster Redskins Friday in an Erie County Interscholastic Conference-North basketball game.

In the junior varsity portion, the Sweet Home squad ran its record to 16-0 with a 60-16 whipping of Lancaster. Sweet Home led 28-2 at the half and never looked back.

Sweet Home led by five 41-36 with two minutes to play thanks to a six-point spurt led by Stafford Trueheart and Gary Bossert. Lancaster took advantage of several Panther miscues to tie it 41-41 as the clock showed three seconds remaining. Lancaster felt the clock had run out, but game officials

placed three seconds on the clock, giving the Panthers enough time for one last chance to win in regulation.

Lauris Robinson fed Jon Spears from under the Panther basket. Spears then whipped a pass to Pawlak deep in the corner where he loosed the desperation shot. It was true and the Panthers had escaped with a win.

Trueheart led Sweet Home with 13 points and nine rebounds while Mike Sims led the Redskins with 11. Sweet Home took over second place in the ECIC-North with the victory. Sweet Home is 11-5, 7-4 in division.

SH @ LANC 41

Sweet Home — Trueheart 8-13, Goins 2-04, Robinson 1-02, Pawlak 3-39, Spears 1-02, Bossert 2-26, Frodham 2-15, Johnson 1-02 Totals 137-43

Lancaster — Perrello 3-10, Sims 5-11, Wisniewski 1-24, Coppola 2-26, Steimer 2-04, Martzloff 2-26 Totals 151-41

Sweet Home 8 15 4 16-43

Lancaster 8 11 8 14-41

Falls is victor

Eugene Johnson meshed 17 points Wednesday as Niagara Falls defeated Lewiston-Porter 61-47 in a Niagara Frontier League basketball game.

NFLS @ LEW-PORT 67

NFLS — Johnson 8-17, Gamble 7-0-14, Moore 5-5-15, McGrady 4-1-9, Maroon 2-0-4, Bedgood 0-2-2 Totals 26-9-61

Lew-Port — Minarcin 9-0-0, Mulroy 9-4-4, Ceasar 1-2-4, Jones 1-0-2, O'Leary 8-2-18, Buenzow 1-2-4, Matthews 3-1-7, Husband 2-4-8 Totals 16-15-47

Tondas edge rival

The Tondas Midget B team nipped Cazenovia 4-3 as Mike Woods picked up two goals, Rick Evans and Bill Davies the others. Dave Lilly, Bob Bartel and Charlie Rumbold helped Tondas secure their 14th win as against two ties and a pair of losses.



MON. & TUE.
MORNING
LATE AFTERNOON
MIXED C

nds LaSalle

211-390, Jeff Seyler 191-359, Don Zartman 172-309 and Paul Labumbard 199.

The N-W gals won their first game 768-748 but lost 778-736 and in total pins 1526-1504. Lori Matyok had 170-331, Rhonda Kaiser 159-307 and Dana Karikalenski

Custom