



There's No Celebration Like the First. 25 Years Ago, Wayne Memorial, Saranac and Stevensville Lakeshore Captured MHSAA

The 1981 Lower Peninsula Girls Volleyball championship teams from Saranac and Stevensville Lakeshore, and the 1981 and 1983 title teams from Wayne Memorial, will be honored through the MHSAA "Legends Of The Games" program at ceremonies prior to the Class A championship match of the 2006 Girls Volleyball Finals this Saturday.

The Legends program promotes educational athletics by showcasing some of the great teams of past years. Members in attendance will receive commemorative plaques during the ceremony and a banner to display at the school,

Twenty-five years ago doesn't seem like it was all that long ago, but consider this:

- The battle for home video supremacy was waged between VHS and BetaMax.
- Tracy Austin, just 19 years old, won her second U.S. Open tennis title.
- Walter Cronkite signed off for the last time as a television news anchor.
- Beth Daniel led the LPGA in winnings, totaling just over \$200,000.
- Wheel of Fortune debuted on TV – in Australia.

But it really doesn't seem like it was all that long ago, especially if you won your first MHSAA Girls Volleyball title, as was

the case for Wayne Memorial, Stevensville Lakeshore and Saranac, which ascended to the top in their respective classes in 1981. For Memorial, it was the first of two titles in three seasons – the other came in 1983.

Those teams return to hear their names called out once more and share memories in Kalamazoo this weekend in the MHSAA's "Legends of the Games" program. The 1981 and 1983 Class A champions from Wayne Memorial, and the 1981 titlists from Lakeshore in Class B and Saranac in Class D will celebrate a 25-year reunion in ceremonies prior to this year's Class A championship match on Saturday. The 1981 Class C champions from Battle Creek Pennfield have previously been honored.

Wayne Memorial had a taste of the highest stage just a year earlier, but lost a heartbreaking 15-9, 14-16, 15-11 decision to Grand Rapids Creston at Chippewa Valley High School in Mt. Clemens. The videotapes of the match Head Coach Doris Busiuto has at home aren't either VHS or BetaMax – it truly was that long ago.

"I remember everyone working very hard as a team," said hitter Lynne Underwood, who played in that 1980 title match as a junior. "We lost in the end and they called us runners-up. Even though our spirits were down and our hearts were broken I knew we would be back the next year to take the championships. It was a time in my life I will never forget."

The 1981 title at Battle Creek Central's Field House was the result of a comeback victory in the Semifinals against East Kentwood, the Zebras losing the first game

and being down 13-7 in the second. The championship was a 15-11, 15-10 decision over Fraser.

Two years later, Wayne Memorial returned to the Final Round, capturing the Class A title with a three-game win over Birmingham Marian, and then turning a 15-5, 15-3 number on Kentwood, holding the Falcons to what was then the fewest points ever allowed in a title match.

Players and coaches alike remember the twin sisters on the 1983 teams – setters Barbara and Brenda Engle – as leaders, but remember the team spirit and the fact that many players on both championship teams were proficient in more than one sport.

A first-year head coach who went on to become one of the nation's all-time winningest volleyball coaches, Diana Davis started Stevensville Lakeshore to an impressive run over most of the last portion of the past millennium. Three Final match appearances, 912 victories and a winning percentage almost as high – 89.9 percent, the second highest in Michigan high school volleyball history – were touched off by a team which stormed to the 1981 championship.

The Lancers disposed of each of its Final round opponents in two games at Battle Creek Pennfield High School – 15-12, 15-11 over Linden in the Semifinals, and 15-8, 15-7 over Warren Woods in the Championship.

Five seniors led the 1981 team – all hitters – Sally Woods, Nellie Hoffman, Marriann Middleton, Natalie Carr and Dawn Gleffe. Middleton and Hoffman were all-conference selections that year. Both Carr



1981 Wayne Memorial



1981 Saranac



1981 Stevensville Lakeshore



1983 Wayne Memorial

and Gleffe summed up the team's drive to the title on one word – desire.

“Everyone came together, our coach was ready and we took off” Carr said. “We won Districts and Regionals and shocked everyone. We hung on to our hope and to our chance; we gave it our all and won.”

“I feel like the reason we won was DESIRE,” Gleffe said. “Everyone wanted to win. I don’t know if I can describe the feeling after we won state. It was awesome.”

The team also featured six juniors and two sophomores that made it to the title game a year later, but was defeated in three games by Battle Creek Lakeview. Regardless, an era of success was born that ended when Davis’ last team in 1999 reached the Finals.

Monty Hayden was Saranac’s top serving artist in helping the Redskins to the 1981 Class D crown. Now as her alma mater’s head coach, she plans on having most of this year’s team in attendance to share in the reunion festivities. “Our team attitude was what whatever it takes to win – do it! Positive Mental Attitude all the way,” Hayden said.

“Monty Jo served so many aces during the games,” said Kim Sweet, a setter on the team. “My teammates were amazing to watch. It was an incredible feeling being a part of that experience.”

After breezing into the Final with a 15-9, 15-12 decision over Centreville at the Battle Creek Central Field House, the Redskins had the daunting task of taking on Leland, which was in the Finals for the fourth straight year.

“We were definitely the underdogs,” Hayden said. “Leland had championships experience and height, and we were short and savvy.”

Saranac’s team approach, using a number of different players on the attack, overwhelmed Leland in game one as the Redskins jumped out to a 12-4 lead and won 15-8. But the Comets, sporting a lineup featuring one of Michigan’s all-time leading scorers in basketball – Julie Polakowski – turned the tables in a big way in the second game by winning, 15-1.

“They just let down mentally,” Head Coach Annette Schneider told the Grand Rapids Press. “We won by attacking that first game and then, in the second game, we seemed to be more cautious.”

The Redskins players heeded Schneider’s preaching the need to return to a Positive Mental Attitude in the finale, racing to a 10-4 lead on the strength of five straight service points by Barb Snay, and Hayden sealed the deal with the last two points, including a service ace to end the match.

— John Johnson
MHSAA Communications Director

BACK ON THE COURT

Expected to participate in the Legends of the Games ceremonies are (all last names are from playing days):

WAYNE MEMORIAL

Pam Matyjasik
Tina Russell
Lynne Underwood
Kim Eldridge
Lisa Hayes
Joan Jackson
Kris Poteau
Mary Batterson
Laura Hayes
Cindy Burnie
Noreen Hamlin
Melissa Prevo
Stats/Photographer Sam Busuito
Head Coach Doris Busuito

SARANAC

Kim Sweet
Diane Hubbard
Jamie Clover
Monty Hayden

STEVENSVILLE LAKESHORE

Names not available at press time