

## ***Detroit Northeastern, Warren Woods and Gladwin stormed to MHSAA titles 30 years ago***

# ***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, 1975 champions Detroit Northeastern, Warren Woods and Gladwin will be honored at halftime of the Class C Final.*

Can it be 30 years since Gladwin coach Ruth Ann Joslin's blue towel hit the basketball courts throughout northern Michigan? Since Warren Woods' postgame celebrations at guard Kathy Bieniek's parents' home? Since the boy vs. girl scrimmages at Detroit Northeastern, where the cheerleaders and girls basketball players good-naturedly imitated one another throughout one extraordinary season?

Cold signs of the times will tell us that, yes, it's been all of three decades. Of the



Photo courtesy of Jeanne Tafoya

### ***Warren Woods head coach Carol Susalla discusses strategy with the team during the Warriors' 1975 run to the Class B MHSAA championship.***

three teams being honored at this weekend's "Legends of the Game" festivities, only Gladwin still has a place to call home.

Detroit Northeastern no longer exists, and Warren Woods consolidated with Warren Tower to form current school Warren Woods-Tower.

Time goes on, buildings close, seasons end. But, memories live on for members of three teams who made their one and only MHSAA Finals appearance count in the Fall of 1975.

At **Detroit Northeastern**, the Falcons entered the 1975 campaign with one mission: perfection. Close would no longer count, not when one loss in each of the previous two seasons meant an end to the season.

In 1973 and 1974, the first two years of the MHSAA Girls Basketball Tournament, The Falcons lost just one time, each com-

ing in the tournament to eventual champion Detroit Dominican. The one-point loss to Dominican in the 1974 Regional was particularly tough to swallow.

Once again, Northeastern brought an unblemished record into the tournament, running its mark to 19-0 entering the 1975 Semifinals vs. Dominican. This year belonged to Northeastern, however, as the Falcons got revenge with a 75-69 victory and a trip to the Finals vs. Framington Our Lady of Mercy.

"After all we've been through, winning this time really feels good," Northeastern coach Brenda Gatlin told reporters afterward. "We set our goal this season to win the state title."

Little doubt that Mercy had that same goal after coming up on the wrong side of a 59-58 score to Dominican in 1974. The two teams had faced each other earlier in the season, with Northeastern coming out on

***Kathy Flynn of Gladwin dishes off a pass during the 1975 championship season. Flynn was chosen as the team's top defensive player as the Flying G's captured their first and only MHSAA crown in any sport.***

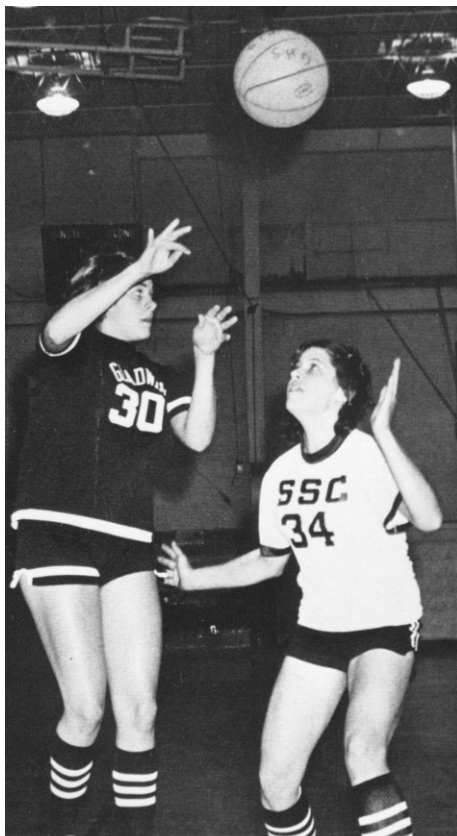


Photo courtesy of Gladwin High School

top by nine points.

There was much more at stake in the rematch, and Northeastern, led by sisters Helen and Sheila Williams, were not to be denied. The Williams sisters poured in 51 points in the 67-62 victory, the first MHSAA girls cage crown for a Detroit Public School League team. Helen led the attack with 31 points, while Sheila added 20, while guards Katharine Reid and Sylvia Jackson ran the floor and applied tenacious defensive pressure.

"Everybody knows about Sheila and Helen, but it was the defense we got from our guards in the second half that did the job for us," Gatlin said afterward.

It was a fitting finish for the 21-0 Falcons, who could consider the mission accomplished.

"I'll always remember how the cheerleaders and men's basketball team helped us out throughout the year," Jackson said. "The men played us in scrimmages. They played us hard and made us tough. The cheerleaders and our team would imitate each other and have a lot of laughs. We were a family."

Just up the road in **Warren Woods** that same Fall, Kathy Bieniek's parents welcomed an extended family on many occasions.

"One of my fondest memories is all the celebrations at Kathy Bieniek's house," recalls Jeanne Mason, a guard/forward on the Warriors' Class B championship team. "Her parents were so kind."

Much more hospitable than the Warriors were to opposing teams en route to a 21-2 record under Coach Carol Susalla. Like Northeastern, Warren Woods was facing a formidable task in reaching its destination, defeating a favored Fenton team, 42-40, in overtime in the

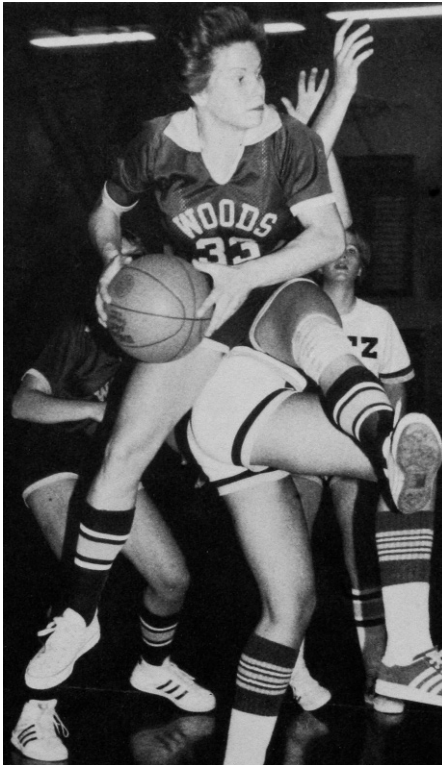


Photo courtesy of Jeanne Tafoya

The result was 18 points from center Debbie Waschewski, and 16 from Bieniek in a 46-43 Woods victory. Bieniek poured in 35 in the Semifinal win over Jenison, and Waschewski had come up big with a couple of buckets in the overtime vs. Fenton.

The Warriors led by three after a quarter and at the half, and led by just two with 19 seconds left, then survived a pair of missed free throws and a missed tip underneath to take the school's first title.

In the northern regions of the state, meanwhile, the Flying G's of Gladwin were also making a run at the school's first

## **Warren Woods' Rhonda Nielson pulls down a rebound during the 1975 campaign.**

Regional Final, then advancing to the Final with a 54-44 win over Jenison.

The reward for the Warriors' hard work was a date with defending champ Tecumseh, which brought a 45-game winning streak into the contest.

"We saw them play in the Semifinals and felt they were good, but not unbeatable," Susalla told reporters. "I think the key was slowing the game down and not letting Tecumseh run its fast break."

The result was 18 points from center

MHSAA crown in any sport.

Coach Ruth Ann Joslin's teams were perennial contenders for the title, and with a 48-33 win in the Class C Final over Hopkins, she and the school had their first championship.

The win gave Gladwin a 25-1 mark, and capped an eight-year run that saw Joslin guide the team to a 110-10 record, but the real start to the 1975 season came at the end of 1974.

"We lost the Quarterfinal game the year before," Joslin said. "It was a horrible loss for us. The team met the next day to vote on a team MVP and turn in uniforms. At that meeting, they told me that would never happen again and proclaimed that, 'We will be state champions next year.'"

"We all set out to ensure that would happen. We worked all summer on defense, and our man-to-man went from excellent to fantastic; our opponents only averaged 20 points a game."

Kathy Flynn was instrumental as the team's defensive stopper, while Amy Huber led the team from point guard. Lisa Woods averaged 15 points per game, and Becky Kern dominated the boards during the season.

In the title game vs. Hopkins, Woods netted 18 points while Flynn and Julie Randal added 10 apiece.

Guard Cheri Jo Card recalled the intensity of the team, and how it mirrored Joslin's approach – and the signal for the team to step it up a notch.

"You could always count on Coach Joslin to throw her blue towel on the floor if

someone was not where they should have been," Card said. "It showed her emotion and drove us to play hard and do our best no matter what else was going on."

It might also have signified trouble for opponents throughout that magical 1975 season.

— Rob Kaminski  
MHSAA Web Site  
and Publications  
Coordinator



Photo courtesy of Gladwin High School

**Gladwin coach Ruth Ann Joslin accepts the 1975 Class C championship trophy in front of her team and fans.**

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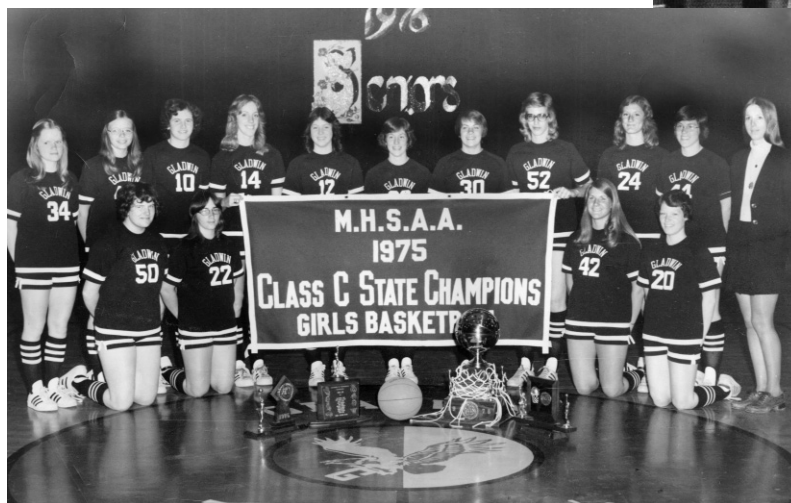


## Detroit Northeastern

*“The team wasn’t just a team, we were like family and Ms. Brenda Gatlin wasn’t just our coach, she was like a mother to us.” – Cynthia Appling, Detroit Northeastern*

## Warren Woods

*“We had such an unselfish team; the teammates really cared about each other and it showed in the game.” – Karen Grove Cossu, Warren Woods*



*“It had taken the dedication and hard work of each player and both coaches to get us where we were. We took the court, played our best, and won the 1975 Class C championship.” – Cheri Jo Card, Gladwin*

## Gladwin

### BACK ON THE COURT

*Expected to be in attendance for today’s ceremonies are the following:*

#### WARREN WOODS

Carol Susalla Johnson, Coach  
 Lisa Barrowman Alfonsi  
 Linda Edgeworth Robert, F/C  
 Taryn Hoisington Maurer, Manager  
 Jeanne Mason Tafoya, G/F  
 Jill Manardo Bates  
 Julie Smith Tracy, F  
 Karen Grove Cossu, G

#### GLADWIN

Ruth Ann Joslin, Coach  
 Karen Bolton, Assistant Coach  
 Cheri Jo Card, G/F  
 Phyllis Bowen Jacobson, G/F  
 Diane Conner Rellinger, G  
 Julie Crandall, F/C  
 Becky Kern French, F  
 Lisa Woods Duran, F

#### DETROIT NORTHEASTERN

Cynthia Appling, G  
 Natasha Bowden, G  
 Patricia Bowen  
 Shelia Calhoun Akers, G  
 Vanessa Calhoun Marshall, G  
 Sandra Hudson, G  
 Sylvia Jackson, F  
 Katharine Reid Mitchell, G  
 Brenda Robinson Wright, F/C  
 Sheila Williams, F/C  
 Helen Williams Kilgore, F