**History of North Muskegon Basketball**

By Jim Moyes

NOTE: Playoff games marked with \*

**1932-33 – Coach: Lyle McNitt (6-6 overall; no conference)**

Note: Games played against Second teams not included

The Norsemen experienced their first season in varsity competition in 1932-33 and posted an admirable 6-10 record, although four of their games were against junior varsity opponents. The team was comprised of 9th and 10th graders as the first graduating class would not be for another two years. There was a total of 82 students combined in the ninth and 10th grade that comprised the entire enrollment for the 1932-33 season. From kindergarten through 10th grades there were a total of 360 students. The nation was still enmeshed in a depression at this time in history. NM teachers volunteered to take a 10 per cent pay cut to keep the school operable.

The old rule of a jump at center court following a made basket was still in effect while the 10 second rule for teams advancing the ball past center court was adopted. The ‘original’ Norsemen Team was made up of Russell Adams, Marvin Andrea, Robert Bulklot, Ralph Cooper, Clordon Daugherty, Norman Ferrill, Junior Hook, James McNiff, Laverne Sittser, Joe Witham and Keith Miles. The first NM girls’ team was comprised of Anna May Noreen, Phoebe Ann Peterson, Maurine Erickson, Barbara Ladd, Marian Church, Donna Castenholz, Geneva Sweet, Phoebe Brown, Florence Kuharvicz, Marianna Sebolt, Mildred Klecka, Jean Goudzwaard, and Ethel Connor.

The first game in NM basketball history was played at Montague on December 2, 1932, with the Norse losing their first ever varsity game 15-23. The game was one of three games played with the Junior high and the girls’ team also playing on this date. Since this was the first game, here are the complete point totals with only four players scoring: Ralph Cooper 6, Russell Adams 5, Joe Witham 2, and Junior Hook 2. No mention for posterity as to who made the first points in that game.

NM then showed they were a much-improved team in the second game with the Wildcats played inside the cozy NM gymnasium. NM, after losing in the first game of the season, and the first game in school history 23-15, defeated the Cats 28-24 behind the fine shooting of Keith Miles who tossed in 14 points.

In a game played at NMHS between the NM girls and Ravenna girls Maurine Erickson scored 29 points in a 34-28 victory, more points than the boys scored in their 38-22 loss to the Bulldogs. The highlight of the season had to be the Norse winning as 10th graders, their first game ever played in the MHSAA playoffs when they defeated White Cloud 15-14 in a Class D playoff game in Fremont. Points were at a premium as the score was tied at 14-14 after regulation. Jim McNiff made a free throw in OT at that would be the only score made in the entire overtime period. Joe Witham had 6 points, Cooper and McNiff 3, Russ Adams had two and Junior Hooker one to comprise all the scoring in the upset victory. The season came to a crushing end as NM was downed by Muskegon St Joseph in the district final 25-12. Keith Miles, who was the leading scorer for the Norse in the first half of the season, did not play in the second half of the season for reasons unknown to your author. On January 6 Miles scored 14 points in NM’s 35-10 victory over Fruitport.

Score Interesting Fact

N Muskegon 15 Montague 23 Ralph Cooper 6, Russell Adams 5

N Muskegon 28 Ravenna (Sec) 14 Cooper 15 pts

N Muskegon 16 Muskegon (Sec) 31 Keith Miles 9 pts.

N Muskegon 14 Musk Hts (Sec) 25 Cooper 4, Witham 3

N Muskegon 35 Fruitport 10 Miles 14, Cooper 9

N Muskegon 28 Montague 24 Miles 14, , Cooper 6

N Muskegon 7 Whitehall 21

N Muskegon 38 Spring Lake 10

N Muskegon 23 Godwin Hts 33 Cooper 10

N Muskegon 14 Whitehall 24 Joe Witham & Junior Hook 4 points

N Muskegon 18 Spring Lake 16 Jim McNiff & Russ Admas lead win

N Muskegon 22 Ravenna 38 McNiff 11, Cooper 7

N Muskegon 15 Shelby (Sec) 20 McNiff & Adams 5 points, Cooper 4.

N Muskegon\* 15 White Cloud 14 Witham 6. McNiff’s winning FT in ot

N Muskegon\* 12 Musk. St Joseph 24 Cooper 5, McNiff, Witham, Adams 2,

**1933-34 – Coach Lyle McNitt (9-6 overall; no conference)**

Still a year away from a four-year school, the Norsemen from 1933-34 posted a winning record as the future looked bright for the NM basketeers. From the onset of the building of the NM High School in the early 1930’s the games were played in the compact gymnasium until the 1957-58 season. The actual playing surface was much smaller than today’s typical 94 feet distances from endline to endline. One only had to advance the ball but about a third of the way to enter the front court. In early December of 1933 in a NM 24-22 loss to Ravenna Jack Jiroch, in the game report from the Muskegon Chronicle, ‘threw’ in a basket from almost his own free throw line to tie the game at 20-20. In the early days of NM basketball, it was common for three games to be played in succession. The first game would feature the boy’s junior varsity game (often referred to as ‘seconds’) while a varsity game with the girls would then be contested. Joining holdovers from the 1932-33 team as a starter for the current Norsemen was Alexander Purdue. Making up the rotation of players primarily used during the season in addition to Purdue were Marvin Andrea, Joe Witham, Ralph Cooper, Jack Jiroch, Fred Schmidt and Russel Adams. In a record that perhaps will never be broken for futility, the Norse held Muskegon St. Joseph to but five points in a game held on January 19, 1934, at the Northside gymnasium. NM had a 10-player roster during the season and nine of the ten scored in NM’s 35-18 victory over Grant on Feb 23, 1934. The Only NM player who failed to score in the game was Alexander Purdue. Jack Jiroch scored 22 points, matching the entire output of their Fruitport opponent to set a NMHS scoring record. NM defeated Fruitport in early December in the first of the two meetings 35-10 as Ralph Cooper scored 13 points followed by Joe Witham with 8. It was the same exact score that NM earned as 10th graders a year earlier against Fruitport. The NM season came to an end by being upset in the first round of the Class D district tournament by White Cloud. The Norse had defeated White Cloud twice earlier in the season but were no match for White Cloud in the tournament. White Cloud won 30-17 with much of their damage occurring after Jack Jiroch, along with Ralph Cooper and Bob Emerson had fouled out in a rough contest played at the Grant Community Center.

Score Interesting Fact

N Muskegon 35 Fruitport 10 Ralph Cooper 13, Joe Witham 8

N Muskegon 30 Spring Lake 21

N Muskegon 22 Ravenna 24 Jack Jiroch 8, Cooper 5,

N Muskegon 21 Montague 27 Jiroch 8, Cooper, Witham 4

N Muskegon 32 White Cloud 27 Cooper 14, Witham 8, Russ Adams 6

N Muskegon 22 Musk St Joe 5 Cooper 11, Jiroch 8, Adams 2

N Muskegon 8 Spring Lake 14 Only the score reported in MC

N Muskegon 21 Grant 15 Jiroch 8, Adams 6

N Muskegon 13 Montague 32 Cooper, Norm Ferrill 4 points

N Muskegon 10 Ravenna 13 Jiroch 7

N Muskegon 24 White Cloud 23 Jiroch 12, Cooper 7

N Muskegon 35 Grant 18 Jiroch 10, Fred Schmidt 6, 9 NM player’s score

N Muskegon 37 Fruitport 22 Jiroch record 22.

N Muskegon 31 Musk St Jos 26 Jiroch 10, Witham 6

N Muskegon\* 17 White Cloud 25 Three NM players foul out in district.

**1934-35 – Coach Lyle McNitt (14-5 overall; no conference District & Regional Champs)**

The 1934-35 season would go down in Norse history as unprecedented in Norse annals. In a season that was marked with joy from winning district and regional championships, it was also marked with tragedy with the death of a star player. The season began on a winning note as NM swept all three games played in December. However, the first of NM’s misfortunes occurred in the first game following the Holiday break when they lost on the road to White Cloud 27-21. Although no explanation was given NM played without star player Bob Raddatz, who was ordered ‘to rest’ by the team physician. Alexander Purdue and Joe Witham each had eight points to lead the losing Norse. On a more positive note, the NM junior varsity won their 18th straight game over a two- year period.

NM dropped their second contest at Montague, but it took overtime before the Norse fell to the Wildcats 23-21. There was no need for overtime in the JV game as the Norse reserves romped to their 22nd victory in a row by defeating the little Wildcats 25-1 --- yes One. It was not a great day for all three NM squads on the first day of February 1935. The three teams fell at the hands of the Shelby trio in the first basketball game played between the now long-time rivals. Of note was the JV team losing after winning 23 games in a row. Nearly 90 years has since passed and I’m curious if that streak has ever been broken over the many decades that has followed. The adage that it’s tough to win three games in a single season over another team certainly proved prophetic between White Cloud and North Muskegon. In the previous season the Norse won both regular season games against White Cloud but then dropped the district opener to WC.

The tables were turned in 1934-35. White Cloud won both regular season games, but it was the Norse then winning the district opener. After dropping the last game of the regular season 27-20 to White Cloud the Norse turned the tables and upset White Cloud 22-17 as Bob Raddatz and Alexander Purdue combined for 14 of NM’s 22 points.

The Norse then doubled up the score by defeating Fruitport for the third time on the season 26-13 but there was an ominous sign in this contest as Alexander Purdue was held scoreless. The euphoria from winning the district quickly dissipated as tragedy struck. Although he was playing with a pain in his side, the Junior forward insisted on playing during the Fruitport game. Purdue participated in a special assembly on Monday in which the team was honored and presented with the district trophy. On Tuesday evening the pain became so severe that Purdue was rushed to the hospital where an emergency appendectomy was performed. However, Peritonitis had set in, and Purdue passed away a week later, two days before NM would play in the quarterfinals. Coach Lyle McNitt inserted Bob Emerson into the lineup to replace Purdue while Norm Ferrill would also see action in NM’s 17-11 win over Custer. Emerson performed admirably in the 24-18 victory over Kent City with seven points. Bob Raddatz also tallied seven points and Howard Speed eight as the Norse would be regional champions. Norse followers would have to wait nearly 40 years before NM would again be crowned Regional Champions.

The Norse would play their quarterfinal game with Stevensville with a heavy heart. When the players received the sad news of Alexander’s death their first thought was to drop out of the tournament. “No, Alex wanted you to carry on for him. It was his wish,” the grief-stricken father W.J. Purdie told his son’s teammates as they gathered around him to express their sympathies. To add to their misery, the Norse would lose another regular in their game with Stevensville as Howard Speed came down with the three-day measles. The pair of losses would prove to be too much to overcome as the Norse fell to Stevensville 24-20. The Norse could always ask “What if” as Stevensville just two days later were crowned Class D champions. Following the season at the team’s banquet Joe Witham, the long-time proprietor of the Canary Inn, was awarded a trophy as the best all-around player on the 1934-35 Norsemen.

N Muskegon 26 Fruitport 17 Joe Witham 11, Bob Raddatz 7, Alexander Purdue 6

N Muskegon 28 Ravenna 16 Howard Speed & Witham 7, Raddatz & Bob Emerson 4

N Muskegon 27 Montague 15 Raddatz 9, Fred Schmid 6

N Muskegon 21 White Cloud 27 Purdue and Witham 8 each

N Muskegon 23 Fruitport 13 Speed 8, Raddatz 7, Witham 6

N Muskegon 27 Grant 11 Speed 10, Witham 8

N Muskegon 28 Musk St Mary 14 Witham 9, Raddatz 8, Purdue & Speed 4

N Muskegon 34 Musk St Joe 17 Speed 12, Raddatz 8

N Muskegon 20 Shelby 23 Raddatz 7, Purdue and Schmid 5

N Muskegon 30 Grant 17 Witham and Speed 8 points, Purdue 6

N Muskegon 40 Ravenna 13 Witham 13, Raddatz 9, Schmid 8

N Muskegon 29 Musk St Joe 10 Purdue 12, Raddatz & Speed 4

N Muskegon 20 White Cloud 27 Speed 8 Raddatz and Purdue 4

N Muskegon 22\* White Cloud 17 Raddatz 8, Purdie 6

N Muskegon 26\* Fruitport 13 Schmid 9, Speed & Witham 6, Raddatz 4

N Muskegon 17\* Custer 11 Raddatz 11, Speed & Witham 3

N Muskegon 24\* Kent City 18 Raddatz and Emerson 8, Speed 7.

N Muskegon 20\* Stevensville 24 Playing without two starters.

**1935-36 – Coach Lyle McNitt (14-2 overall; no conference, District Champs)**

With only Joe Witham lost to graduation, the Norse were poised to have another successful season in only their second year as a four-year school. NM would have had a fourth starter returning for the upcoming season but for the tragic passing the previous season of Alexander Purdue.

Prior to WWII there was a girls’ team at NMHS. The 1935-36 team was comprised of Joyce Bergren, Geneva Sweet, Catherine Bulkley, Jennie Hekkema, Eleanore Sweet, Barbara Gerling, Doris Speed, Sally Sessions, and Barbara Mavis. Sally Sessions would have a great career as a pro golfer and was inducted into the charter class of the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame. Barbara Mavis would become Mrs. Bob Raddatz.

There were mixed emotions for the opening game of the 1935-36 season at the Northside gymnasium. At halftime of the varsity game there was the unveiling of the Alexander Purdue trophy, the oldest annual award given to a NM player who excels in both basketball and football. ‘Winning one for Alexander Purdue’ the Norse doubled the score on Fruitport 28-14 with Howard Speed and Bob Raddatz, returning regulars from the previous season, scoring 14 and 8 points respectively. Fred Schmid returned as a starter from last year’s regional championship team and was joined in the backcourt by his brother Albert. Called upon when the Norse played without both Purdue and Speed in their quarterfinal game with Stevensville, Al Schmid was a member of the Junior Varsity team that won 23 consecutive games without tasting defeat. Yet another regular from their final game of the preceding season, Bob Emerson was injured and would miss much of the season.

On December 12, NM traveled to Montague in hopes of atoning for one of their defeats incurred the previous season. Mission accomplished as Al Schmid scored 13 points in leading the Norse to victory.

NM would then have to wait nearly three weeks to play their next game and perhaps they were a little ‘rusty.’ In what would prove to be their only loss suffered in the entire regular season, the Norse led all the way up into the closing moments before dropping a low-scoring 15-13 defeat at Fremont.

The Norse then had yet another low-scoring contest with Whitehall but managed to escape with a 17-16 victory. Bud Wiley, who replaced the injured Bob Emerson in the starting lineup led NM scorers with 8 points.

In a game touted to be a revenge game, the Norse made amends for their only loss earlier in the season as they trounced Fremont 25-13. Al Schmid led the way with 8 points with Raddatz adding seven. Of special mention for the game was the play of Howard Speed as he added materially by controlling all the tip offs. It was not until the 1938 season when the jump ball after each made basket was eliminated.

The winter of 1936 will go done in local annals as one of the most brutal in Muskegon history. The game with Grant was cancelled as there was no way for Grant to reach NM as the roads were completely blocked. So deep were the drifts on US 31 that a special rotary plow had to be transported in to clear the highways. NM’s next contest scheduled for Ravenna was also cancelled as the road leading to Ravenna was impassable. The front page of the Muskegon Chronicle of February 22 showed a picture of US 31 North of Montague with the snowbanks well over ten feet high. The temperature at Muskegon on February 21, 1936, was 20 below zero. Although the games were called and the road going north and south on US 31 were blocked, schools remained opened. They brought them up tough in the 1930’s.

Despite the frigid conditions the entire NM contingent of three teams made the jaunt to Whitehall. NM made it 10 wins in 11 tries as they downed the Vikings 27-16. The girls team continued their winnings as they also won their game with Whitehall 17-12.

Following their final regular season game with Fruitport the Norse would enter the MHSAA playoffs hoping to make a long run. However, the student body enrollment had increased from the previous year, and the Norse would now find NM moving up to Class C. The Norse were able to go to their bench early as NM had little trouble to besting an outmanned Ravenna team 29-18. Of special note during the contest was the meeting of NM head coach Lyle McNitt who coached against his younger brother Merlin McNitt, one of Ravenna’s starting players. NM moved into the district finals with another convincing 26-14 win over Sparta. Meet officials at Grant were thrilled with the turnout as a ‘robust’ $130 was collected at the gate.

After defeating Grant handedly in their first encounter, that was not the case in the district championship as the Norse had their poorest shooting output on the season in losing to the host Tigers 19-15. However, with rules at that time, NM was allowed to move on to the regionals but fared no better against Zeeland. The Norse held a slim lead at halftime but were thoroughly outgunned in the second half by Zeeland and fell 31-21 to end their season at 13-3. Zeeland would end their season as Class C runner up. Losing in the championship game to Lansing St. Mary.

N Muskegon 28 Fruitport 14 Howard Speed 14, Bob Raddatz 8

N Muskegon 32 Montague 32 Al Schmid 13, Raddatz 7, Speed 6

N Muskegon 21 Grant 9 Speed 10, Raddatz 6

N Muskegon 13 Fremont 15 Speed 4

N Muskegon 17 Whitehall 16 Bud Wiley 8, Raddatz 5

N Muskegon 22 Ravenna 8

N Muskegon 23 Newaygo 9 Wiley 7, Raddatz 6, Speed 5

N Muskegon 28 Montague 21 Speed 9, Raddatz 8, Wiley 6, F Schmid 5

N Muskegon 28 Shelby 12 Al Schmid 8, Raddatz 6, F. Schmid 5

N Muskegon 25 Fremont 13 Al Schmid 8, Raddatz 7

N Muskegon 27 Whitehall 16 Al Schmid 7, Wiley, and F Schmid 5

N Muskegon 32 Fruitport 15 Wiley 8, Speed 7, Raddatz & F Schmid 6,

N Muskegon\* 29 Ravenna 18 Ross Cooper 7, Fred Schmidt & Speed 7

N Muskegon\* 26 Sparta 14 Speed 10, Raddatz and Fred Schmidt 6

N Muskegon\* 15 Grant 19 Speed’s 4 points leads NM scoring

N Muskegon\* 31 Zeeland 21 Raddatz 8, Fred Schmid 5

**1936-37 – Coach Lyle McNitt (12-4 overall; 4th WMC, Scottville WMC Champs)**

The Norsemen kicked off their 1936-37 with a starting five of Bob Raddatz, a three-year mainstay for NM, as well as returning starters Bud Wiley and Albert Schmid. Walt Bergren would also crack the starting lineup along with newcomer Bob Cooper. NM got off to a quick start as Coach Lyle McNitt’s squad defeated his alma mater and his young brother Merlin’s Ravenna team 29-16. North Muskegon had now joined the West Michigan Conference for the first time with long-time mainstays Hart, Montague, Shelby, and Scottville. Whitehall, who did not field a football team did have a basketball team and was another member of this long-time conference.

The Norse made their first ever WMC basketball contest a winning one as they had little trouble in disposing of a favored Shelby team 33-12. Three- year starter Bob Raddatz led NM with 12 points. In the first game of three played at the Shelby band-box gymnasium, the NM girls defeated Shelby 25-0, the first shutout in a basketball game in years. In a forgettable game that will go down in Norse annals as the second lowest scoring game for combined points saw NM fall to Montague 12-9. Montague used a collapsing zone defense to throttle Bob Raddatz, and it worked perfectly as the NM star failed to score a point. In the early years of basketball teams were often called ‘Tossers’ and for many years, including during today’s times known as ‘cagers.’ Early gymnasiums, mostly college teams had cages surrounding the playing courts.

In early January the headline for NM’s win over Fremont was: ‘Norsemen Defeat Fremont Tossers.’ The Norse lost to Whitehall 18-17 in a game that was highly disputed. Whitehall scored (or did they) a basket with about 40 seconds remaining that at first was not deemed a made basket by the referee. Fans, thinking the basket was good stormed the floor in exuberance and after much discussion, the referee reversed his decision and called the basket good. Coach McNitt later acknowledged the basket was indeed good and was only concerned that a technical foul wasn’t called on the Whitehall fans for storming the court.

Later in January NM turned the tables on Montague. After the Norse were limited to but nine points in their first meeting in December, NM returned the favor and held Montague to but six points in a revenge 19-6 Norse victory. Held scoreless in their first game with the Wildcats, Bob Raddatz had 11 of NM’s 19 points.

Prior to NM’s 35-22 victory at Ravenna, a car accident on the way to the game was a near disaster for three NM students. Injured in the crash was Emma Jean Gwatkin, older sister of NM football star John Gwatkin. Not injured in the roll-over was future Hall of Fame great Sally Sessions, a passenger in the car driven by her brother William Sessions.

During the season NM twice defeated Grant, winners of the Newaygo Conference. The second tilt between NM and Whitehall was again an exciting one that went into overtime with NM winning on a basket from Bob Raddatz. The victory atoned for the earlier controversial loss to the Vikings and eliminated Whitehall’s chances to win the WMC conference championship that was won by Scottville. After closing out their regular season with an impressive 28-18 victory at Hart it looked like it might be a promising run in the upcoming state tournament. After defeating Hesperia, the Norse were poised to win the district against a Newago team that scored but 10 points in the district semifinal 12-10 win over Grant. However, a long tournament run was not to be as the Norse had their lowest scoring game in the school’s more than 90-year history as they scored only five points as they were eliminated by Newaygo 15-5. It was the fewest points scored combined by two teams in NM history.

N Muskegon 29 Ravenna 16 Bob Raddatz 10

N Muskegon 33 Shelby 12 Raddatz 12, Bob Cooper 8, Bergren 7

N Muskegon 9 Montague 12 Raddatz held scoreless, Wiley 4

N Muskegon 16 Grant 14 Wiley’s free throw late the winner.

N Muskegon 16 Scottville 18 Raddatz 5 points

N Muskegon 22 Fremont 17 Cooper & Schmid 8 points

N Muskegon 17 Whitehall 18 Cooper 8 in controversial game.

N Muskegon 19 Montague 6 Raddatz 11

N Muskegon 35 Ravenna 22 Raddatz 10, Cooper 9.

N Muskegon 21 Fremont 17 Raddatz and Cooper 8 points

N Muskegon 32 Hart 18 Raddatz 15, Cooper 6, Wiley 5

N Muskegon 17 Grant 10 Raddatz 7, Wiley 6

N Muskegon 25 Whitehall 23 Raddatz 11 & game winner in OT.

N Muskegon 28 Hart 18 Cooper 14, Raddatz 8

N Muskegon\* 24 Hesperia 14 Raddatz 7, Wiley & Cooper 5

N Muskegon\* 5 Newaygo 5 Lowest NM point total in school history.

Three regulars returned for the 1937-38 season, Walt Bergren, Harvey Speed, and Bob Cooper, as the Norse repeated their successful 12-4 record from their previous season. The 1937-38 season did not begin well for the Norsemen as the rule for having a center court jump ball after each made basket was thankfully ended. A powerful Whitehall team downed the Norse 26-21 with Harvey Speed leading NM scorers with eight points while Ellis‘Nip’ Pender added 5. The Norse bounced back to throttle Shelby 36-16 as Donald Andree and Thornton scored seven and six points respectively. In the first of the three games played at the Northside gymnasium the NM girls edged Shelby 25-24. Sally Sessions, a charter member of the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame scored 11 points for NM while the older sister of Dave Whitsell, another future member of the MASHOF led all scorers with 18 points. There must have been a lid on the basket as NM was able to score a season low 11 points in a 23-11 defeat by Montague. However, the Norsemen would then go on a nine-game winning streak before again losing to Whitehall for the second time in the season. The second of their nine straight victories came at the expense of Hart. NM defeated the Pirates with Bob Cooper scoring 14 points. Also in double figures for the Norse was Oliver Eyestone, who had moved from Hart to North Muskegon to begin the season. The 1937-38 season was a difficult season for the Pirates as all their games were played on the road while their new gymnasium was under construction. Coach McNitt generally used a rotation of seven players during the season: Harvey Speed, Oliver Eyestone, Walt Bergren, Lawrence ‘Lunk’ Bergren, Bob Cooper, Edwin Cowles and Dick Hoeker. The schedule had to be altered somewhat as a scheduled January 25 game at Shelby was postponed to a later date as a blizzard that hit the entire state of Michigan made the road to Shelby on US 31 impassable. Perhaps making amends for the only loss incurred by the Norsemen during the football season, NM defeated Fremont twice in basketball, the latter contest a convincing 33-18 victory at the NM gymnasium. During the nine- game winning streak NM topped Scottville twice, including a 22-14 victory at the Scottville tiny court, always a tough win for any team venturing to the Mason County school. The 29-21 victory at Montague came on a furious NM second half comeback. Trailing 19-9 at the half the Norse outscored the host Wildcats 20-6 to secure the victory. The winnings streak, as well as a golden opportunity to win the WMC Championship both ended as Whitehall, after holding a three-point lead at halftime, routed the Norse in the second half to earn the win and their first WMC Championship. NM was only able to net but three field goals in the entire contest as ‘Dude’ Pelon, a longtime fixture as a pitcher in baseball, led the Vikings with 11 points. Whitehall would advance all the way to the final eight in the MHSAA playoffs before losing in overtime to Stevensville. The Norse bounced back to edge the Hart Road Warriors 40-38 to clinch second place in the WMC. NM had to rally from behind in the final two minutes to earn the victory. NM opened the MHSAA tournament with a ragged 34-28 victory over Hesperia. 38 fouls were called with numerous players from both teams having players fouled out of the contest. Rules at the time called for a player to be disqualified when he accumulated his fourth foul. NM then ran into a very good Ravenna team who had lost but one game in the regular season and fell to the Bulldogs 35-26. The leading scorer for Ravenna was Lyle McNttt’s youngest brother B. McNitt who led all scorers with 13 points. Ravenna made it to the finals of the regional tournament but lost in overtime. The Bulldogs can only blame their woeful shooting from the free throw line for their loss. Ravenna had nine free throw attempts in regulation --- and missed ALL nine!

N Muskegon 21 Whitehall 26 Harvey Speed 8, Ellis‘Nip’ Pender 5

N Muskegon 36 Shelby 16 Donald Andree 7, Thornton 6

N Muskegon 11 Montague 24 George McNeil & Bill Peterson 4 pts.

N Muskegon 33 Grant 18 Bob Cooper 13, Speed 7, McNeil 5

N Muskegon 40 Hart 28 Cooper 15, Oliver Eyestone 10, Speed 7

N Muskegon 20 Fremont 15 Walt Bergren 6, Speed 5,

N Muskegon 22 Scottville 14 Cooper 9, Ed Cowles 5, Speed 3

N Muskegon 33 Fremont 18 W. Bergren 11, Pender 8, Cooper 6

N Muskegon 30 Scottville 17 Cooper 13, Speed 8

N Muskegon 29 Montague 21 Bergren & Cooper 7, Speed 6, Pender 5

N Muskegon 27 Grant 21 Cooper 12, Speed 6, W. & L. Bergren 4

N Muskegon 29 Shelby 26 Speed 9, Cooper & W. Bergren 6

N Muskegon 14 Whitehall 32 NM only 3 Field goals

N Muskegon 40 Hart 38 Cooper 16, Pender 9

N Muskegon\* 34 Hesperia 28 Coopers 11, Speed 8

N Muskegon\* 28 Ravenna 35 Cooper 11, Speed 6, Pender 5

**1938-39 Coach Lyle McNitt (14-4 overall NM WMC Champs)**

The Norsemen had one of their better years in the school’s long history with a 14-4 record while winning the WMC Championship. It would be another 20 years before NM would be undisputed WMC champs. Fully half of their season’s defeats came at the hands of Manistee.

The Norse began their season on a winning note with a double-digit victory against a Whitehall team that was decimated by graduation losses from their championship team from the previous season.

In their second game of the season the Norse trailed Shelby by one with two minutes left but rallied behind baskets from Ellis Pender and Shed Thornton to eke out a 18-15 victory.

NM again had to rally to defeat Montague 23-22. Montague had a 22-19 lead at the end of the third quarter but failed to score a single point the rest of the contest.

NM and Manistee battled into overtime as the two squads were even at 23-23 at the end of regulation. Rules at the time specified that the team that scores the first two points in the three-minute overtime would be declared the winner. There was only one point made in the extra session, a free throw by Manistee’s Mikula (no first name provided). When the final buzzer had sounded that one point would prove to be the difference as NM lost their first game of the season to Manistee 24-23. Lunk Bergren’s six points was the best for NM followed by Nip Pender with four.

Playing on their new gymnasium floor in their first season, Hart handed NM a surprising 48-18 thumping in early January. Future WMU All-American baseball player Fred Stevens led the Pirates uprising with 15 points.

For those who like offensive basketball the January 13 contest with rival Fremont was not for you. The teams played more than seven minutes before a point was scored. The Norse eventually won the game that had to be hard to watch 13-11, with Lunk Bergren’s five points the leading scorer for the Norse. In the 30-18 victory over Shelby Elllis ‘Nip’ Pender poured in 19 points, the second highest total at the time in Norse history.

The Norse took a one game lead in the WMC on February 7th with a 23-17 victory over Montague. The Norse, trailing 10-5 at the ‘halftime rest’ rallied in the second half behind the play of Lawrence ‘Lunk’ Bergren to pull away from the visiting Wildcats.

The Norse kept up their winning ways with Fremont by pulling away in the final quarter to dump Fremont 21-11. In the second low-scoring affair on the season between the two squads, the Norse were leading by only 10-9 entering the final quarter.

In a ‘must win’ game near the close of the regular season the Norse defeated Whitehall in ‘sudden death’ 30-28. Rules at the time had the team that first scores two points in overtime would be declared the winner. Don Andree scored the overtime basket by converting on a rebound off a missed shot for the winning points. Don McNeil scored with just seconds to go in regulation to send the game into overtime and set up a regular season finale against Hart to decide the WMC championship.

Hart had to be tabbed as a prohibitive favor after trouncing the Norse by 23 points earlier in the season. In a roughly played game in front of an overflow crowd at the Norse gymnasium, the Norse pulled off a stunning 30-27 victory over the Pirates. Leading the way with a career game was NM’s portly Dick Hoeker. With both starting guards Don Andree and Lunk Bergren having earlier fouled out of the game, Hoeker poured in 14 career points to lead NM to the improbable upset victory. A huge factor in NM’s victory was holding Hart’s future Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame inductee Fred Stevens without a field goal in the game.

After playing all their previous MHSAA playoff games in Newaygo County, the Norse were assigned to travel North, and it all worked out very well for the Blue and Gold. The NM boys were not the only WMC basketball champs, as the NM girls team went undefeated in conference play and were WMC champs. The Norse opened their tournament played at Shelby with a convincing 44-32 victory over Muskegon St. Mary’s. The Norse received some major scoring from a couple of players who saw limited action during the regular season. Morris Engstrom came off the bench to lead all scorers with 14 points while Herb Cooper chipped in with 10 tallies.

NM then played Whitehall. Although the game was not decided in ‘sudden death,’ it was just as close as the earlier thriller. NM’s Lawrence Bergren was fouled with just four seconds to go in regulation and calmly swished both free throws through the net and NM won their second straight nail-biter over the Vikings and earned a berth in the district finals.

NM then captured the Class C district championship with a well-earned 32-30 victory over Ludington St. Simons. Don McNeil tipped in a missed NM shot with seconds remaining to give NM a 32-30 lead. A last second made bucket from the Ludington five came just after the buzzer sounded, sending the Norsemen to the Class C regional in Grand Rapids. The Norse had a sharp second half and won a trip to the regional finals with a 30-19 conquest of Grant. It was a tale of two halves at the regional championship game between NM and Holland Christian. One may find it hard to believe that when one looks at the final score of 35-15 that NM was even in the game. NM led at halftime 14-7 but the wheels came off the Norse in the second half as the Maroons, who would later advance to the state finals, blew out NM in the second half as the ice-cold NM five could only muster one point for the entire half.

N Muskegon 23 Whitehall 13 Lunk Bergren 7, Ed Cowles, and Dick Hoeker 4

N Muskegon 18 Shelby 15 NM come from behind win. No NM over 4 pts

N Muskegon 23 Montague 22 Don McNeil 6, Hoeker 4, Don Andree 3

N Muskegon 23 Manistee 24 Bergren 6 as 11 Norse players see action

N Muskegon 18 Hart 41 George McNeil 7

N Muskegon 13 Fremont 11 Bergren 5, George McNeil 4

N Muskegon 24 Scottville 20 G. McNeil 8, D. McNeil 6

N Muskegon 30 Shelby 18 Ellis Pender 19 of NM’s 30 points

N Muskegon 17 Manistee 24 NM loses for 2nd time vs. Manistee, Pender 5

N Muskegon 23 Montague 17 Bergren 10, Don McNeil 5 as NM now 1st

N Muskegon 21 Fremont 11 Pender 9, Don McNeil 6

N Muskegon 30 Whitehall 28 Andree the winner in OT. Bergren 10

N Muskegon 30 Hart 27 Hoeker 14, Don McNeil 9 for WMC champs.

N Muskegon\* 44 Musk St Mary 33 Morris Engstrom 14, Herb Cooper 10.

N Muskegon\* 26 Whitehall 24 Bergren GW free throws.

N Muskegon\* 32 Lud St Simons 30 Don McNeil 9, Hoeker 8

N Muskegon\* 30 Grant 19 Pender, Hoeker, Bergren 6 points

N Muskegon\* 15 Holland Chr. 35 Pender 8, Don McNeil 6, Hoeker 1.

**1939-40 Coach Lyle McNitt (8-6 overall 3rd in WMC – Hart Champs)**

Returning as regulars from the WMC and Class C 1938-39 district champs were Ellis Pender and Lawrence Bergren. Pender, a co-captain on the 1939 NM football team, got the Norse off to a rousing start with 15 game high points in NM’s 33-21 opening win over Muskegon St. Mary’s. Morris Engstrom, who saw considerable action in the previous season captured a starting spot and chipped in 5 points. In a rivalry in the early days of NM basketball, the second game of the season proved to be another thriller. Hart broke a 22-22 tie with 20 seconds remaining to down the Norsemen 24-22 in front of a packed house at the Northside gymnasium. Adding to the drama was a made field goal made by a Norse player that was said to be made after time had expired in the contest. ‘Lunk’ Bergren paced all scorers with 10 points. Trailing 20-10 at the end of the third period, the Norse put on a furious rally but came up two points short in a 21-19 loss vs. Shelby.

Following a convincing win over Montague. The Norse continued their dominance of the 1930s against Fremont as they won their 10th game in 11 tries 34-21 over Fremont.

A capacity crowd packed the antiquated NM gymnasium to witness the Norsemen taking on the defending State Class D champs in Muskegon St. Joseph. The fast-breaking St. Joseph five downed the Norse 33-21 despite a game high 14 points scored by ‘Lunk’ Bergren. NM’s leading scorer, Ellis Pender, scored the games’ first points on a free throw but then was held scoreless the rest of the game by St. Joseph. The Muskegon parochial five would go undefeated throughout the season before tasting defeat in the regional championship game.

A second clash between NM and Hart wasn’t nearly as close as the first encounter back in December as Hart crushed NM 41-24 to earn their fourth straight WMC victory on the season. Bill Gates topped NM scorers with 8 points as Hart shut out NM for the entire third quarter.

Marsh Reeves made his first start as a Norsemen a productive start as he scored 12 points in a 41-24 victory over Whitehall. The Norse continued their dominance over Fremont as they made it 11 wins in a row after Fremont had won the first game in the rivalry back in 1935. NM rallied in the second half to edge the Packers 28-24 with Pender, now back in the lineup, scoring nine points to lead the Norsemen.

The Norse had two players in double figures, a rare event in the 1930’s and 40’s in a 38-27 win over Montague. Marsh Reeves tallied 13 points while Lunk Bergren added 12. The game was played in Whitehall at the Eagle/Ottawa gymnasium, later known as the Tannery. This gymnasium would serve as the home site for both Montague and Whitehall until well into the 1950s.

NM won their next two WMC Conference games against Shelby and Scottville to move into s second place tie in the WMC. Second place in the WMC behind undefeated Hart was at stake in the regular season finale at Whitehall. The Vikings edged the Norse 27-25 to take outright possession of second place as the Norse were unable to hang on to a first half lead.

A second half rally came up short as NM lost their opening game of the Class C state tournament 31-26 as the Norse were eliminated for the second straight year by Holland Christian. Lawrence Bergren scored 11 points in his final game in a NM uniform while Holland Christian was led by their future coach Art Tuls with 14 points.

N Muskegon 33 Musk St Mary’s 21 Ellis Pender 15, Morris Engstrom 5

N Muskegon 22 Hart 24 Lawrence Bergren 10 Points

N Muskegon 19 Shelby 21 Pender & Bergren 5, Engstrom 4

N Muskegon 34 Montague 22 Pender 10, Gregory Mahynski 5

N Muskegon 34 Fremont 21 Pender 15, Bergren 9

N Muskegon 22 Musk St Joe 33 Bergren 14 vs the defending state champs.

N Muskegon 24 Hart 41 Bill Gates 8, Pender 5

N Muskegon 42 Whitehall 28 Marsh Reeves 14. Bergren 8

N Muskegon 28 Fremont 24 Pender 9, Don McNeil 5

N Muskegon 38 Montague 27 Reeves 14, Bergren 13

N Muskegon 33 Shelby 19 Pender, 10, Bergren 8

N Muskegon 31 Scottville 10 Pender 10, McNeil 8, Bergren 6

N Muskegon 25 Whitehall 27 Bergren & McNeil 8, Reeves 5

N Muskegon\* 26 Holland Christ. 31 Bergren 14 as NM season ends

**1940-41 Coach Lyle McNitt (12-6, 2nd in WMC – Hart WMC champs – NM District Champs)**

With but two veterans’ returning for the 1940-41 season, Joe Farrell and Marsh Reeves, with neither player a full-time starter, not much was expected for the upcoming season. However, the Norse surprised the pundits and posted a 12-6 record and a district championship. After a so-so start to the season NM improved considerably as the season wore on and won eight games in a row before losing a close playoff battle against Grant.

The Norse opened the season against a favored Muskegon St. Mary’s squad and displayed promise with a 32-24 victory. Joe Ferrell paced the Norse with 15 points while Marsh Reeves added eight in a game where NM never were threatened by the veteran St. Mary’s five.

The Norse then took down the defending WMC champs from Hart as Marsh Reeves tallied 19 points, second highest individual game total in NM annals. Many years after Reeves tallied his game high tally, March often boasted to your author about his great time wearing the Norsemen uniform.

After dropping a home tilt with Shelby, the Norse won three in a row, the first a 25-17 victory over Fremont, with Marsh Reeves leading the Norse with 13 points. One oddity occurred during the contest that would not have been possible under today’s rules. NM’s Jack Goudzwaard was fouled and was awarded one free throw (no one and one at this time). Jack made the free throw and was granted another attempt when a Fremont player stepped into the lane too soon. Goudzwaard made that attempt as well.

NM won their second of the first three games played with an overtime win over Muskegon St. Joseph. Ken Potter sank the winning basket in overtime after Marsh Reeves had sent the game into overtime with a late fourth quarter field goal. Seven Norsemen players scored in the contest, a rarity for the era.

After the Norse opened the 1941 year with a victory over Montague, NM then dropped three games in a row before going beginning a winning streak. Hart first made amends for an earlier loss to the Norse while Fremont, after dropping 11 in a row finally broke the hex with a slim 28-27 win over NM. The Norse had an option when fouled with less than a minute remaining and leading 26-25: take the foul shot or take the ball out of bounds. The Norse chose the latter, and it may have backfired ass Dave Jackson intercepted a Norse pass with the clock winding down, dribbled to midcourt and unleashed a desperation shot that swished through the net.

The NM Whitehall contest, played on January 28, was originally scheduled for January 17. However, the Flu had sent over 100 Whitehall students’ home as NM graciously let Whitehall reschedule the contest. Whitehall then gave the Norse a 31-22 pasting to hand the Norse their third straight defeat.

NM got back on the winning track with a 27-13 drubbing of a poor shooting Montague team 27-13. So sad was the Montague offense that the Wildcats had managed to score only two free throws in the first half as NM led 13-2 at the halftime ‘rest.’

Marsh Reeves continued his outstanding scoring as his 17 points led NM to a 29-17 victory in a road win at the tiny Scottville gymnasium, an always tough assignment for any Scottville foe.

NM then clinched second place in the WMC with a 43-32 home victory over Whitehall as Reeves and Ken Potter netted 10 points while Jack Goudzwaard chipped in with nine.

In the final game of the regular season Muskegon St. Joseph wiped out an earlier loss handed to them by the Norsemen with a 25-20 victory. St. Joseph’s Joe Beyrle, who would become one of America’s most decorated World War II heroes, had six points for St. Joseph. There was one bright spot for the Norse as the JV team went undefeated for the entire season with a winning streak that had reached 17 games.

NM entered the Class C district championships as decided underdogs to the WMC champs from Hart. The following day after defeating Scottville in the opening round the Norsemen stunned heavily favored Hart 39-30 as Marshal Reeves led the Norse with 18 points. NM bounced out to an early 8-0 lead and never looked back to earn the upset win.

Playing their third game in as many days, NM then defeated Montague for the third time during the season as Reeves again netted 18 points for the Norse. The district champs then had their season come to an end as Grant won their 16th straight contest of the season to nip the Norse 26-24. Leading the way for Grant was future Central Michigan long-time head coach Ted Kjoldede with 14 points. Kjolhede’s sister, Imogene, would serve as a schoolteacher at North Muskegon in the late 1950s where on her students was your author.

N Muskegon 32 Musk St Mary’s 24 Joe Ferrell 15, Marsh Reeves 8

N Muskegon 34 Hart 21 Reeves 19, Jack Goudzwaard 6

N Muskegon 20 Shelby 29 Reeves 5, Ferrell 4

N Muskegon 25 Fremont 17 Reeves 13, Ken Potter 5

N Muskegon 41 Musk St Joe 39 Reeves 16, Potter 12

N Muskegon 25 Montague 19 Potter 8, Reeves 7, Bill Asmussen 4

N Muskegon 30 Hart 34 Dan Thompson and Goudzwaard 8,

N Muskegon 27 Fremont 28 Reeves 13 as Packers win at the buzzer.

N Muskegon 22 Whitehall 31 Asmussen, Reeves, Goudzwaard 5 points.

N Muskegon 27 Montague 13 NM holds Montague no FG in first half

N Muskegon 28 Shelby 22 Reeves 19, Potter 7

N Muskegon 28 Scottville 17 Reeves 17 points

N Muskegon 43 Whitehall 32 Reeves & Potter 10, Goudzwaard 9

N Muskegon 20 Musk St Joe 25 Potter 9, Reeves 6.

N Muskegon\* 26 Scottville 20 Reeves 10

N Muskegon\* 39 Hart 30 Reeves 18 as NM upsets WMC champs

N Muskegon\* 35 Montague 14 Reeves again scores 18 – District champs

N Muskegon\* 24 Grant 26 Potter 8, Reeves 6

**1941-42 Coach Lyle McNitt (8-8, 4th in WMC – Hart WMC champs)**

Four veterans who saw considerable action for North Muskegon’s district champs from 1940-41 returned to the Norse: starters Jack Goudzwaard, and Ken Potter along with Bill Asmussen and Bill Miner.

The Norse got off to a promising start to begin the season with a 44-22 stomping of Muskegon St. Mary’s, but visions of a perfect season went up in smoke the following week when they were defeated by the Hart ‘Skyscrapers’ 38-29. The Pirates featured a towering front line of 6’6 Walter ‘Stretch’ Hansen and 6’5 Joe Kapulac that proved too tall of a task as four NM starters fouled out of the contest. Joe Mack, father of future Mona Shores boys’ basketball coach Mike Mack, led all scorers with 13 points.

Two days later sports took a back seat to everything as Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor, and the US was now firmly involved in World War II. NM’s hopes of a WMC title were quickly extinguished by Shelby as NM was downed on the Shelby floor 31-25.

The Norse got back on the winning track against their favorite ‘whipping boy’ of the era with a 27-17 victory over Fremont. NM was no match for a powerful Muskegon St. Joseph juggernaut as they ended the war-torn year of 1941 with a home loss to the visitors 39-31.

Hazardous driving conditions postponed all games scheduled in the WMC conference on Friday Jan 9, 1942. The Norsemen were able to travel to Hart for their second meeting of the season the following Tuesday but fell to the Pirates in a hectic contest that saw many players fouling out of the contest. The two referees, one from Ludington and the second, an old-time friend of your author and Muskegon Sports Hall of Fame inductee Nelson Voltz, called 44 fouls in the contest. The Norse got off to a sensational start and held an amazing 16-1 lead over the Pirates at the end of the first quarter. However, playing before a capacity crowd the Pirates, behind the play of Joe Mack who scored 22 points clawed their way back to victory. NM was forced to play the last two minutes of the contest with but four players on the floor as Hart was victorious 40-37. One must remember that prior to a rule change in 1945, players were disqualified after four fouls instead of the current rule of five. Jack Goudzwaard had 11 for the Norse. Hart also had some key players foul out of the contest including Mack as well as 6’6 frontline players Stan Kapulac and ‘Stretch’ Hanson.

For their second consecutive game the Norsemen saw a lead collapse as Whitehall posted a 29-27 victory over NM. The Norse led 27-23 late in the game only to see the Vikings score six unanswered points to send NM to the basement of the WMC conference. It would prove to be a year to remember for Whitehall fans as they made it to the state championship game at MSU’s Jenison Fieldhouse before losing the final game to Leland.

Muskegon also made it to the state finals but, like Whitehall, had to accept the runner up trophy. Both Muskegon and Whitehall had the experience for the first time of playing in a game that used glass backboards.

NM broke their three-game losing streak at the expense once again of Fremont as coach Lyle McNitt started four players from NM’s undefeated, untied, and unscored upon football team from the fall. The dynamic NM backfield duo of Moe Sikkenga and Don Bowen were installed into the starting lineup with lineman Jack Goudzwaard and Bill Goldberg in NM’s 32-26 win over the Packers.

NM then finally broke into the winning column in the WMC with a 34-19 victory over Montague as Bill Asmussen scored a career high 16 points. After losing to Shelby 34-23 Ken Potter scored 20 points, second most at that time in NM history to lead NM to a 41-29 win over Scottville.

The Norse made a complete turnaround from scoring their lowest total points in a season in a 27-18 loss to Whitehall by becoming the first NM team in history to surpass 50 points in a single game in a regular season ending 51-15 rout of Montague.

NM opened the 1942 state playoffs with a district 33-22 win over Scottville with Goodzwaard scoring 8 points while Potter and Don Bowen added 7.

However, the Norse faced an ominous task in their next game as they would face Hart, a team that traversed through the season undefeated and sporting a perfect 15-0 record. In a game that still rankles my good friend Walter ‘Stretch’ Hansen, a stellar Hart performer 82 years later in 2024 at the age of 99, NM did the unfathomable and upset the Pirates 27 to 25. Stretch was held to six points as Ken Potter led all scorers with 15 points. My good friend Stretch made it to the century mark before passing away in 2025.

The game winning field goal was made by Potter’s nephew Don Bowen, who hooked in a side court shot in the final minute of play for the winning goal. In a district final game where the teams were only separated by no more than two points, Ludington St. Simons nipped the Norse 26-25. The Norse lost star guard Don Bowen in the first quarter when he fouled out. At the time it took but four fouls to disqualify a player.

N Muskegon 44 Musk St Mary’s 22 Ken Potter 12, Jack Goudzwaard 10

N Muskegon 29 Hart 6 Potter 10 as 4 NM players fouled out

N Muskegon 25 Shelby 31 Potter 9, Don Bowen 7

N Muskegon 27 Fremont 17 Bill Asmussen 8, Goudzwaard,Bowen 6

N Muskegon 31 Musk St Joseph 39 Asmussen 9, Potter & Bowen 6

N Muskegon 37 Hart 40 NM plays with only 4 due to foul trouble.

N Muskegon 27 Whitehall 29 Potter 12, Bill Goldberg 5

N Muskegon 32 Fremont 26 Potter 9, Goudzwaard 8

N Muskegon 34 Montague 19 Asmussen 16, Goudzwaard 10

N Muskegon 23 Shelby 34 Asmussen 8, Potter 6

N Muskegon 41 Scottville 29 Potter 20, Bill Meiner 12

N Muskegon 18 Whitehall 27 Goudzwaard leads low score NM with 5

N Muskegon 51 Montague 15 Potter 14 as NM scores 50 points.

N Muskegon\* 33 Scottville 22 Goodzwarrd 8, Potter & Bowen 7.

N Muskegon\* 27 Hart 25 NM beats 16-0 Hart, Potter 15, Bowen wins game.

N Muskegon\* 26 Ludington St Simon 27 Goudzwaard 12, Asmussen 7

**1942-43 Coach Paul Moyes (4-8, 3rd in WMC – Hart WMC champs)**

Although NM completed arguably their finest season in football history, the same results did not happen in basketball. Paul Moyes had succeeded Lyle McNitt as the football, basketball, and baseball coach beginning with the fall of 1942. Moyes’ plate was full as he was also coach of the NM Junior Varsity team. 1943 proved to be a hardship year for sports, and for all Americans as our country was deadlocked during World War II. Rationing of several items were in existence, notably gas rationing which posed a deterrent for travel. Gas rationing took effect on Dec 1st, 1942, and NM, due to the distance that would require the burning of too much fuel, did not play Scottville in 1943. Whitehall too, cancelled both of their games with Scottville while as many as six Michigan Universities completely dropped basketball for the duration of the War. Even coffee lovers had to lower their penchant for an early morning brew due to tight rationing. The team that was perhaps hurt the most was Hart. The Pirates, boasting of a skyscraper lineup had the potential to win the state Class C championship, however, following the district tournaments, the rest of the season was cancelled for all MHSAA events. Only 11 regular season games were scheduled for the Norse, the lowest number of games in school history. Four letter winners returned from the previous season, Bill Goldberg, Moe Sikkenga and Don Bowen from the great football team, as well as Don McNabney. However, none of the lettermen returning were high scorers from the previous year’s 8-8 squad as the three leading scorers had graduated.

The Norse had an ominous assignment for their opening game of the 1942-43 season in the Hart Pirates. Still smarting from their huge upset the preceding year by NM, the Pirates pummeled the Norse 37-17. Walter “Stretch’ Hansen led the Pirates with 13 points while Bill McNabney scored eight of the NM’s slim totals of 15 points, their lowest offensive output of the entire season.

The Norse bounced back the following Friday to defeat Shelby handily 35-14 on the NM home court. Football star Don Bowen led NM in scoring with 10 points while sophomore newcomer Don Jacobson, also a regular on the NM football team, added seven.

Luck was finally on the side of Fremont who had been on the losing end of most of their battles over the years with the Norse. Fremont won in overtime 31-30 in what would prove to be the first of three one-point victories over NM during the season.

It was now time for the Norse to enjoy the fruits of a one-point win when they edged Muskegon St. Joseph a few days later 21-20. A late free throw made by Moe Sikkenga, one of just two points scored during the game by the husky NM guard, proved to be the game winner in the low-scoring affair held just before the Christmas Holiday break.

Hart’s imposing huge front line proved to be too much once again in their second encounter of the season with a 49-28 swamping of the Norse. Don Jacobson led NM with 10 points while Art Wittevrongle added five. Scoring six points for the winners from Hart was Lyle Burmiester, who years later would be one of this author’s working partners at Wagoner Transportation in Traverse City.

The Norse led heavily favored Whitehall by four points midway through the game’s final quarter before the Vikings rallied to earn a 28-22 victory. Scoring four field goals on hook shots, Don Bowen and NM won their third contest of the season with a 27-16 victory over Montague.

NM then made it two wins in a row, and their final victory of the season with a series sweep of Shelby. The modest 36 points scored by NM would be their biggest offensive output of the season and the only game whereby the Norse had two players score in double figures, Bowen with 11 and Jacobson with 10.

Coach Paul Moyes had to ‘raid’ his JV team for the Whitehall contest as four of his varsity players were suspended for cutting classes. Whitehall then dropped the Norse 42-29. Sikkenga had 8 for the Norse while a pair of JVs called up, Tom Jackson and freshman Dick Salmonson combined for 8 of NM’s points. Due to travel restrictions the Norse had to wait two weeks before entertaining the Vikings.

NM’s regular season ended when they dropped a contest at Montague 37-22, a game that was delayed nearly a week.

The entire season then ended when NM dropped a hard-fought game with Coopersville. The districts for Class C were held at the spacious Central Campus gym of Muskegon High School and the Norse came up one point short in a 26-25 loss to Coopersville.

N Muskegon 26 Hart 40 Bill McNabney 8, Bill Goldberg 5

N Muskegon 35 Shelby 15 Don Bowen 10, Don Jacobson 7

N Muskegon 30 Fremont 31 Moe Sikkenga and Goldberg 7, Bowen 6,

N Muskegon 21 Musk St Joseph 20 McNabney 7, NM wins on Sikkenga ft.

N Muskegon 28 Hart 48 Jacobson 10, Bill Peterson 5.

N Muskegon 22 Whitehall 28 Jacobson & Goldberg 7.

N Muskegon 17 Fremont 18 Jacobson & Goldberg 5.

N Muskegon 27 Montague 16 Bowen 10, Goldberg 6.

N Muskegon 36 Shelby 23 Bowen 11, Jacobson 10, Goldberg 8

N Muskegon 29 Whitehall 42 Sikkenga 8, Tom Jackson 6

N Muskegon 22 Montague 37 Bowen 7, Jacobson 5

N Muskegon\* 25 Coopersville 26 Jacobson and Art Wittevrongle 8

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**1943-44 Coach Paul Moyes (3-10) 3rd in WMC – Montague WMC champs)**

The Norsemen didn’t fare well in the War years of 1943-44. Once again, they played a limited schedule of 12 games as fuel rationing again raised havoc with scheduling opponents. Three lettermen returned for the start of the season, including junior center Don Jacobson, Tom Jackson and the Norsemen’s tallest cager in Art Wittevrongle. One player counted upon by coach Moyes was Bill Peterson. However, Peterson opted to join the service midway through the 1943 football season as did many other patriotic Americans during this tumultuous period.

There was good news for high school athletes just prior to NM’s opening game with Hart. The MHSAA executive board announced that basketball, as well as track & field championships will again resume after a one-year hiatus in 1943. It would be another 77 years before the Covid 19 pandemic reared its ugly head and forced cancellation of state championships.

Once again NM opened the season against the 4-time WMC champions from Hart and were no match for the Pirates in a 40-26 defeat.

The schedule got even tougher as NM played a mid-week game against the Muskegon Big Reds and were humbled by the Big Reds 53-14. Leading the way for Muskegon was Bill Bos, a future inductee into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame and the oldest of the four Bos brothers. The Bos residence in North Muskegon was just a few yards away from the NM school complex as the three younger Bos brothers would all play for North Muskegon.

NM then resumed playing their WMC competitors and nearly pulled off their first victory of the year against Shelby. The Norse saw a four-point lead in the final period evaporate as the host Tigers sent NM to their third consecutive defeat 29-25.

Fremont at one point had lost 10 straight games to NM but the Packers have reversed that trend as they won their third victory in a row by a score of 30-22 over their rivals.

After going more than three weeks without playing a game, the Norse displayed their rust from the long layoff as they scored only 11 points as they were routed by Hart 46-11.

After scoring but 11 points at Hart, the Norse touched the sixty points mark for the first time in school history in a 60-36 blitz over Whitehall. Art Wittrevongle netted a career high 20 points while freshman Bob Pyle added 12.

After losing at one time 12 of 13 games vs NM, Fremont won their fourth game in a row over the Norse 41-32 despite 12 points tallied by NM’s Don Jacobson.

Falling victim due to rationing and other factors caused by World War II was girls’ basketball at NM. It would be 30 years before girls’ basketball would be revised at NM and at most other schools throughout the USA with the advent of title IX.

Competing without center Wittrevrongle, who was out with the flu, NM was only able to muster 13 points in a 18-13 loss to league leading Montague. It was a virtual one-man show for NM as Don Jacobson scored 11 of NM’s 13 points.

The Norse finally annexed their second win of the season with a 25-20 win over Shelby, atoning somewhat from their early season loss to the Tigers. Missing in action in NM’s third and final victory of the season was their coach, Paul Moyes. Coach Moyes was in Detroit to take a physical examination for a commission in the US Navy. Superintendent Max Smith was the interim coach for the Norse as NM defeated Scottville 33-24 with Salmonson leading the way for the Norse with 13 points.

What a difference a few weeks make. After scoring a school record 60 points at the Northside gym in January, the Blue & Gold netted 41 fewer points in their rematch with Whitehall in a 33-19 loss.

In the final game of the regular season NM almost pulled off the upset against Montague. The Wildcats had to come from behind to edge the Norse as Montague went undefeated in WMC conference action for the season. In a near replay of their previous game Montague scored but one point in the entire second half but was able to hold on to end the Norse season in the first round of the playoffs 18-16.

N Muskegon 26 Hart 40 Tom Jackson 7, Tom Pinder 6

N Muskegon 14 Muskegon 53 Art Wittevrongle 10 of NM’s 14 points.

N Muskegon 26 Shelby 29 Don Jacobson 12 leads NM in loss

N Muskegon 22 Fremont 30 Jackson 12; 8 of his points on FTs

N Muskegon 11 Hart 46 Norse score only 3 points in second half.

N Muskegon 60 Whitehall 36 Wittrevongle 20, Bob Pyle 12, Ken Kueny 9

N Muskegon 31 Fremont 41 Jacobson 12

N Muskegon 13 Montague 18 Jacobson 11 of NM’s 13 points.

N Muskegon 25 Shelby 20 Jacobson, Pyle and Dick Salmonson 7

N Muskegon 33 Scottville 24 Salmonson 13, Jacobson 7, Ken Kueny 6

N Muskegon 19 Whitehall 31 NM scores 41 less points less than 1st game

N Muskegon 15 Montague 18 WMC champs Montague rallies in 2nd half

N Muskegon\* 16 Montague 18 WMC Champs just barely defeat NM in playoffs

**1944-45 Coach Earl Meyers (10-8) 2nd in WMC – Montague WMC champ, ‘C’ District champs)**

Paul Moyes, coach for the last two years at NM, had entered the service in May of 1944 and was replaced by Earl Meyers. Three lettermen returned from the 1943-44 squad, including three-year starter Don Jacobson. Tom Jackson also returned for the Norse while 6’4 center Bob Pyle, still only a sophomore, also returned to the NM lineup. Although NM began the season by losing six of their first nine games, they did finish strong by going on a six-game winning streak to close out the season.

NM began the season with balanced scoring the key in a 34-18 victory over a newcomer to their schedule in Coopersville. Sophomore Bob Pyle had 9 points while back-up center Harry Waters netted 7.

The Norse then ventured across the causeway to take on Muskegon, for the second, and last, meeting ever between the two schools on the hardwoods. The second meeting resulted in nearly the same score as the first game played as Muskegon romped 53-16. NM kept in close early but the Big Reds, behind the play once again of future NM resident Bill Bos, went on a 16-0 run to squash any NM hopes for victory. No Norsemen were able to score more than four points in the contest.

NM opened their WMC schedule on the road in Hart but dropped a decision to the Pirates 28-24. The Norse after trailing for nearly the entire game, managed to tie the score at 20-all only to see the Pirates score the game’s final four points. Sophomore Bob Pyle. With a modest seven points topped NM in scoring.

The Norse jumped out to a commanding 17-4 lead enroute to their second win on the season, 43-23 over Shelby. Don Jacobson led the Norsemen with 12 points.

Fremont then spanked the Norse 49-31, the largest margin of victory over the Norse in the series history that was once dominated by NM. The Packers even received a fortuitous two points when a Norsemen player tipped the ball into the wrong basket.

The losing woes continued following a two-week layoff for the Holidays. Montague handed the Norse a 30-24 loss followed by their second loss on the season to Hart 41-35. The loss to the Pirates, despite a game leading 12 points by Tom Jackson, put the nail in the coffin for any Norse hoops of winning the WMC title.

Using a 16-7 first quarter advantage over Whitehall, NM snapped their three-game losing streak with a 31-28 win over the Vikings. Don Jacobson and Ken Kueny led the Norse, each with eights.

After dropping their second game of the season to a good Fremont team 46-35, NM, behind Don Jacobson 15 points, defeated Coopersville for the second time on the season 31-25.

Keeping their undefeated winning streak intact, Montague defeated the Norse for the second time on the season 34-23.

NM would begin a six-game winning streak as Don Jacobson tallied a career high 18 points in a NM 39-28 victory at Shelby.

NM compiled their largest scoring total on the season with a 47-31 win over Scottville in their annual one-game only series. Tom Jackson with 14 and Bob Pyle with 10 scored in double figures for the Norse.

The Norse closed out their regular season in winning fashion with convincing wins over Muskegon St. Joseph (36-18) and Whitehall to prepare them for the district tournament. So stingy was the Norse defense (or how bad was the St. Joseph offense, as the Norse held the visitors to no field goals for the entire first half.

The Norse clinched second place in their 42-29 conquest of Whitehall as most of the nation was riveted to the US Marines battle on Iwo Jima.

NM opened with Muskegon St. Mary’s in the Class C districts held at Fremont. For the first time in program history NM had three players reach double figures in a game. Jackson had 12 points, Ken Kueny 11 and Jacobson 10 as the Norse defeated St. Mary’s for their sixth straight win over the local Irish.

NM then defeated Newaygo to win the district title at Fremont. The Norse garnered more than half of their points in the 3rd period with 15 markers as they pulled away from Newaygo. Called up from the JV team, Bud Anderegg led Norse scorers with nine points.

North Muskegon’s season ended as they were outclassed by Grand Rapids Lee in the opening round of the regional. Although the two schools had faced each other many times in the 1940s in football, the playoff contest was the only game played in basketball between the two teams.

N Muskegon 34 Coopersville 18 Bob Pyle 9, Harry Waters 7

N Muskegon 16 Muskegon 53 Tom Jackson, Bill Andree, & Jacobson 4

N Muskegon 24 Hart 28 Pyle 7, Jackson 6, Ken Kueny 5

N Muskegon 43 Shelby 23 Don Jacobson 12, Jackson 9

N Muskegon 31 Fremont 49 Kueny and Pinky Gerling 7 points.

N Muskegon 24 Montague 30 Jacobson 8, Pyle 7, Bob Duplissis 5

N Muskegon 35 Hart 41 Jackson 12, Pyle 7

N Muskegon 31 Whitehall 28 Kueny and Jacobson 8.

N Muskegon 35 Fremont 46 Jacobson 11, Kueny 10

N Muskegon 31 Coopersville 25 Jacobson 15, Pyle 7

N Muskegon 23 Montague 34 Pyle and Jackson 7, Jacobson 5

N Muskegon 39 Shelby 28 Jacobson 18, Jackson 9, Pyle 6

N Muskegon 47 Scottville 31 Jackson 14, Pyle 10, Andree & Jacobson 8

N Muskegon 36 Musk St Joseph 18 Jackson 10, Kueny 7, Jacobson 6

N Muskegon 42 Whitehall 29 Jacobson 14, Pyle 8, Kueny 7

N Muskegon\* 46 Musk St Mary’s 27 Jackson 12, Kueny 11, Jacobson 10

N Muskegon\* 28 Newaygo 20 Bud Anderegg 9, Jacobson 8

N Muskegon\* 14 Grand Rapids Lee 36 Lowest output of season for NM.

**1945-46 Coach Earl Meyers (7-10) 4th in WMC – Hart WMC champ)**

The state now permitted 15 games could be played beginning with the 1945-46 season and NM added a new opponent in Grand Haven. Three lettermen returned for second year head coach Earl ‘Bud’ Meyers: Ken Kueny, Bob Pyle and Bud Anderegg. 63 players tried out for the team resulting in multiple cuts before NM would open the season.

The Norse again opened their season with Coopersville and came away with the victory 43 to 36 as Bob Pyle led NM with 14 points while Bud Andergegg had 9 and Bob Duplissis 7.

The Norse then faced for the first time ever, the Grand Haven Buccaneers, who were playing for the first time with a coach other than Muskegon area Sports Hall of Fame charter inductee Gus Cohrs. Replacing Cohrs, recently released from his duties from the service was Steve Sluka, who would also be inducted into the MASHOF. The Norse were no match for the visiting Bucs as their tight zone defense on the small NM gymnasium floor limited NM to but six field goals for the entire game.

Hart then continued their mastery of the Norsemen by edging NM 36-33. It was a raggedy game as three Norse players would foul out of the contest.

NM went to overtime to defeat Shelby 31-27. Two free throws by Bob Duplissis and a field goal from Al Hekkema in overtime sealed the win for the visiting Norse. All 31 points tallied by the Norsemen came from underclassmen.

NM then snapped a six-game losing streak against Fremont with a 37-25 victory over the Packers. The fortunes of NM took a decided downturn following their victory over Fremont as they would embark on a three-game losing streak. Included among the losses was a narrow defeat at Hart in a game whereby the Norse led up until the final minute in regulation. After 5’4 (maybe) Ken Kueny gave NM the lead late in the contest. Hart’s McKinley Schrumpf tied the contest to send the game into a three-minute overtime period. NM was scoreless in the overtime frame while the Pirates one lone basket during the period was all that was needed in the 32-30 victory over the Norse.

The Norse were no match for Whitehall’s Jack Harper who notched 21 points in the Viking’s lopsided 42-18 win over the Norse. Ken Kueny, who had just returned from taking a physical for the draft, returned with an ailing stomach and could only play but a couple of minutes in the defeat.

Kueny was healthy and back in the lineup and scored 10 points as NM defeated Coopersville for the second time on the season 48-21.

After losing to both Fremont and Montague NM did find a win thanks to a 15-point burst from Bob Pyle in a 35-30 win over Shelby.

Following a loss to Scottville the Norse suddenly found their offense as they routed Muskegon St. Joseph 61-33, the most points scored to date for a NM team. The Mutt & Jeff of NM, 6’4 Bob Pyle and 5’4 (maybe) Ken Kueny each scored 20 points in the NM victory. A big Norse rally fell short in their next contest as they dropped a decision to Whitehall 36-32. The Vikings welcomed back three regulars who had been suspended.

NM defeated Grant in the first round of the playoffs 42-26 with the big news the 22 points scored by Bob Pyle that equaled a record set 12 years early by Jack Jiroch in 1934. The Norse season ended with a tight 31-30 loss to Ravenna, the first meeting between the two foes since the 1937-38 season.

N Muskegon 43 Coopersville 36 Bob Pyle 14, Bud Anderegg 9, Bob Duplissis 7

N Muskegon 20 Grand Haven 34 Duplissis 6, Ken Kueny 5, Al Hekkema 4

N Muskegon 33 Hart 36 Duplissis 11 as 3 Norse out on fouls

N Muskegon 31 Shelby 27 Hekkema 14, Pyle 10, Duplissis 6.

N Muskegon 37 Fremont 25 Duplissis & Kueny 8, Hekkema 7

N Muskegon 32 Montague 37 Anderegg 10, Hekkema 9, Duplissis 7, Pyle 6

N Muskegon 30 Hart 32 Pyle 11, Hekkema 9, Kueny 6

N Muskegon 18 Whitehall 42 Kueny ill, Ken Barrs led NM with 4 points.

N Muskegon 48 Coopersville 21 Kueny and Anderegg 10 points, Pyle 9, Hekkema 7

N Muskegon 34 Fremont 39 Seven Norse score but the leader Kueny had but 4 points

N Muskegon 33 Montague 46 Kueny 10, Pyle 7, Hekkema & Duplissis 6

N Muskegon 35 Shelby 30 Pyle 15, Hekkea and Baars 6.

N Muskegon 25 Scottville 37 Hekkema & Duplissis 7

N Muskegon 61 Musk St Joe 33 Pyle & Keueny 20 each.

N Muskegon 32 Whitehall 36 Hekkema 8, Kueny 7

N Muskegon\* 42 Grant 26 Pyle school record tying 22 points

N Muskegon\* 30 Ravenna 31 Anderegg and Jack Ortquist 9 each.

**1946-47 Coach Earl Meyers (8-8) NM third in WMC – Whitehall champs)**

Four lettermen returned for coach Earl Meyers to begin the 1946-47 season. Big Bob Pyle (6-4, 220) returns to begin his fourth year as a Norse regular and co-holder of the NM school record for points in a game with 22. Included among the four letterwinners would be Dick Salmonson, who is returning from a stint in the service. Starters from last year returning include Bob Duplissis and Al Hekkema. Missing starter from the previous season was 5’4 (maybe) Ken Kueny who can boast of a career high of 20 points scored in a single game. Kueny and his longtime pal Al Hekkema would be fixtures as Norse fans at NM basketball game well into the next century before they each passed on. Superintendent Max Smith was adamant that they would limit the number of spectators allowed into the NM bandbox gymnasium to 510. In the past the tiny gymnasium was overcrowded with spectators who would sit in the aisle ways that overtaxed the facility.

NM opened the season by defeating Coopersville for the fifth consecutive time 43-22. Fresh off his tenure in the service Dick Salmonson led NM with 13 points as the Norse nearly doubled the score on the visiting Broncos.

The Norse were again outclassed by Grand Haven 27-20 in their second-ever meeting. The Norse made it close yet dropped their ninth straight contest to Hart 25-21.

A reported 75 people had to be turned away as a sellout crowd of 510 saw the Norsemen rout Shelby 48-20. Bob Pyle led a pair of Norsemen in double figures with 15 points while Bob Duplissis gunned in 11.

A long break over the Holidays was just what was needed for the Norse after ending 1946 losing handedly to Fremont. After dropping nine straight to their rivals from Hart, the Norse played their best ball to date on the season as they upset the Pirates on the Norse floor 41-29. Al Hekkema dropped in 14 points while Bob Duplissis added 12 as NM won their 2nd WMC game on the season.

It was a bazaar finish for NM in their 55-45 loss to Whitehall. NM had a 10-point lead heading into the final quarter and inexplicably failed to a score a single point in the final quarter while Whitehall meshed 20.

It was no disgrace to loss a pair of games to Fremont during the 1946-47 season. Fremont won their second game of the season 40-30 over NM in what would be Fremont’s furthest run in their school’s history. The Packers would advance to the state finals before losing the Class B championship game to Alma.

NM then made it six victories in a row with a 43-33 conquest of Coopersville to get back on the winning track. Al Hekkema had 13 points, Bob Pyle 11, while reserve Dale Bos, brother of former Muskegon basketball star and tennis ace Bill Bos, moved into the rotation and scored nine points. The immediate future didn’t look all that promising if free throw shooting from the JV players could be exploited. In the JV’s 22-21 loss to the Coopersville JV’s, the Norse cagers hit but one free throw in 21 attempts.

In additional to snapping a long losing streak to Hart, NM also stopped their suffering at the hands of Montague as they swamped Montague 56-35 for their first win over the Wildcats in eight games. Despite 19 points from my old friend Al Jancek, NM had much better balance as three Norse players were in double figures. Al Hekkema with 16, Ken Baars and Dick Salmonson had 12 each with Bob Duplissis just missing with 8.

No tickets were available at the door for the highly anticipated matchup on February 21 with Whitehall as all tickets were sold out and no one without a ticket was allowed into the bandbox NM gymnasium. The hometown fans came away disappointed as Whitehall downed the Norse 41-37 and clinched the WMC Championship, the first WMC title in Whitehall school history. Al Hekkema netted 14 points in the losing cause.

With their spirits crushed by the loss to Whitehall the Norse quickly got back into action the following Monday to play a game at Shelby that was postponed to Feb 24, 1947, due to an earlier snowstorm. NM saw the game get away from them in the fourth period as Shelby, beaten soundly by the Norsemen in December by 28 points upset the Norse 32-22. The Norse could only blame their shooting woes from the free throw line as they were only able to make six of their 15 attempts.

NM need a couple of very late baskets from Bob Pyle and Al Hekkema to earn a tight victory over Newaygo 31-30 to begin the 1947 tournament.

Sadly, for Norse followers, they would have to wait another 10 years to earn a victory in the playoffs.

After losing to the Norsemen in their previous five meetings, Muskegon St. Mary’s came from behind to eliminate NM from the tournament 35-29. For St Mary’s, it was their 17th consecutive win in a row and for three NM seniors it was their final game. The graduating seniors of Al Hekkema (12) Bob Pyle (8) Bob Duplissis (5) scored all but 4 points in the loss to the undefeated Irish. WMC champ Whitehall would end St. Mary’s season in the first game of the regional. Whitehall would make a great run in the 1946-47, advancing all the way to the semifinal four.

**N Muskegon** 43 Coopersville 22 Dick Salmonson 13, All Hekkema and Ken Baars 8

N Muskegon 20 Grand Haven 27 Bob Pyle 8, Hekkema & Baars 6

N Muskegon 21 Hart 25 Pirates defeat NM for 9th straight time.

N Muskegon 48 Shelby 20 Pyle 15, Bob Duplissis 11, Baars 9

N Muskegon 27 Fremont 48 Pyle 7, Baars 6, Salmonson & Hekkema 5

N Muskegon 41 Hart 29 Hekkema 14, Duplissis 12, Pyle 8

N Muskegon 45 Whitehall 55 Salmonson 10, Hekkema, Duplissis & Baars 9, Pyle 8

N Muskegon 30 Fremont 40 Duplissis 9, Hekkema & Pyle 7, Salmonson 5

N Muskegon 43 Coopersville 33 Pyle 11, Dale Bos 9,

N Muskegon 56 Montague 35 Hekkema 16, Salmonson & Baars 12, Duplissis 8

N Muskegon 41 Scottville 37 Duplissis 14, Hekkema 8, Baars 7

N Muskegon 37 Whitehall 41 Hekkema 14, Duplissis 8, Pyle 7, Baars 6

N Muskegon 22 Shelby 32 Hekkema 9, Duplissis 8, Bos 7.

N Muskegon 46 Montague 26 Pyle 13, Hekkema 10, Duplissis 9, Bos 7, Baars 6

N Muskegon 31\* Newaygo 30 Pyle 11, Bos 8, Hekkema 6

N Muskegon 29\* Musk St Mary 35 Hekkema 12, Pyle 8, Duplissis 5, Bos 4

**1947-48 Coach Earl Meyers (2-13) NM 5th in WMC – Hart champs)**

With only Dale Bos and Ken Baars returning to the starting lineup from the previous season, prospects didn’t look all that rosy for the Norse. The Norse would only win two games on the season, both against Montague as NM experienced their worse season to date in program history.

The writing was on the wall in their first game on the season when they were pummeled by Muskegon St. Joseph 54-40 in a game that wasn’t even that close as NM outscored St. Joseph 16-4 in the final quarter. Leading the scoring for St. Joseph was future NM football coach Dick Doornbos with 22 points. The two returning starters for NM, Dale Bos and Ken Baars had 17 and 14 to pace the Norse.

It didn’t get any easier for NM in their second contest against Grand Haven as the host Buccaneers doubled the score on the Norse 49-24. Following a Ken Baars two-pointer early into the second half the score was tied at 16 all but the rest of the game belonged to Grand Haven.

Coach Earl Meyers’ five gave Norse fans hope that all was well in game number three as they defeated Montague 41-38 in overtime. Dale Bos was the big gun for NM by scoring the winning basket in overtime, two of his game high 18 points. Jim Scott had a key bucket in the overtime period for NM as three NM players fouled out of the game before the fourth quarter.

However, it was back to reality for NM beginning with a 42-24 loss to Shelby. Dale Bos had 13 points, but no other Norse player was able to score more than three points. The Norse then ran into a hot shooting cager from Muskegon St. Mary’s, Jack Martin, who surely must have set a school record with 30 points in the Irish 54-48 win over NM.

After a close first half that had Scottville leading by only two points at halftime, once again NM faltered in the second half at Scottville’s super-tiny gym and fell to the Spartans 43-36.

League leading and defending WMC champs Whitehall then derailed the Norse 51-33, but the worst was yet to come. To say that the Norsemen’s offense was colder than the previous night’s temperature of -13 below would be an understatement--- check out this stat of NM’s impotent offense. NM trailed Hart 33-0 and the half! A Dick Schalk field goal late in the third quarter averted NM going scoreless for three full quarters but the Norsemen still found themselves trailing 47-2. The 59-9 loss to Hart must perhaps take the dubious honor of the worst showing in NM history.

Thank goodness for the Norsemen that Montague was on the schedule. After their embarrassing loss to Hart, the Norsemen more than welcomed a trip to Montague where the Norse won their second, and last game of the season with a 41-30 victory over Montague. Ten Norsemen saw action in the game, including a few sophomores. However, it was a trio of seniors, Jim Scott (10) Ken Baars (8) and Dale Bos (8) who led NM scorers.

Still smarting from a defeat to Muskegon St. Joseph where future NM football coach (1958 & 59) Dick Doornbos poured in a school record 33 points, Shelby held off a NM rally to edge the Norse 42-40. NM coach Meyers started five reserve players to begin the game, and it backfired as Shelby led NM by 13 points at the end of the first quarter.

Newaygo had replaced Fremont on the NM schedule, and perhaps it was a wise move as Fremont would go all the way to the state semifinals in Class B. Although NM was on the losing end 45-41 to Newaygo, they were in contention throughout the contest.

The final four games on the season again were not pretty for the Blue & Gold. Following a home loss to Scottville 54-29 NM would give up the most points in program history (as of the 1948 date) as Whitehall poured in 73 points to the Norsemen’s 35. Leading NM in scoring was Jim Scott with 10. Scott, who lived directly across the street from my residence in NM, in later years would become a longtime teacher and head track coach for Whitehall.

Hart secured their WMC Championship with a commanding 54-39 victory over NM. Although NM scored but 39 points, it was 30 points more than they tallied in their initial game with Hart. NM than had the dubious task of attempting to win a playoff game against an undefeated Grant squad. NM fought gamely and trailed the heavy favorites by only a point at halftime. Grant pulled away in the second half and NM would end the season with but two wins. On a positive note, that would be double the wins NM would have the following season.

N Muskegon 40 Musk St Joseph 54 Dale Bos 17, Ken Baars 14

N Muskegon 24 Grand Haven 48 Baars 8, Jim Scott 4

N Muskegon 41 Montague (ot) 38 Bos 18, Scott 7

N Muskegon 24 Shelby 42 Bos 13

N Muskegon 48 Musk St Mary’s 54 St. Mary’s Jack Martin scores 30.

N Muskegon 26 Scottville 43 Scott 10, Baars 4

N Muskegon 33 Whitehall 51 Baars 15, Bos 13

N Muskegon 9 Hart 59 NM 0 pts in first half. Ken Douglas 7

N Muskegon 41 Montague 30 Scott 10, Baars 8, Bos 8

N Muskegon 40 Shelby 42 Scott 10, Douglas & Baars 8.

N Muskegon 41 Newaygo 45 Scott 14, Bos 13, Baars 9,

N Muskegon 29 Scottville 54 Scott 9, Baars 8

N Muskegon 35 Whitehall 73 Scott 10

N Muskegon 39 Hart 54 Bos & Douglas 10 points, Dick Schalk 6

N Muskegon\*33 Grant 43 Scott 10, Baars 9, Schalk 8, Douglas 6

**1948-49 Coach Bob Morris (1-13) NM 6th in WMC – Hart champs)**

North Muskegon had a new coach, and it would prove to be a very popular hire in Bob Morris. Unfortunately for Coach Morris he only had but one letterman to work with for the 1948-59 season and the one letterman, Monty Hand, saw limited action from the previous season. Although NM had a dismal 1-13 record, the experience gained by the many underclassmen on this team would lead to a co-WMC championship in but two years. Your author was in early grade school during the 1948-49 school year and being the son of a football and baseball coach, and living right across the street from the school, I spent many hours after school watching the Norsemen practice. In this youngster’s wide eye vision, I thought these players were superstars. Many years had passed by before I did research on NM basketball and I was shocked to finally realize that these players who I looked up to with envy, won only one game the entire season! Coach Morris would coach the Norse through the 1964 school year and would be the head mentor for more than 250 games. It was in his very first game with Grand Haven where his Norsemen would be on the losing end of the most lopsided score in his long coaching career as Grand Haven swamped the Norse 70-20.

Although they lost in their next outing, NM was not embarrassed in their 39-37 defeat at the hands of Montague. Scoring in double figures for the Norse, the first of many times during his career, was sophomore Bill Duplissis.

The next four games saw the Norse defeated in all games by more than double digit scores before they were finally able to post their first, and only victory on the season against Montague. The first of those lopsided defeats came at Muskegon’s Central Campus gym when NM was defeated by Muskegon St. Mary’s 45-27.

Looking for a spark, Coach Morris called up from the Junior Varsity team freshman John Dykhouse for NM’s away game with Whitehall. Dykhouse chipped in with seven points, but it was not nearly enough as NM dropped their sixth straight game of the season 51-32 to the Vikings.

Ben Leisburg broke the Hart High school scoring record at the expense of the Norse with his 30 points in a 75-42 rout of the Norse at the northside gym. As if there weren’t enough troubles with the basketball team. The long-standing old school that was just north of the current high school was condemned for safety reasons as NM administrators scrambled to find some temporary facilities for some of their classes. Shortly thereafter the old school built in the first part of the 20th century was demolished. For many of us youngsters from the 1940s, it meant that we would no longer be able to slide down the long fire escape that was attached to the east side of the building.

After suffering seven straight losses NM finally was on the winning side of the score with a 29-25 victory over Montague. Bill Duplissis fired in 11 points while Coach Morris got some fine play from Bill Woller. Then it was once again back to reality for the Norse as they lost to Shelby 49-31 in a battle for who would escape the cellar of the WMC.

NM nearly pulled off an upset over Newaygo, the leaders of the Newaygo County Athletic Conference but fell two points short in a 25-24 loss at the Norse gym. NM was no match in the bandbox Scottville gym as they were downed convincingly by the Spartans 50-26.

NM came close to pulling off the upset with Whitehall as they trailed by only a point going into the final quarter. NM gave powerful and league champion Hart a brief scare in the regular season finale as they enjoyed an all too brief lead in the second quarter before the Pirates pulled away to a 53-34 victory.

The Norse nearly pulled off a stunning upset in the MHSAA playoffs but fell to Manistee 47-46. It was the first year whereby North Muskegon was a Class B school. Fortunately for Norse fans, NM would show vast improvement over the next few seasons.

N Muskegon 20 Grand Haven 70 Monty Hand 5 pts in worse loss for Coach Morris ever.

N Muskegon 37 Montague 39 Don Miller 16, Bill Duplissis 10, Bill Dyer 10

N Muskegon 28 Shelby 45 Don Simonson 15, Duplissis 5

N Muskegon 27 Musk St Mary’s 45 Miller 11

N Muskegon 33 Scottville 49 Miller 14, Dyer 9

N Muskegon 32 Whitehall 51 Miller 10, Hand, 8, John Dykhouse 7

N Muskegon 42 Hart 75 Dykhouse and Tom Mitchelson 9, Duplissis 8

N Muskegon 29 Montague 25 Duplissis 11, Bill Woller & Miller 6

N Muskegon 31 Shelby 49 Hand and Dyer 7

N Muskegon 24 Newaygo 26 Mitchelson and Miller 7

N Muskegon 26 Scottville 50 Duplissis 10, Miller 6

N Muskegon 28 Whitehall 39 Duplissis 9, Miller 7, Dykhouse 6

N Muskegon 34 Hart 53 Simonson 9, Duplissis 8

N Muskegon \*46 Manistee 47 Miller 13, Mitchelson 11

**1949-50 Coach Bob Morris (7-7 NM 2nd in WMC – Hart champs)**

Five lettermen returned for 2nd year coach Bob Morris with two of his returnees still underclassmen in sophomore John Dykhouse and junior Bill Duplissis. Seniors returning included starters Bill Dyer, Monty Hand and Jerry Raymond.

NM began the season and dropped their opener in a bazaar way at Newaygo. The Norse called one too many timeouts late in the game that resulted in a technical foul. Newaygo made the foul shots, and NM went down in defeat 50-46. Newaygo, with one of their stars being future Montague head coach Bill Mattson, would go undefeated in conference play in the Newaygo County Athletic Association. Sophomore John Dykhouse led NM with 16 points while Bill Dyer added 14 and junior sharpshooter Bill Duplissis had 12 to account for all but three of NM’s total points.

Dykhouse was the man of the hour as NM began their West Michigan Conference schedule with a tight 24-23 win over Montague. Dykhouse’s last minute made free throw, one of his game high 14 points was the difference in the NM victory.

It took only until their third game of the season for the Norse to double their number of wins from the previous season when they downed Shelby 35-31. Duplissis led NM with 15 points, followed by Dykhouse with 10 and Claude Easterling netting 8.

NM ended 1949 with a loss at Fremont 51-35 in a game that the Packers had firm control the entire game.

It would be another three weeks before NM would return to action to begin the new decade of the 1950s. Unfortunately for the Norse, their first game after the long layoff would be a road contest at Scottville’s tiny ‘House of Horrors’ bandbox gymnasium, where the local team always held a decided advantage with their low ceiling gymnasium and a court where at one end the basket was attached to the wall. Although heavily favored the Norse dropped a 33-31 squeaker to the Spartans with Bill Duplissis the only Norseman in double figures with 10 points.

Despite converting on but four of 15 free throws the Norse emerged victorious 46-32 over Whitehall as Bill Dupliissis, who made NM’s only free throws, led all scorers with 16 points.

NM then ventured to Hart to take on their nemesis and again fell to the Pirates 49-35. Hart rebounded from a loss earlier in the week to Muskegon St. Joseph in a game that was held at the downtown Muskegon YMCA. The three Muskegon Parochial Schools during the length of their school’s history never had a gym they could call their own.

Leading at one time 20-5, NM blew a big lead and fell to Montague 37-35. It took an extra three minutes, but NM was content to walk off with a 33-30 win at the Northside gym over Shelby as Captain Bill Dyer scored a game high 14 points.

In a rare Thursday game, the Norse evened their record at 4-4 on the season with a convincing 41-24 win over a young Muskegon St. Mary’s team. Duplissis had 16 for the Norse while being guarded by young St. Mary’s freshman guard Jim Morse.

To clarify how much of an advantage over the years it was for Scottville to play on their bazaar home court, one needed to look no further than the 1949-50 season. After losing earlier in the season at Scottville’s bazaar gym in early January, NM won by a whopping 25 on their home court vs. the Spartans.

NM built up a modest four-game winning streak after defeating both Scottville and Whitehall. The Norsemen’s 39-31 victory over Whitehall, with Bill Duplissis scoring a season high 19 points, set up the regular season finale with Hart to determine the WMC conference championship. Needing a win to tie Hart for conference honors, once again the Norse fell prey to the Pirates 45-31. NM had a golden opportunity to earn a tie as the Norse held a huge 31-16 lead over the Pirates with only two minutes to go in the third period. However, the Hart ‘jinx’ prevailed as the Pirates won their 15th game in their last 16 meetings with the Norsemen.

Still smarting from their loss to Hart the Norse were no match for Fremont in the opening round of the playoffs in a 20-point loss to the Packers. However, with their top two scorers returning, the following season looked much more promising for the Norsemen.

N Muskegon 46 Newaygo 50 John Dykhouse 14, Bill Dyer 12

N Muskegon 24 Montague 23 Dykhouse 14, Duplissis 5

N Muskegon 35 Fremont 51 Dykhouse 13

N Muskegon 31 Scottville 33 Duplissis 10

N Muskegon 46 Whitehall 32 Duplissis 16, Monty Hand 10

N Muskegon 35 Hart 49 Dykhouse 14, Duplissis 12

N Muskegon 35 Montague 37 Dykhouse 10, Duplissis & Dyer 8

N Muskegon 33 Shelby (ot) 30 Dyer 14, Dupllissis & Dykhouse 6

N Muskegon 41 Musk St Mary’s 24 Duplissis 16, Dykhouse 11

N Muskegon 48 Scottville 23 Dykhouse 16, Duplissis 14, Hand 12

N Muskegon 39 Whitehall 31 Duplissis 19, Dykhouse 9

N Muskegon 37 Hart 45 Duplissis 19, Dykhouse 8

N Muskegon\*36 Fremont 56 Duplissis 17

**1950-51 Coach Bob Morris (10-5 NM co-champs in WMC with Shelby)**

One of your author’s most fondly remembered teams would be the Norsemen of 1950-51. I believe I only missed watching one game played by the Norse this season that featured one of my early idols in sports, Bill Duplissis. “Duppy’ was a three-sport star and a class gentleman who always treated this youngster with the upmost respect. When I was a freshman at NMHS I was thrilled to wear his number #24 jersey even though it was perhaps two or three sizes too big for this tiny youngster. I was proud when I sadly gave one of the eulogies at his funeral when my idol and long-time friend passed away in March of 2009.

Just five years after our country left World War II, the USA was involved in yet another conflict as the Korean War had begun which impacted many of our young athletes. The captain of Army’s undefeated 1949 football team, Lt. John Trent was killed in action in Korea.

NM returned their two leading scorers from the 1949-50 season, and they quickly made their presence known in the opening game when they defeated the defending Newaygo County league champions from Newaygo 42-36 in overtime. Duplissis and John Dykhouse accounted for 32 of NM’s 42 points.

NM made it two straight wins to start the season as Paul Bos, a frequent starter from the previous season, was in doubles figures with 11 points as NM defeated Montague at the Whitehall Tannery 50-38. Dykhouse added a game high 16 points as the Wildcats made stopping Duplissis their number one priority. “Dupe’ had a modest six points but his teammates more than picked up the slack.

It was in early December of 1950 when a couple of additions at the school were now open at NMHS. The elementary school for those from kindergarten to fourth grade was opened as well as an addition to the current high school that included a couple of classrooms as well as a new facility for shop classes.

A brief December schedule saw a scheduled game with Shelby snowed out until a later date and Fremont edged NM 42-37 before games resumed in early January of 1951.

NM throttled Scottville 59-24 with Duplissis scoring 21 points, a single point away from the school record.

The Norsemen and Shelby made up a game earlier postponed due to a snowstorm on January 9 and it was a game that always was sadly remembered by Bill Duplissis. “Dupe’ did not play in the NM-Shelby clash with the Tigers as he was suspended one game for ‘sidestepping’ a class, something that gnawed Duplissis for many years. With their leading scorer not in uniform Shelby nipped the Norse by two points, a loss that would prove costly to NM as they would have to share the WMC championship. It appeared even with their best player not in the lineup that the Norse would win out as they held a 44-38 lead with but three minutes to play only to see Shelby score the games last eight points. One of the Shelby players on the floor would not only lay claim as the best football player in WMC history, but as a freshman Dave Whitsell would later deprive the Norsemen of an outright conference championship. In a improbable victory over Scottville, Whitsell won the game by hitting a shot from mid-court at the buzzer.

NM then survived a scare by winless Whitehall 39-33 to keep their title hopes alive.

For only the 2nd time in 18 meetings were the Norse able to beat their arch nemesis from Hart 35-32 before a sold-out crowd at the Norse gym. Bill Duplissis scored eight of his game high 20 points in the final quarter to lead NM to the all-important victory.

Following perhaps their worse showing of the season in losing to Coopersville on their unusual tile floor gymnasium, NM bounced back three days later to turn back Montague for the second time on the season. Bill Duplissis fired in a new school record of 23, points; last set in 1946 by his neighbor Bob Pyle, who lived right across the street from Duplissis,

The NM sharpshooter improved on his record by a point as he tallied 24 points in a 51-43 win at Shelby. Duplissis sat out the loss to Shelby earlier in the season and it probably cost NM the outright championship in that loss to the Tigers.

NM, who was beaten by Muskegon St. Mary’s in football, turned the tables on the Irish with a 47-39 victory on the hardwoods. Paul Bos had a career high 19 for the Norse while St. Mary’s was led by a pair of long-time friends of your author, Mike Kanitz with 13 and Jim Morse with 12. After trouncing Scottville earlier in the season by 35 points, NM struggled to come away with a victory on Scottville’s cracker box gymnasium but escaped with a 41-34 win. It is hard to pinpoint how much of a homecourt advantage Scottville had over the years, but by looking at home and away scores over the many years, it was huge.

NM then clinched at least a tie with Shelby in the WMC with a 57-20 win over Whitehall. NM received outstanding balance in the win as Duplissis netted 17, Paul Bos 11, John Dykhouse 10 and defensive guard specialist Don Vento added 9. Ten NM players scored at least a point in the victory.

Leading throughout much of the game, with at one time a 10-point lead over their longtime nemesis from Hart, NM had to settle for the co-championship of the WMC with Shelby as NM lost to Hart in another ‘heartbreaker’ 53-50. John Dykhouse was outstanding for the Norse with a school record 25 points, eclipsing the record held by his teammate Bill Duplissis less than a month earlier. NM led 41-34 heading into the final quarter before Hart rallied to throw a dagger once again into the Norse’s hopes for an outright title. The Hart gym has proven a jinx to Norse teams over the past 12 years, as only once back in 1940 have the Norse been able to win a decision at Hart.

The 1950-51 season ended in the last ever meeting between North Muskegon and Grand Haven in basketball. Bill Duplissis ended his stellar career in fine fashion as he scored 19 points in the first-round playoff game held at the Holland Armory.

N Muskegon 42 Newaygo (ot) 37 Bill Duplissis 19, John Dykhouse 13

N Muskegon 50 Montague 38 Dykhouse 16, Paul Bos 11,

N Muskegon 37 Fremont 42 Duplissis 15, Dykhouse 11, Bos 6

N Muskegon 59 Scottville 24 Duplissis 21, Dykhouse 11, Mitchelson 8

N Muskegon 44 Shelby 46 Dykhouse 17, Kyran Mitchelson 8

N Muskegon 39 Whitehall 33 Bos 12, Duplissis 11, Mitchelson 10

N Muskegon 35 Hart 32 Duplissis 20, Dykhouse 10

N Muskegon 22 Coopersville 37 Duplissis 7, Charley Whiteman & Bos 4

N Muskegon 56 Montague 49 Duplissis record 23, Dykouse 10, Bos 9

N Muskegon 51 Shelby 43 Duplissis 24 to improve on his record.

N Muskegon 47 Musk St Mary’s 39 Bos 19, Duplissis 12, Dykhouse 10

N Muskegon 41 Scottville 34 Dykhouse 14, Duplissis 13, Don Vento 6

N Muskegon 57 Whitehall 20 Duplissis, 17, Bos 11, Dykhouse 10

N Muskegon 50 Hart 53 Dykhouse NM record 25 points in loss

N Muskegon\*45 Grand Haven 51 Duplissis 19, Dykhouse 10, Bos 9

**1951-52 Coach Bob Morris (10-5 2nd in WMC – Hart Champs)**

North Muskegon returned but one letterman from their 1950-51 season in John Dykhouse, a four-year starter for coach Bob Morris. No other returnee managed to even earn a major letter from the previous season as expectations were low for the current season. However, the Norsemen did have a successful campaign that equaled the previous season’s success in wins & losses. Sophomore Tom Arntz developed rapidly into a very good player for NM and the Norse got a boost in size from 6’5 senior Dan Olsen.

NM was a decided underdog for game number one on the season when they traveled to an always tough to play Newaygo gym to tangle with the defending NCAA champions. The veteran Dykhouse led NM to a triumph by pouring in more than half of his team points in a 34-27 win.

In their first WMC contest NM had little trouble with Montague as NM prevailed behind Dykhouse’s 17 points in a 42-29 victory on their home court.

Playing perhaps their poorest game of the season NM fell at Shelby 34-29.

It appeared NM had secured a rare victory over Fremont at the Packer gymnasium when Gordon Munn, who scored his only point in the game on a free throw with just seconds to go appeared to clinch a NM win. However, NM fouled on the inbounds pass and Fremont converted to send the game into overtime whereby Fremont won its seventh straight win in the series.

A raging blizzard forced the cancellation of the Scottville at NM game in mid-December. The game was later made up on the last day of February.

The cancelled game caused a layoff of nearly a month before NM resumed action on January 11, 1951, against Whitehall. John Dykhouse improved on his own NM scoring record with 26 points as NM nearly doubled the score on Whitehall 61-31.

Hart’s mastery over the Norsemen continued as Hart again won on their home court 51-44 over NM to virtually doom any hopes for NM to win the WMC title.

In the final game played between NM and Muskegon St. Mary’s NM defeated the Irish 53-50 on the Northside court as Dykhouse and Arntz combined to score 40 of NM’s 53 points. Art Turner only scored two points in the entire game, but it came at the right time for NM as his basket with the scored knotted up at 50-50 proved to be the game winner. The two teams did not meet again in 1952-53 and it was probably a good thing for NM as St. Mary’s would have an outstanding team that was rated number one in Class C much of the season before falling in the Class C Championship game.

NM hung on despite a rash of foul troubles to nip Montague 35-33 in a game annually contested at the Whitehall Tannery gym. What a difference a few weeks make! After scoring but 29 points in an earlier loss at Shelby, the Norse exploded for a school record 74 points in a 30-point win at the friendly Northside gym against the Tigers. Dykhouse netted a game high 22 markers while 6’5 center Dan Olsen added 15 before fouling out early in the fourth period.

NM kept their flickering hopes of earning a share of the WMC title alive when they handed Scottville a 46-31 loss at the Northside gym.

NM then clinched second place in the WMC with a 51-34 victory over a Whitehall team that was still seeking their first victory of the season.

It was yet another agonizing defeat handed to the Norsemen in their second game of the season with the Hart Pirates. NM looked like they had finally found the formula against their jinx with the Pirates as they held a commanding 18-5 lead after the first quarter. However, the Norsemen quickly developed foul trouble as Dan Olsen, Art Turner and high scoring John Dykhouse ended the half in foul trouble, each with four fouls. Sophomore Tom Arntz scored 24 points in the losing cause while 6’5 junior center Dan Olsen netted 15. Hart would end the regular season with a perfect 15-0 record.

The Norsemen then posted an easy 54-40 win over Coopersville. Three Norse were in double figures for NM; Art Turner with 12, Arntz and Dykhouse with 11. Making his varsity debut after being called up to the varsity was freshman Dave Bliss, who made his first appearance as a varsity performer a success with five points.

Three seniors, John Dykhouse, Art Turner, and Don Schuiteman led the Norsemen to a rare 56-44 away victory at Scottville to close out a very successful 1951-52 regular season. Dykhouse and Turner shared scoring honors with 13 points while Schuiteman was a stalwart on defense.

A tall task was at hand when NM entered the Class B district in Holland against the hometown Holland Christian team that was coming off a win over an undefeated St. Joseph team. It was a game effort by NM, but they fell short 45-35 to the Maroons. John Dykhouse capped his fine 4-year career with a team leading 17 points while Tom Arntz added 13 as the duo scored all but five of NM’s total points.

N Muskegon 34 Newaygo 27 John Dykhouse 20, Tom Arntz 7

N Muskegon 42 Montague 29 Dykhouse 17, George Schalk 8, Arntz 7

N Muskegon 29 Shelby 34 Arntz 12, Dykhouse 10

N Muskegon 38 Fremont (to) 39 Arntz 15, Art Turner 9, Dykhouse 8

N Muskegon 61 Whitehall 31 Dykhouse record 26, Arntz 15

N Muskegon 44 Hart 51 Arntz 17, Don Schuiteman 10

N Muskegon 53 Musk St Mary’s 50 Dykhouse 22, Arntz 18, Olsen 9

N Muskegon 35 Montague 33 Arntz, Dykhouse, Olsen all 8 points.

N Muskegon 74 Shelby 44 Dykhouse 22 NM record, Arntz 10

N Muskegon 46 Scottville 31 Dykhouse 18, Arntz 11, Turner 9

N Muskegon 51 Whitehall 34 Dykhouse 16

N Muskegon 54 Hart 56 Arntz 24, Olsen 15

N Muskegon 54 Coopersville 40 Turner 12, Dykhouse & Arntz 11, Bliss 5

N Muskegon 56 Scottville 44 Dykhouse & Turner 13, Arntz 12

N Muskegon\*35 Holland Christ. 45 Dykhouse 17, Arntz 13

**1952-53 Coach Bob Morris (7-8 Hart WMC Champs)**

Two starters returned from last season’s 10-5 ball club as underclassmen would dominate the roster for the 1952-53 campaign. 6’4 Dan Olsen would be the lone senior in the starting lineup while 6’2 four-sport star Tom Arntz would begin his second year as a starter. As the season progressed coach Bob Morris would see three sophomores move into the starting lineup: 6’2 Gordy Odell, 6’2 Dave Bliss and 6’0 Avery Allen. The trio of sophs were no strangers to one another as they all lived in the same neighborhood, just a block from North Muskegon High School. Tom Arntz and the Norsemen got off to a roaring start, Arntz especially.

The leading letterwinner (13) in NM history, Arntz wasted little time in establishing a new one-game scoring record as he pumped in 28 points to erase the record set the previous season of 26 by John Dykhouse as NM bested Montague 56-50.

In a game in which more than 100 free throws were taken in a foul prone contest on the Coopersville tile floor, NM saw a fourth quarter lead vanish as the Broncos nipped the Norse 56-50. Jack Cooper, who lived but three blocks from NMHS, and Arntz led Norse scorers with 11 points. Odell had eight points, all from the free throw line as the Norse committed 28 fouls in the loss with both Dan Olsen and Dave Bliss fouling out while Cooper and Arntz nearly went out on fouls with four each.

Tom Arntz and Gordy Odell combined for 38 of NM’s 60 points as they defeated Shelby 60-52 to win their second straight WMC contest. Future NFL all-pro performer Dave Whitsell, although standing but six-feet tall and playing center for Shelby, scored 11 points for the losing Tigers.

NM traveled to Holland to take on an even taller Holland Christian five and were overwhelmed 57-30, perhaps a major reason why this was the only scheduled game between the two teams in regular season history.

On the same night when Rio Grande College cage star Bevo Francis scored a still-standing college record of 116 points, NM defeated Scottville 48-40 to go a perfect 3-0 in the WMC title chase.

The Norse held off a Fremont rally to escape with a 47-45 win over the Packers. A last second made basket by Fremont that would have sent the game into overtime was a split-second too late as the Norsemen prevailed.

NM then set up an upcoming clash with Hart for the league lead in the WMC following a 55-44 win over Whitehall that wasn’t nearly as close as the final score. NM held a commanding 50-30 lead over the Vikings before NM coach Morris emptied his bench. Tom Arntz and Dan Olsen each tallied 15 points as the Norsemen got a big lift from their steady sophomore playmaker Avery Allen. It was Allen who keyed a big third quarter run as he scored eight of his nine points to help NM to an insurmountable lead heading into the fourth quarter.

To say that Hart was a jinx foe for NM during the early years of NM basketball would be an understatement. In the first of three ‘heartbreaking’ losses to Hart during the season, the Norsemen held a 66-64 lead late in the game only to see Hart center Gary Tubbs tie the game with seconds left, was fouled, converted the free throw to give Hart a one-point victory and the outright lead in the WMC. Coach Morris played six players during the game, and they all played well. NM was hurt considerably late in the game when both Tom Arntz and Dan Olsen fouled out of the contest. Arntz left with a game high 18 points while Odell, who missed all the practices leading up to the game with the flu, tallied 15 and Jack Cooper was also in double figures with 10.

Still smarting from their crushing defeat the previous Friday by Hart, Montague helped destroy all hopes for a WMC title by thumping NM 60-37 on the Norsemen’s home court. The Norse were hampered with Dan Olsen sidelined for the game as 6’6 Montague center Jerry Brown and 6’5 Ron Erdman controlled the boards in Olsen’s absence.

NM doldrums continued as the Norse fell to Shelby 69-55 as future longtime schoolteacher and clock operator for football at Mona Shores, Jack Cooper scored 30 points.

NM finally broke out of their slump, and against a good opponent with a 37-28 win over Fremont. Either NM played great defense or Fremont shot poorly (probably both) as NM’s 37 points was good enough to defeat the Packers for the second time on the season.

On the same day that Hart clinched another WMC title, their second straight and fifth in the last six years, the Norse went down to a narrow defeat at Scottville 51-49. Leading the host Spartans to victory on their tight floor was Gale Noel with 20 points, a future partner of your author and NM star athlete Tom Stribley in later years in harness racing.

Another sellout crowd packed the quaint NM gym and NM didn’t let their followers down with a 53-44 triumph over Whitehall as Tom Arntz led the way with 21 points.

Hart made it a perfect 10 for 10 in WMC play as they kept up their home court dominance over the Norse. In a game where an astonishing total of 62 fouls were called, Hart edged the Norse 68 to 63. Starters Dan Olsen. Avery Allen and Dave Bliss fouled out of the contest. The Norse even saw reserve Walt Busker leave the Hart floor with five fouls.

As luck (or bad luck) would have it. NM would have to return in less than a week to the dreaded Hart court to again try to depose of the Pirates in the opening round of the MHSAA playoffs. Again, close but no cigar for NM as they were downed by the Pirates by a scant 3 points. After NM tied the game at 69-69 with just seconds remaining, NM fouled Hart’s Buzz Stevens who canned both free throws to give Hart the win. A late free throw by Hart made the final score 72-69.

N Muskegon 56 Montague 48 Tom Arntz school record 28, O’Dell 12

N Muskegon 50 Coopersville 56 Jack Cooper 11, Arntz 11, NM 25 fouls

N Muskegon 60 Shelby 52 Arntz 20, Gordy Odell 18, Dan Olsen 12

N Muskegon 30 Holland Christ. 57 Arntz 12

N Muskegon 48 Scottville 40 Odell 15, Olsen 13, Arntz 12

N Muskegon 47 Fremont 45 Arntz 19, Odell 10, Olsen 8, Avery Allen 4

N Muskegon 55 Whitehall 44 Arntz & Olsen 15, Allen 9 Odell 7, Bliss 5

N Muskegon 66 Hart 67 Arntz 18, Cooper & Odell 15, Cooper 10

N Muskegon 37 Montague 60 Arntz 15 Cooper & Odell 8

N Muskegon 55 Shelby 69 Arntz 18, Olsen 14, Odell 8, Allen 4

N Muskegon 37 Fremont 28 Olsen 15, Cooper 14

N Muskegon 49 Scottville 51 Arntz 15, Odell & Olsen 11

N Muskegon 53 Whitehall 44 Arntz 21, Dave Bliss 13

N Muskegon 63 Hart 68 Arntz 18, Odell 16

N Muskegon\* 69 Hart 72 Arntz 21, Odell 14, Cooper 8

**1953-54 Coach Bob Morris (10-6 2nd WMC Hart WMC Champs)**

With their two leading scorers returning for the 1953-54 season hopes were at a fever pitch from Norse followers when the new season began. In addition, three-sport star Dave Bliss would return for his junior year. However, coach Morris and NM fans were dealt a crushing blow with the news that one of their three sophomore regulars from 1952-53 would not be returning to the NM school. Instead, playmaker Avery Allen brought tears to his team and legion of fans who watched Allen run the Norse offense with his brilliant playmaking and ball-handling skills with news that Allen would be entering a prep school. Allen would leave NM and his saddened NM teammates to improve his academic standings in hopes that someday down the road he could find a prestigious job, not on the pristine shores of Lake Michigan, but in ‘beautiful’ Dayton, Ohio.

NM faced an ominous task in their season opener as they would face the Montague Wildcats and their huge 6’8 center Jerry Brown. Brown would score ten points in the first half before coach Morris doubled Brown in the second half with 6’4 Walt Busker and 6’3 Tom Arntz holding Brown scoreless in the final two periods. NM had a commanding 41-24 late in the game but held off a torrid Wildcat rally to earn the win. Arntz was held to nine points, but junior Gordy Odell took up the slack with 16 points.

For the second straight game NM had another big man to contain. NM was able to hold 6’7 Frank Scott to ten points, but Scott knocked in a pivotal basket with seconds remaining to stretch the Coopersville advantage to 51-48, the game’s final score. Arntz and Odell were again the big offensive guns for NM with 21 and 17 points.

A gym that has often posed problems for NM in the past posed no problems for Tom Arntz and his teammates as they won their second straight WMC contest 64-44 over the Shelby Tigers.

It was the first game ever contested between NM and the first year consolidated Muskegon Catholic School, but it might have been the best. With a sellout crowd packed into the cozy NM gym, the Norse won 62-61 with the winning point coming on a Walt Busker free throw.

In what might be the most bizarre of games scheduled by North Muskegon over the years, NM faced another opponent for the first time, West Michigan Christian. The game initially wasn’t even on either teams’ schedule. The game took place on a Wednesday afternoon at 2:30 PM at the NM gym with only the North Muskegon Student Body present. West Michigan Christian won the game 54-42 even though they didn’t have any fans in attendance.

Two days later the Norse made the long journey to Scottville and came away with a hard-fought win. Gordy Odell scored a career high 23, more than half of his team’s total.

The Norse ran into a buzzsaw as Fremont then overwhelmed the Norsemen 67-47 despite 20 points scored by NM’s Odell. Arntz added 16 but the other Norsemen were only able to tally but 11 points, seven of those scored by Walt Busker.

During the following week’s practices NM’s Tom Arntz slipped in the locker room and incurred a deep gash that required several stiches, resulting in Arntz watching from the NM stands in their Friday night game with Whitehall. Taking Arntz’s place was seldom used Leonard Green, better known for his ability on the football and baseball fields. Green scored 20 points, one of three Norse players to score more than 20 points as NM racked up a school record 81 points in the rout of Whitehall. 6’4 Walter Busker scored a season high 24 while steady Gordy Odell netted 23.

It was time for NM to again make their dreaded trip to Hart, where it had not been since the early 1940s when NM earned a victory on the Pirates home court, many of those losses coming from the slimmest of margins. It looked like the Norsemen would finally end their jinx with the Pirates as they once held a 15 point. But when big Walk Busker fouled out of the contest, Hart center Gary Tubbs went ballistic and led a furious Hart comeback to again send NM down to another ‘heartbreaking’ defeat. Tubbs scored a WMC record 37 points to lead the Pirates to their comeback win and set NM back with a 4-1 record in WMC action. Playing on a bad foot, Tom Arntz scored 20 points in the losing cause. Busker had 17, Green 11 while Odell was held under ten points for the first time all season with nine.

The Norse suffered a double whammy in WMC action as they were upset by Montague in a game held as usual in the Whitehall Tannery, 48-46. The Wildcats scored the winning two-pointer with but five seconds remaining to virtually eliminate the Norse from winning conference honors. Walt Busker, who has improved his offensive game immeasurably of late, led Norse scorers with 17 points followed by Odell with 13. Tom Arntz, still suffering from his injured foot had a season low five markers.

NM kept their faint hopes for a WMC title alive as the big three of Arntz, Odell and Busker combined for 68 of NM’s 77 points in a win over Shelby.

NM paid back Fremont, the co-leaders of the Ken-New-Wa conference from an earlier setback at Fremont by defeating the Packers 62-57 as Gordy Odell tied the school scoring record of 28 points held by his teammate Tom Arntz from the previous season. Arntz also had a great game for the winners with 19 tallies. It was also a good night for the Norse JVs as they handed the Packers their first loss in 26 games.

NM moved into a tie for second in the WMC with their second victory of the season over a good Scottville five 51-37.

NM outlasted Whitehall 51-47 to set up what promised to be yet another dandy of a game with Hart. And a dandy it was --- for the Norsemen! Before the usual sellout crowd at the NM gym the Norse put it all together as they routed the Pirates 84-69. The victory snapped the 29-game winning streak in WMC conference play over the past three years for Hart. Walt Busker became the first NM player in school history to score 30 or more points in a single game while the team total of 84 points was another school record. After seeing the Pirates star center score 37 points in their initial meeting, Busker and his Norse mates held Tubbs to but nine in their second matchup.

However, the Norse were faced with another jinx over the past eight years --- winning a playoff game. After scoring a school record 84 points a week earlier against Hart, NM scored just half that total in their opening playoff game with Fremont. NM shooters at one time made but two shots in 19 attempts in the tournament game played at the new Grand Haven gym. Fremont, winners of the Ken-New-Wa Conference downed the poor shooting Norsemen 48-41.

NM finished the season against top notch competition at 10-6 with several highlights and school records. The game would mark the end of one of NM’s greatest all around athletes and an argument could be made that Tom Arntz was number one. Nobody in the more than 90 years of NM athletics won more letters than Tom Arntz (13). What was impressive was that Arntz was All-Conference in all four sports. Two times All-Conference in football and basketball, a three-time WMC champion in track in the high jump, and although there were no all-WMC teams selected in those years in baseball, the four-year starter at NM during his four years in baseball surely would have made the All-Conference team if one was selected. When his senior season had ended Arntz had scored a NM career best of 662 points, an average of more than 15 points per game. Walt Busker, who came on strong in the second half of the basketball season would leave NM for Dartmouth College, where he would be reunited as a student with NM’s 1952-53-star playmaker Avery Allen.

N Muskegon 44 Montague 41 Gordy Odell 16, Dave Bliis 11, Tom Arntz 9

N Muskegon 48 Coopersville 51 Arntz 21, Odell 17

N Muskegon 64 Shelby 44 Arntz 25, Odell 13, Walt Busker 11

N Muskegon 62 Musk Catholic 61 Arntz 18, Odell 17, Busker 15, Bliss 9

N Muskegon 42 West Mich Chr. 54 Arntz 12, Odell 10, Busker 9, Bliss 7

N Muskegon 39 Scottville 34 Odell 23, Arntz 8, Busker 5.

N Muskegon 47 Fremont 67 Odell 20, Arntz 16

N Muskegon 81 Whitehall 44 Busker 24, Odell 23, Leonard Green 20

N Muskegon 65 Hart 68 Arntz 20, Busker 17, Green 11, Odell 9

N Muskegon 46 Montague 48 Busker 17, Odell 13, Arntz 5m Green 5

N Muskegon 77 Shelby 61 Odell 25, Busker 24, Arntz 19

N Muskegon 62 Fremont 57 Odell school record 28, Arntz 19

N Muskegon 51 Scottville 37 Busker 18, Arntz 16, Odell 13, Bliss 4

N Muskegon 51 Whitehall 47 Arntz, 17, Odell 16, Busker 14

N Muskegon 84 Hart 69 Busker record 30, Odell 16, Arntz 14

N Muskegon\*42 Fremont 48 Busker 14, Odell 10, Arntz 8

**1954-55 Coach Bob Morris (9-7, NM ties for 2nd: Scottville WMC champs)**

Two starters returned for the Norsemen to begin the 1954-55 season and one of those starters would go on to become the most prolific scorer in NM history. 6’3 Gordy Odell, who averaged a whopping 17 plus points per game as a junior, would headline the list of returnees and would shatter all scoring records in his senior season. Also returning as a starter was Dave Bliss, a three-sport star who was first string All WMC as an end on NM’s undefeated football team in the Fall. Joining Odell and Bliss in the rotation would be fellow seniors Tom Stribley and Jack Mavis while 6’4 junior Ken Bolema would be the lone underclassmen as a starter. All five starters were well acquainted with one another as they all lived just a little more than a stone’s throw from the high school.

NM, who already had a rough schedule made it even tougher as they would begin the season with their first ever meeting with the Ludington Orioles. Playing on the large Oriole gymnasium the smaller but quicker Orioles raced by the Norsemen to earn a 63-50 victory. Odell, who spent tireless hours honing up his game on an outdoor basketball court where the current tennis courts are now located, gave NM fans a quick preview of his basketball acumen when he poured in 29 points in a losing cause, just one point shy of the school record.

Odell then scored 30 points, all field goals, as NM suffered their second straight defeat on the young season as the Norse fell at the Whitehall Tannery to Montague 54-52. Odell’s 30 points equaled the school record of 30 by Walk Busker, currently a member of the Dartmouth freshmen football team. Dave Bliss and Ken Bolema each scored eight points but both players fouled out in the contest.

Odell than shattered the school record in their next game as he poured in 39 points as the Norse secured their first win of the season at the expense of Shelby 63-61. Odell tallied 17 field goals; one more than the entire Shelby team scored during the game.

NM received much better balance as they pummeled Muskegon Catholic 66-35 in a game played at Muskegon High’s Central Campus gym. Dave Bliss led the Norse attack with 21 points while Odell was ‘held’ to 19. Igniting the Norsemen attack from his guard position was Jack Mavis who netted 12 points.

Scottville, with one of its best teams in their school’s history made it six straight wins on the 1954-55 season with a 56-48 win over the Norse. Odell, despite double and triple teamed all night still managed to score 22 points in a losing cause.

NM evened their season record at 3-3 with a hectic 60-58 defeat over Fremont. Odell was again sensational as he blistered the nets for 35 points. Fremont nearly tied the game with just four second left but fell two-points shy as the final buzzer sounded to give NM the upset victory over a powerful Packer five.

Odell again surpassed the 30-point mark by canning 16 field goals and a pair of free throws good for 34 points as NM defeated Whitehall in the Vikings new gymnasium.

The duo of Odell and Bliss, who resided within a block from one another in NM, combined for 54 of NM’s 75 points as the Norsemen handed the once dominant Hart Pirates a 75-54 defeat. Odell rifled in 33 points while his neighbor Dave Bliss added 21 as NM moved into 2nd place in the WMC. The once proud Pirates dropped their fourth conference game in five starts.

NM atoned for an earlier loss to Montague with a convincing 66-47 victory in front of the usual sellout crowd at the tiny NM gymnasium. Once again Odell surpassed the 30-point mark with 34 markers while getting some great support from his teammates. Dave Bliss added 14 points while little Jack Mavis was in double figures for the first time in his career with 10.

The Norse won their fifth straight contest with a commanding 77-58 victory at Shelby as the Norse front line of Odell, Bliss and Bolema dominated the action. Odell scored a ‘ho-hum’ 30 points while Bliss added 21 and Bolema 14 on the Tiger home court.

Despite yet another school scoring record (40 points) by the amazing Gordy Odell, NM dropped a high scoring game at Fremont 85-79. The Packers got off to a red-hot start on their home court by blistering the nets for 33 points and the Norse were never able to recover from that scoring onslaught.

NM then had the misfortune of playing their next game against an undefeated Scottville team on their crackerbox gym and dropped the game to the host Spartans 60-52. Scottville would easily field their best team in history until their state finalist team in the next century as they advanced all the way to the quarterfinals in the MHSAA playoffs. Odell with 23 and Bliss with 19 combined for all but 10 of the total points scored by the Norsemen.

NM again hit the road for their fourth straight game yet came away with a tough victory at Coopersville 70-65. NM trailed the Broncos 64-61 with 1:23 left in the game. Dave Bliss nailed a 20-footer and then canned two free throws to give NM the lead. Odell then added a free toss, and Jack Mavis capped the rally with a clinching field goal to preserve the NM win. Odell again passed the 30-point barrier with 34 points, setting up a historical feat three days later.

Odell and the Norsemen would set records that would stand for years as NM scored 104 points in a 104-81 victory over Whitehall. Odell’s 53 points were the most points scored by any Greater Muskegon player in history. The bespectacled Odell misfired on only eight of his 31 shots attempts during his assault on the record. Odell was on fire right out of the gate as he rifled home 16 points in the first period, added nine more before half and used his uncanny eye and skill in posting six baskets and two gift shots in the third frame to set the stage for his final output. Also having a good night were Dave Bliss and Ken Bolema who added 17 and 14 points. Feeding Odell on the night were Norse guards Jack Mavis and Tom Stribley.

Just the thought of North Muskegon coming to Hart must have inspired Hart to play at their absolute best. Still looking for their first win on the Pirates home court since the Pirate gym was erected in 1939, Hart again defeated NM in the final game of the regular season 83-77. Gordy Odell had his poorest game of the season and finished with 14 points, by far his lowest total of the season. Far off form throughout the contest, Odell had a chance to win the game for the Norse with the score tied at 71-71 with 3-seconds to go but the Hart jinx continued as the normally sure shot missed both free throws. Hart then took control of the game in overtime as both Dave Bliss and Ken Bolema had fouled out late in the fourth quarter. Carrying the load for NM was pint-sized Jack Mavis who had a career high 25 points. Mavis was a late bloomer who would get much better in the years after graduation as he became one of the top scorers as a Muskegon City League player and would even become a star, as well as a player coach for Muskegon Business College. Tom Stribley, normally just content to feed his teammates from his guard position also had a season high of 16 points in the upset loss to Hart.

There was one more hex the Norse had to face: winning a playoff game. And again, NM could not post a victory and for the second straight year dropped their playoff opener to rival Fremont 57-51. Concentrating in tying up Gordy Odell worked as for his second straight game Odell was held in check with 13 points. Ken Bolema, the lone underclassmen in the Norse starting lineup had a season best 18 points to lead NM scorers. Bliss ended his career as a 3-years starter with 11 points while also bowing out were guards Jack Mavin and Tom Stribley. Odell would finish his brilliant career with a career total of 898 points in 47 games that averaged out to 19 points per contest. His per game average 30.1 for his senior year when he banged in 898 in 16 games led Odell to being named to the first team Class B All State team. One must remember that during Odell’s career teams were only permitted to play but 15 regular season contests.

N Muskegon 50 Ludington 63 Gordy Odell 29, Dave Bliss 12

N Muskegon 52 Montague 54 Odell 30, Bliss & Bolema 8

N Muskegon 63 Shelby 51 Odell record 39, Bliss 9, Ken Bolema 7

N Muskegon 66 Musk Catholic 35 Bliss 21, Odell 19, Jack Mavis 12

N Muskegon 48 Scottville 56 Odell 22, Bolema 12, Bliss 8

N Muskegon 60 Fremont 58 Odell 35, Bliss 12, Bolema 9.

N Muskegon 64 Whitehall 51 Odell 34, Bliss 9, Bolema 8

N Muskegon 75 Hart 54 Odell 33, Bliss 21, Bolema 8, Mavis 6

N Muskegon 66 Montague 47 Odell 34, Bliss 14, Mavis 10, Bolema 8

N Muskegon 77 Shelby 58 Odell 30, Bliss 21, Bolema 14. Mavis 7

N Muskegon 79 Fremont 85 Odell record 40, Bliss & Bolema 14

N Muskegon 52 Scottville 60 Odell 23, Bliss 19

N Muskegon 70 Coopersville 65 Odell 34, Mavis and Bliss 11

N Muskegon 104 Whitehall 81 Odell record 53, Bliss 17, Bolema 14

N Muskegon 77 Hart 83 Mavis 25, Tom Stribley 16, Odell 14

N Muskegon\* 51 Fremont 57 Bolema 18, Odell 13, Bliss 11

**1955-56 Coach Bob Morris (7-9, Reed City WMC Champs)**

Only two lettermen returned for the 1955-56 season and only 6’4 senior Ken Bolema was a starter. Chuck Houts did see considerable action for Coach Bob Morris the previous season and will move into the starting rotation for this season’s squad.

NM again had a tough opener as they entertained an always strong Ludington team. The Orioles, led by future Ludington head coach and AD Wally Sadosty had little trouble with the inexperienced Norsemen as they won going away 65-46 on the Norsemen’s home court. The tiny Norse court, which had been the home for NM basketball since 1933, would be turned into a library following the close of the season as a new gymnasium was in its early stages of being constructed. Ken Bolema matched Sadosty’s 20 points with Dick Maples adding 10 for NM. Bruce Bestervelt earned a start for NM and added eight points with Houts adding six markers.

Dick Maples, who had to sit out last season because of a transfer ruling, became only the third NM player in history to score 30 or more points in leading NM to a narrow 63-62 win over Montague. Maples garnered his 31 points on nine field goals while also making 13 free throws, the most charity tosses ever made in one game by a Norse player. Arlan Cedarquist gave the visiting Wildcats a brief lead at 62-61 but Maples then made two of his 13 free throws with 20 seconds left for the game winner.

The small basketball court at Shelby often led to some nightmarish games over the years. This was again the case in December of 1955 as Shelby downed the Norse 57-47. After scoring 31 points a week earlier Shelby had all eyes on Dick Maples and held the Norse guard to but seven points. Bruce Bestervelt was the only NM player in double figures in the loss with 13 points.

Ken Bolema was the man of the hour for the Norse as the Norse defeated Muskegon Catholic Central for the third straight time 63-61. Bolema, who had a game high 22 points calmly meshed two free throws in the closing moments of the game for the margin of victory. The Norse got a big boost from reserve Jim Olding who scored eight of his ten points in the final period.

NM again failed to do any damage at the site of where Scottville plays their home games as NM lost 64-55 to the Spartans. NM pulled to within three points at 41-38 in the third period before the Spartans pulled away. Ken Bolema was the only Norsemen that solved the odd configuration of the Scottville facility with his game high 21 points.

A parade to the free throw line paved the way for a 66-52 win for Fremont in the first of their annual home and home rivalry over the years. The visiting Packers cashed in 28 free throws to the host Norse eight.

After losing to NM 12 straight games, Whitehall finally snapped their losing ways to the Norse with a close 69-66 win. Claude Caviness made his only basket the entire game late in the contest for the game winner for Whitehall who improved to 3-1 in the WMC while the Norse were just the opposite at 1-3. Ken Bolema fired in 27 points for NM with Dick Maples adding 15 and Chuck Houts 12.

Surely the last place one would expect the Norse to not only break their current three game losing skein but a streak that dates back 17 years would be at Hart High. The Norse did both as the one-two punch of Dick Maples and Ken Bolema combined for 49 of NM’s 69 points in NM’s 69-56 victory. I should have known it was going to be a good night for the Norse. This seldom used JV reservist scored his only point of the entire season when I ‘banked’ in a free throw against the Hart wooden backboard.

The second meeting of the season between Montague and NM was just as close as the first contest but in the second game there was a different winner: Montague. After losing at NM by one early in the season it was Montague winning by two in their second encounter by an almost identical score 65-63. NM enjoyed an all too brief six-point lead heading into the final quarter before Montague rallied.

It was then time for NM to reverse the tables as they made amends for an earlier loss to Shelby with a 71-57 victory on their home court. Balance scoring paced the NM victory with four Norsemen in double figures. It was WIN number 200 in NM basketball history.

The Norsemen couldn’t use the excuse of playing poorly on the tiny Scottville floor as they were pummeled on their home site by the Spartans 69-41 to fall to 3-5 in the WMC and 4-7 overall.

NM did a complete 360 after suffering the embarrassing loss to Scottville by surprising Coopersville 61-41. Ken Bolema and Dick Maples had their shooting eyes working as Bolema tallied 15 and Maples 15 in NM’s surprising 20-point victory over the visiting Broncos.

Playing their best ball of the season, and after losing to Whitehall earlier on the NM court, NM pummeled the Vikings on their new gymnasium floor 78-51. Ken Bolema had a career high 35 points. Only Gordy Odell had tallied more points than Bolema’s output at Whitehall.

Even when they are having a down year, Hart always seems to play their best against the Norsemen. The glory years for Hart basketball were now in the past as the once dominant Pirates came to the NM gymnasium with only one win for the entire season. They came close to doubling their total at the expense of NM as they lost by only four points 66-62. Dick Maples gunned in 28 points for the victors. The game was the final game played over the years at the old gymnasium, one that brings back lots of fond memories for this old timer.

Fremont, boasting of one of their top teams in school history, made the Norsemen their 15th victim in the final game of the regular season. Just the Friday before the Packers won a thrilling victory over a Zeeland team where one of their star players was future baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Jim Kaat. The Packers would advance to the quarterfinals before losing to the eventual Class B state champs from Stephenson.

If NM was to ever break their playoff drought that goes back to 1947, then it would be a matchup with a Sparta team that won only three games in the entire season. However, the jinx held, and NM lost to the lowly Sparta team 62 to 54 to end their season at 7-9, their first losing season in the decade of the 50s. There surely was one oddity for the West Michigan Conference in the 1955-56 season. Reed City had a perfect 7-0 conference mark yet never played North Muskegon.

N Muskegon 46 Ludington 65 Ken Bolema 20, Dick Maples 10

N Muskegon 63 Montague 62 Maples 31 points included 13 free throws

N Muskegon 47 Shelby 57 Bruce Bestervelt 13, Jim Damm 8

N Muskegon 63 Musk Catholic 61 Bolema 22, Jim Olding 10

N Muskegon 55 Scottville 64 Bolema 21, Bestervelt 8, Damm 8

N Muskegon 52 Fremont 66 Bolema 17. Damm 12, Maples 9

N Muskegon 66 Whitehall 69 Bolema 27, Maples 15, Chuck Houts 12

N Muskegon 69 Hart 56 Maples 26, Bolema 13

N Muskegon 63 Montague 65 Bolema 22. Houts 15, Damm 12

N Muskegon 71 Shelby 57 Maples 17, NM WIN 200

N Muskegon 41 Scottville 69 Bolema 17, Olding 7

N Muskegon 61 Coopersville 41 Bolema 15, Maples 15 Pete Sheldon 7

N Muskegon 78 Whitehall 51 Bolema 35, Maples & Damm 13

N Muskegon 66 Hart 62 Maples 28, Bolema 16, Damm 11

N Muskegon 55 Fremont 65 Bolema 25, Houts 6, Ron Farmer 5

N Muskegon\*54 Sparta 62 Bolema 16 Maples 13, Sheldon 12

**1956-57 Coach Bob Morris (6-11 6th in WMC – Whitehall Champs)**

There was not a rosy picture posted for the beginning of the Norsemen season of 1956-57. Not only would they have but two veterans returning from the previous season, but NM would be homeless. A new gymnasium was in the early stages of being constructed, the old gymnasium was being converted into a library, and NM would be the road warriors for the entire season. All practices would take place at Reeths Puffer, where both the varsity and JV teams would bus to RP for practices staged at various hours. Their first ‘home game’ would also take place at RP’s gym, but not until late January. Returning regulars were 6’2 senior Jim Damm and 5’11 3-sport star Pete Sheldon but the rest of the team would consist mainly of players who played on the JV team from the previous season.

NM began the season against a pair of top-notch teams, always strong Ludington, and a first-time road matchup with the defending WMC champions of Reed City. The Norse were no match for the veteran Ludington team and were soundly beaten 81-54. Each of the two leading scorers, Ron Farmer with 17 points, and Fred Livingston with 12 were JV players in 1955-56.

NM was again no match in the first ever meeting between the Norse and Reed City as the defending WMC champs overwhelmed the Norse 77-44. Pete Sheldon was the only NM player in double figures with 15 points. NM’s big 6’5 center Ron Farmer had a game he would like to forget as he fouled out of the game in the second quarter!

Farmer came back the following Friday to lead NM to their first win on the Hart home floor since the Hart gymnasium was built in the late 1930s with a modest game high total of 11 points. The current Hart team was not even a shadow of the former Hart teams from the 1940s and early 1950s as the Pirates dropped their fourth straight game and were able to tally but 31 points in their 37-31 loss to the visiting Norsemen.

North Muskegon and Muskegon Catholic ended their exciting game with the identical final score from the previous season: 63-61. However, it was MCC and not NM that was on the winning end of the score. Bob Vogel hit a jump shot with ten seconds left to give MCC their first victory over NM after the Norse had won the three previous encounters.

Fremont then defeated NM 59-51 with Pete Sheldon scoring 20 points in the losing cause.

Just two days later NM’s road warriors played better but lost 45-39 to Whitehall to close out the 1956 calendar year with a record of 1-5. One bright spot in the NM loss was the play of sophomore Jerry Johnson. Called up from the JV team Johnson scored all ten of his points in the final period to give Coach Bob Morris a ray of light that perhaps things will get better as 1957 arrives.

NM showed considerable improvement following the long Holiday layoff and gave the Shelby Tigers a real scare on their home floor before falling to the Tigers 59-56. Juniors Ron Farmer and Fred Livingston each had 15 points for the losing Norsemen. Thirty fouls were called against NM with Farmer, Fred Livingston and Jerry Johnson all fouling out of the contest with two other Norse players receiving four fouls.

No longer would North Muskegon basketball teams have to play both Whitehall and Montague at the Whitehall Tannery. Whitehall was in their third season with their new gymnasium while Montague would begin its first season in what is still their current home court. NM would lose to Montague 61-49 to finally conclude their eight consecutive games on the road.

Although a home game, the game was played at Reeths Puffer, a high school that was two years removed from having their first graduating class. In the only game scheduled between NM and Scottville, the Spartans edged the Norsemen in a low-scoring game 41-38. NM led going into the fourth quarter, but Scottville went on a 10-0 run to begin the final quarter to build up a big enough margin to hold off the Norse.

A pair of proud schools, North Muskegon and Hart, who once dominated the basketball action in the WMC during the 40s and early 50s, met on the Reeths Puffer hardwood with only one win for the combined two schools, and that one win was against one another in an earlier Norse victory. NM made it two in a row and two wins on the season with a 53-33 victory over the Pirates. Hart shot a miserable 18% from the field and could not contain Pete Sheldon who netted 23 points for the Norse.

In what would prove to be the first of two games played during the season between the two clubs, Coopersville downed the Norse on their home court 69-49.

Whitehall showed the Norsemen why they won the WMC title this season with a 54-38 win over the Norsemen as Whitehall moved to a perfect 9-0 in conference competition. NM pulled to within a point of the Vikings in the third period but were outscored by the visitors 12-2 the rest of the quarter.

With a disappointing 2-10 record it would have been easy for NM to just go through the motions for the rest of the season. But that was not the case as the young NM team began to find their rhythm beginning with a 69-58 conquest of Shelby. NM had had three players score 20 or more points in the victory. Ron Farmer netted 21 while Jim Sibson and Pete Sheldon had 20 each to account for 61 of NM’s points in the win over the visiting Tigers.

The Norsemen were big underdogs when they entertained Fremont at the Reeths Puffer gym. The Packer boasted of a 10-4 record compared to NM’s lowly 3-10 record, but it was NM who posted a hard-earned 50-46 upset victory. Ron Farmer had an awesome game for NM with 16 points and controlled the backboards for the victorious Norsemen.

Talk about a turnaround! In the final game of the regular season NM put it all together in a 72-43 thrashing of Montague, a 41-point improvement from their earlier loss at Montague.

Could NM carry this momentum into the playoffs and win their first game in the post-season in 10 years? Mission accomplished! NM rolled to a big lead and then held off Sparta, a team that had eliminated NM the previous year to earn a 52-49 victory, their first playoff victory dating back to 1947. A once 13-point lead had slipped to a single point before Pete Sheldon’s two-pointer late in the game sewed up the win for NM.

The Norse would then play for their first district title in a decade against Coopersville, a team who defeated NM badly in their first meeting and who earned the trip to the final with an upset victory over tourney host Grand Haven in the semi-finals 68-45. The Broncos continued their fine play as the foul prone Norse defenders saw the winning Broncos earn 24 of their points at the free throw line. For this author, the game had a special meaning. Called up from the junior varsity team and with the Norsemen trailing by a bunch, I got the call from coach Morris to enter the game. My limited play in the game’s final moments didn’t even merit a number to get into the game’s box score but it was a lasting memory for this young sophomore.

N Muskegon 54 Ludington 81 Ron Farmer 17, Fred Livingston 12

N Muskegon 44 Reed City 77 Pete Sheldon 15, Jim Damm 7

N Muskegon 37 Hart 31 Farmer 11

N Muskegon 61 Musk Catholic 63 Sheldon 22, Jim Sibson 9

N Muskegon 51 Fremont 59 Sheldon 20, Farmer 13, Livingston 10

N Muskegon 39 Whitehall 45 Jerry Johnson & Sibson 10, Farmer 7

N Muskegon 56 Shelby 59 Farmer & Livingston 15, Sheldon 13

N Muskegon 49 Montague 61 Farmer 16, Sheldon 13, Johnson 10

N Muskegon 38 Scottville 41 Farmer 13, Sheldon 7

N Muskegon 53 Hart 33 Sheldon 23, Livingston 11, Farmer 10

N Muskegon 49 Coopersville 68 Sheldon & Farmer 12, Jim Pyle 9

N Muskegon 38 Whitehall 54 Livingston 12, Sheldon 10, Pyle 8

N Muskegon 69 Shelby 58 Farmer 21, Sibson & Sheldon 20

N Muskegon 50 Fremont 46 Farmer 16, Sheldon 9, Livingston 8

N Muskegon 72 Montague 43 Sheldon, 19, Farmer 15, Johnson 14

N Muskegon\*52 Sparta 49 Sheldon 18, Farmer 10, Sibson & Damm 8

N Muskegon\* 39 Coopersville 63 Johnson & Farmer 10

**1957-58 Coach Bob Morris (10-7 2nd in WMC – Reed City Champs)**

The Norsemen who played all their games away from their home in 1956-57, now had a gym of their own and it was christened on Dec 6, 1957. Ironically, their opponent was Reed City. Many decades have come and gone since that first game, and it was the only appearance on the new Northside gymnasium ever for the Reed City Coyotes. The former ‘bandbox’ gym, that was initially converted into a library held less than 500 fans while the new facility was built to host about 1200 rooters. The first game was nearly filled to capacity as NM got out of the blocks quickly to down Reed City in the first ever meeting between the two schools, 58-38. Your author (Jim Moyes) got off to a great start as he rifled in 19 points, all in the first half as NM cruised to a 59-38 victory in the first game played at the new gymnasium. Also in double figures was my running mate at guard Fred Livingston, who added 14 points in the win over the Coyotes. Starting center Ron Farmer, who can always boast that he scored the first basket in the sparkling new NM gym, suffered a knee injury shortly after his made basket and sat out the rest of the game. Although they were defeated by the Norse by 20 points, Reed City would go on to eventually win the WMC championship with an 8-2 record.

The second game wasn’t nearly as much fun. Ludington downed the Norse 51 to 37 as the Norse never did pose a threat to the Orioles.

What a difference a few years make with the NM vs. Hart rivalry. After Hart dominated the Norse for much of the 1940s & early 50s by winning 19 of 21 games, the Norse earned an overwhelming 72-41 win over the once mighty Pirates. NM had now turned the tables and won their fifth straight game over Hart. NM was hot at the free throw stripe as they converted on 25 of their 38 chances.

NM then rallied to defeat Muskegon Catholic 39-33 in a game much closer than the final score. For Catholic, who played mostly all Class A opponents and included Muskegon High one of their earlier wins, led much of the way before NM pulled away in the final quarter.

Following the holiday break NM entertained Whitehall on their sparkling new floor and came away with a hard-earned low scoring 39-33 win over the Vikings. Jerry Johnson, quarterback on the NM football team and shortstop for the NM baseball team, carried NM to victory as he tallied 21 points, more than half of the winning NM total.

The Norsemen in the third quarter were as cold as the below zero weather outside the packed NM gymnasium, as they were outscored 12-2 in the third period. That run proved to be the difference in Fremont’s 50-41 victory over the Norse.

The Norsemen then played their poorest game of the season in a 55-39 loss at the tight quarters of the Shelby band box gymnasium. The Norse played the game without the services of their two big men: 6’6 Ron Farmer and 6’4 Larry Powell, both out with knee injuries.

The Norse then bounced back from their debacle at Shelby to defeat Montague 56-43. Jim Moyes had 21 to lead the Norse in scoring but he had plenty of help from his teammates. Jim Pyle had 11 points, sophomore Tom Cousineau 8 while 6’2 jumping jack Sam Hughes, getting better with every game in his first year playing team basketball, added seven. Seeing their first action on the varsity level were juniors Tom Baker and a player who would become the first NM grad to be inducted into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame: Dave Taylor.

This author had heard stories about the unique configurations of the Scottville gymnasium but the NM game on January 1, 1958, was my first sighting of this unique facility. For me, it was not a pleasant experience. My first two shots from long range hit the ceiling that was only about 12 feet high. When I looked forlornly at coach Morris in exasperation he gave me some sound advice: “Just aim a little lower.” A couple of other unique features of this abominable facility was the placing of one basket at one end of the short playing surface, a backboard that was attached against the wall, leaving no room for a follow through on a layup shot. They also had a three-foot restraining line for in bounding the basketball that further restricted one’s ability to toss an inbounds pass to your teammate. If ever a team enjoyed a homecourt advantage over the years it was the Scottville Spartans. NM suffered their biggest blow of the season by losing to Scottville 54-31. Thankfully, it would be the last game the Norsemen would have to play in this awful facility. The only good news for this game was the return to action of NM’s starting center for the past two years, 6’6 senior Ron Farmer.

NM then went from playing their worse game to, in just the space of one week, perhaps play their best game as NM walloped the Hart Pirates 72-34. The game was the coming out party for Sam Hughes as the 6’2 jumping jack scored 17 points and controlled the backboards in the rout of the once mighty Pirates.

Hughes, the eventual 1958 state high jump champion was even better four days later when he scored 21 points to lead NM to a 57-46 victory over Coopersville. Due to a quirk in the schedule NM had to wait nearly two weeks before they would resume action in a game that could decide the WMC championship against Whitehall. Teams during this era that also played football were allowed to play only 15 games during the regular season as opposed to a more liberal 22 game schedule in 2024. The Norsemen were rusty after the long layoff and lost 48-39 to Whitehall to move into a first-place tie with NM in WMC standings. Although he only scored four points, Whitehall’s Gordy McLouth surely earned respect from this author as he stymied me all night long with his suffocating defense and I was only able to make a couple of lone field goals the entire evening.

After losing by 16 points earlier in the season at Shelby, the Norse found their home court much more accommodating as they buried the Shelby Tigers 70-46 in the rematch, a swing difference of 40 points!

Fremont hung on to record their second win over NM in the 1957-58 season with a 53-49 victory as a sellout crowd looked on.

NM closed out their regular season and settled for a tie for 2nd place with Whitehall in the WMC with a tight 48-46 win over Montague. Jerry Johnson dumped in a bucket with seconds remaining to provide the margin of victory.

The Norse would begin the tournament against a Zeeland team as heavy underdogs. To make matters worse, NM would face a Zeeland team that were not only undefeated champions in the Ken-New-Wa, sporting a 14-2 record with their only two losses coming at the hands of one of the top ranked teams in the state in Holland Christian, but the game was to be played on Zeeland’s home court. Before 1600 fans, most of them rooting for their home team of Zeeland, NM quickly silenced the crowd as the Norse once held a 16-point lead. Zeeland rallied to tie up the game at 58-58 when NM’s Sam Hughes intercepted a pass, raced the length of the floor, and scored on the layup to give the Norse the winning basket. The host Chix had a chance to tie up the game with just seconds remaining but were only able to make one of two free throws and NM posted one of their biggest upset victories in their program’s long history. Jim Moyes had 17 for the victors while Hughes had 14, including his winning basket.

Fame, however, was fleeing as NM was outclassed by a Holland Christian team many felt would go on to win the Class B title. The Maroons ended NM’s up and down season with a convincing 66-45 victory. It was a foul-marred contest, but NM could not take advantage of their free throws as they made only 19 of 38 attempts with Jim Moyes canning 11 of those 19 makes. Holland Christian’s season closed out when they were upset by the eventual state champs from East Lansing in the quarterfinals. The NM team of 1958 had a few players who would make waves in the local annals down the road. NM reserve player Dave Taylor would make his niche in football and would be the first NM alumnus to be inducted into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame. Jim Moyes would follow Taylor into the Hall of Fame in 2013 and as of this writing are the only two male NM graduates in the MASHOF. Hughes would watch his son Mark, a Reeths Puffer 1985 grad, lead the University of Michigan to the 1989 NCAA championship as team Captain of the Wolverines. Ron Farmer, as a proud grandfather, was thrilled to see his grandson Camden Thompson break all the scoring records for Whitehall by his junior season at Whitehall.

N Muskegon 58 Reed City 38 Jim Moyes 19, Fred Livingston 14

N Muskegon 37 Ludington 51 Jim Pyle, Moyes & Livingston 9 each

N Muskegon 72 Hart 41 Moyes 21, Jerry Johnson 13

N Muskegon 49 Musk Catholic 43 Moyes 14, Johnson 11, Livingston 8

N Muskegon 39 Whitehall 33 Johnson 21

N Muskegon 41 Fremont 50 Johnson 17, Moyes & Livingston 7

N Muskegon 39 Shelby 55 Johnson 9, Tom Cousineau and Pyle 7

N Muskegon 56 Montague 43 Moyes 21, Pyle 11

N Muskegon 31 Scottville 54 Livingston 8, Pyle & Ron Farmer 6

N Muskegon 72 Hart 34 Sam Hughes 17, Moyes 14, Farmer 12

N Muskegon 57 Coopersville 46 Hughes 21, Moyes 11, Pyle & Farmer 8

N Muskegon 39 Whitehall 48 Johnson 15, Livingston 11

N Muskegon 70 Shelby 46 Hughes 17, Farmer and Johnson 14

N Muskegon 49 Fremont 53 Hughes 14, Farmer 11

N Muskegon 48 Montague 46 Hughes 15, Farmer 12

N Muskegon\* 60 Zeeland 59 Moyes 17, Hughes 14, Farmer 12

N Muskegon\* 45 Holland Christ. 66 Hughes 16, Moyes 15

**1958-59 Coach Bob Morris (11-5 – NM WMC Champs)**

It took twenty long years, but North Muskegon finally won the WMC championship outright. However, from the euphoria of winning the title, there was utter despair when NM was ousted on their own home court in the most heartbreaking manner of all --- losing in sudden death. Two of their five defeats were in overtime that denied the 1950 Norsemen of compiling their schools best record in history up to that date. The 1958-59 Norsemen had two starters back from their productive season the previous season, Jim Moyes and Jerry Johnson, while junior Tom Cousineau also saw considerable action in 1957-58. Joining that trio was Tom Baker and future Muskegon Area Hall of Famer Dave Taylor. This fivesome would compile most of the minutes earned in this banner year. As a cub reporter for the Muskegon Chronicle, as well a member of the NMHS basketball squad, my beloved Muskegon Chronicle was on strike for the first three games of the season. NM took the long road to Reed City for the opener, and the Norse came away with a nice win over the defending WMC champs.

The Norse came oh so close to pulling off the first victory ever over Ludington. The Norse had a golden opportunity to pull off the upset with seconds left in regulation and the score tied. Jerry Johnson and Jim Moyes, who combined for 43 of NM’s total points were obvious Norsemen candidates to take the final shot. On a drive to the basket Moyes drew a crowd and passed to a teammate who was wide open but missed the layup and the game went into overtime where the Orioles won on a last second shot from 15 feet out in overtime.

There was no room for the faint of heart when the Norse edged Muskegon Catholic before a full house at the Crusader gymnasium. The Norse rallied in the final two minutes of the game to defeat the Crusader 57-54. One of the leading scorers in the game for MCC was no stranger to the Norsemen. This now very old Norseman always lamented on how good NM would have been in 1959 if star Catholic center Dennis Potuznik hadn’t left NM after his eighth-grade year. However, my former neighbor Potuznik, who lived a block from NM high school had no regrets, as it was while he was at MCC where he met his future bride Barb, a marriage that lasted well over a half century before Dennis’ passing in late 2023.

The Norse resumed action in 1959 following the Holiday break by handing a very good Fremont team their first defeat of the season 51-44 as Junior Tom Cousineau, a three-sport start for NMHS led NM with 15 points.

NM then limited Shelby to only 22 points in a decisive 57-22 victory over Shelby but had a much tougher time in edging Montague in the first of their two pivotal battles 42-41.

In a battle of the unbeatens in the WMC Whitehall moved into first place by handing the Norse their first, and what would prove to be their only loss with a 54-50 victory over NM. Three technical fouls were called against the Norse in a hotly contested contest with one of those fouls called against an upset NM fan who through an orange on the Whitehall court.

In a foul marred game at Coopersville, the Norsemen saw their lead dissipate as four Norse starters were on the bench having fouled out of the game. This was a complex time for the Norsemen as the floor at their second-year gymnasium had buckled, forcing the Norse to not only find another place to play but also to find a place to even practice.

After a long layoff NM resumed action by turning back Whitehall 57-42 in a game that was played before a sellout crowd at the Reeths Puffer gymnasium.

The win moved the Norse into a tie with the Vikings for first place in the WMC. Three days later NM returned to action to play a Monday game at Reeths Puffer against Scottville. The game was rescheduled from January 23 due to the NM floor buckling. After losing by more than 20 points the previous season at Scottville’s tiny gymnasium, NM reversed the score at the Reeths Puffer gym with a 63-37 blitz of the visiting Spartans.

NM kept their title hopes alive with their second straight win on the season at Shelby but stumbled before their big game with Montague by dropping a 62-50 decision at Fremont.

The stage was now set and a return to the repaired NM floor for the final game of the regular season against Montague. The game was sold out before the JV game even started and the fans would witness a good one. After Whitehall had lost their second game of the season it was winner take all for the WMC championship. NM had a seemingly comfortable lead of a dozen points heading into the final period, but Montague unleashed a valiant comeback only to fall two points short as NM won their first outright WMC title in 20 years 53-51. After the final horn had sounded signifying victory for the Norse, the players carried their beloved coach Bob Morris off the court on their shoulders.

Per luck of the draw, the opening game of the Class B district tournament held at the NM gymnasium pitted the winners of the WMC and the Ken-New-Wa conference, North Muskegon and Coopersville. The game was a classic and was decided in ‘sudden death’, the only such game in NM’s history. Coopersville forward Wendell Vanderploeg broke the hearts of the Norsemen by sinking a jump shot in the second overtime period which ended the game and NM’s season with Coopersville winning 58-56. Post-season honors saw both Jerry Johnson and Moyes making the top five on the WMC all-conference team while Moyes was selected to the Greater Muskegon team.

N Muskegon 53 Reed City 50 Jim Moyes 16

N Muskegon 60 Ludington (ot) 62 Jerry Johnson 23, Moyes 20

N Muskegon 53 Hart 21 Moyes 23

N Muskegon 57 Musk Catholic 54 Moyes 18, Tom Baker 14

N Muskegon 51 Fremont 44 Tom Cousineau, 15 Moyes 13, Baker 10

N Muskegon 57 Shelby 22 Johnson 16, Moyes 15

N Muskegon 42 Montague 41 Johnson 12, Tom Baker 9, Cousineau 9

N Muskegon 50 Whitehall 54 Dennis Hunter 14, 3 Norse with 10

N Muskegon 66 Hart 64 Johnson 21, Moyes 12

N Muskegon 43 Coopersville 54 Johnson 15, Moyes 12

N Muskegon 57 Whitehall 42 Cousineau 15, Johnson 12, Moyes 11

N Muskegon 63 Scottville 37 Johnson 25

N Muskegon 59 Shelby 44 Johnson 23, Moyes 16, Cousineau 10

N Muskegon 50 Fremont 62 Cousineau 16, Moyes 12

N Muskegon 53 Montague 51 Johnson 21, Moyes 12

N Muskegon\*56 Coopersville (2ot) 58 Johnson 24, Moyes 14

The WMC Champs of 1959: Coach Bob Morris

Bottom Row: The Starting Five: L-R, Tom Cousineau, Dave Taylor, Jerry Johnson, Jim Moyes, Tom Baker

Top Row: L-R, Fred Damm, Mike Whitney, Dick Wilson, Dennis Hunter, Ira Bank, Carl Rittman



**1959-60 Coach Bob Morris (7-9 – Whitehall WMC champs)**

The 1959-60 season was a transition year for NM athletics, and not just for basketball. The Norsemen were caught in a predicament where they kept their ties with their WMC opponents while also adding a few newcomers who would join them the following year in a brand-new conference that will be named The Seaway Conference. NM would start the basketball season minus four of their five starters from the NM champs from the previous season. Only 6’3 Tom Cousineau would return as a starter and many of those that would start in 1959-60 saw very little action from the previous season.

NM began the season on a winning note against a familiar foe in Scottville on the Northside court. Three players for NM reached double figures in the low scoring affair with Ira Bank leading the charge with 14 while three-year veteran Tom Cousineau controlled the boards and added 11 with Carl Rittman netting 10.

After being dominated by Hart for more than a decade with the Pirates winning 22 out of 24 games at one point, NM has reversed the rivalry as they made it nine straight vs. their WMC rivals with a 53-40 win over Hart.

In their third straight encounter against an WMC foe Montague rallied to defeat NM 46-42. The Norse took a big lead in the first quarter, but their star center Tom Cousineau picked up three quick first period fouls and sat much of the game as a spectator.

In the first meeting between two schools that until 1958 were one and the same, North Muskegon won the first matchup between the two neighboring schools.

The game wasn’t pretty, but it couldn’t have been closer as NM had to go into overtime to secure a 48-46 win over Reeths Puffer. Dave Johnson’s canned a 20-footer just before the final buzzer sounded in OT to give NM the first win in their series.

Dave Johnson again nearly was the hero in their next game that wasn’t decided until they reached another overtime session. With Whitehall leading 48-47 Johnson was fouled with one second remaining and stepped to the free throw. Johnson made the first to send the game into overtime but missed the second. The Vikings then handed NM a 54-50 loss in the extra session to end the 1959 calendar year.

A pair of long-time rivals, but never members of the same conference, NM and Fremont met again for the 45th meeting and it was NM who were the victors on the Packers home court 55-44. The following day after this game, principals of the new league, which would include both Fremont and NM, met to decide the name of the new conference.

NM then played the role of a spoiler as they handed Shelby their first defeat in the WMC with a 63-52 win over the visiting Tigers. A pair of underclassmen played big roles in the NM win. Sophomore Roger Shaffer had 13 points while freshman Steve Harpold had eight. Harpold, a polished freshman, unfortunately for NM followers transferred out of state with his family before he would begin his sophomore year. Balanced scoring was the key as Bank, Shaffer, Carl Rittman and Cousineau all scored 10 or more points in the victory.

Due to a quirk in the schedule the Norse were idle for the next two weeks. After composing a promising 5-2 record the Norse would only earn two more wins the remainder of the season. The Norse were rusty on their home court and lost to Hart on a buzzer beater by Dick Hasty. Just six seconds earlier Tom Cousineau’s tip in had tied the game and it looked like NM was headed to their third overtime game of the season before Hasty’s basket doomed the Norse. So frustrated was Norse scoring ace Ira Bank following the loss that he smashed his fist through a plate glass window in the locker room and had to go to the hospital for numerous stitches.

In the final game ever played up to this date between NM and Reed City (2025) NM went on the road to defeat Reed City 55-53. The series would conclude with NM holding a 3-1 edge in the very brief four-game series.

Muskegon Catholic then unleashed their frustration for having dropped five of their previous six games against NM with a dominating 52-24 victory over the Norse. Although he only scored three points, MCC ‘s Dennis Potuznik only had to walk one block to the Northside gym where he was squared off with his childhood buddy and NM neighbor Tom Cousineau. The Norse were stone cold during the game, and their low total of 24 points would be the fewest points scored by a NM team for nearly 40 years.

In what would prove to be their final win of the season, NM got 15 points from sophomore Roger Shaffer in a 46-40 road victory at Montague to split the season series with the Wildcats.

Talk about an even rivalry. Going into their next game with Whitehall each team had won 26 games in the 52 games played between the two rivals. Whitehall then took a one game lead in the tight series with a 61-55 win over the Norse. The victory also clinched the WMC title for the Vikings in their last year in the historic conference until their return from the Seaway in 1985. Carl Rittman had his best game in the losing cause before the sellout crowd at the Northside gym with 19 points.

Playing without their star center Tom Cousineau, who was out with the flu, NM battled but lost at the tiny confines of the Shelby gym 79-71.

NM then dropped their second game of the season to Fremont 47-42 as their shooting woes continued heading into the final game of the regular season against Reeths Puffer. The second game was a near carbon copy of the first meeting at Reeths Puffer that NM won in overtime. This game saw Reeths Puffer making a final last second bucket to nip NM 39-38. A long mid court heave by Ira Bank of NM swished through the nets but the shot was taken just a fraction after the final horn had sounded.

Once again it was Coopersville ending NM’s season with a 60-53 win over the Norse. The Broncos, with the districts once again held on the Norsemen’s home court, went on a 16-1 run to break up a close game.

N Muskegon 43 Scottville 33 Ira Bank 14, Tom Cousineau 11

N Muskegon 53 Hart 40 Bank 20, Mike Saunders 13, Cousineau 11

N Muskegon 42 Montague 46 Bank 13, Roger Shaffer 9, Dick Wilson 9

N Muskegon 48 Reeths Puffer (ot) 46 Bank 15, Cousineau 12, Shaffer 7

N Muskegon 50 Whitehall (ot) 54 Bank 15, Cousineau 13

N Muskegon 55 Fremont 44 Bank 19, Cousineau 11, Shaffer 8

N Muskegon 63 Shelby 52 Bank 14, Shaffer 12, Carl Rittman 12

N Muskegon 44 Hart 46 Bank 17, Cousineau 10

N Muskegon 55 Reed City 53 Bank 17, Cousineau & Rittman 12

N Muskegon 24 Musk Catholic 52 Cousineau 6

N Muskegon 46 Montague 40 Shaffer 15, Cousineau 10

N Muskegon 55 Whitehall 61 Rittman 19, Bank 9

N Muskegon 71 Shelby 79 Bank 22, Wilson 14, Steve Harpold 12

N Muskegon 42 Fremont 47 Shaffer 11, Bank 9

N Muskegon 38 Reeths Puffer 39 Bank 14, Cousineau 18

N Muskegon\*53 Coopersville 60 Bank 15, Rittman 14, Shaffer 13

**1960-61 Coach Bob Morris (9-9 – NM 4th -Coopersville Seaway champs)**

Only junior Roger Shaffer returned as a starter from the 1959-60 team as NM ventured for the first time into the recently established Seaway Conference. Fielding a very young team NM made a surprising run in the district tournament, winning a pair of games before losing in the district finals to Big Rapids. Three juniors, Shaffer, Dan Cooper and Tom Moyes would move into the starting lineup while sophomore Bob Hasper would eventually crash into the starting five.

The opener vs. West Michigan Christian was billed as the first ever meeting between the two local squads but evidently lost through the archives was the ‘matinee’ contest played before the NM student body back in 1954 won by the Warriors. WMC turned back the host Norse before a turn away crowd at the Northside gym 61-52.

Still keeping ties with their long-time WMC conference foe Montague, NM easily defeated the host Wildcats 73-37 as Roger Shaffer netted 28 points, a total only surpassed previously in NM annals by Walt Busker in 1954, Gordy Odell in 1955 and Dick Maples and Ken Bolema in 1956. Although they had played against one another 46 games in the past, the first game between NM and Fremont in December of 1960 would be the first played as conference members, and the first official basketball contest for the Norse in the neophyte Seaway conference. My how the Muskegon area loved basketball during this era! On the same date that a capacity crowd watched Fremont defeat the Norsemen 51-38, 1400 fans were also on hand at Muskegon Catholic where the Crusaders defeated their rivals from Grand Rapids Catholic. However, the big crowd was at the recently completed LC Walker Arena where 4200 fans were on hands for the first of two games played between Muskegon and Muskegon Heights. The rematch between the two local rivals drew even 5100 fans.

A rivalry that began back in the 1930s, and one game played in 1945, was resumed when NM hosted Ravenna at the NM gym. 6’5 Sophomore Bob Hasper was inserted into the starting lineup for the first time and responded with a team high 14 points to lead NM to a resounding 62-27 romp over the visiting Bulldogs.

Although NM had moved into the Seaway, it would have been an injustice to not have Hart on their schedule. NM defeated the visiting Pirates 63-48 as four Norsemen scored in double figures. An undefeated Whitehall team pasted the Norse 74-65 in the first game played between two long-time WMC foes in the new Seaway Conference.

NM evened their Seaway record at 2-2 with a 64-47 win over Reeths Puffer as Roger Shaffer and Bob Hasper combined for 38 points to lead the victors.

Playing at a new gymnasium, a far cry from the old tile floor facility, did not help the Norse as they were overwhelmed by Coopersville 56-35.

Muskegon Catholic then closed the gap in the short series between MCC and NM by downing the Norsemen 65-49 in front of a large crowd on hand at MCC.

The Norse were no match for Fremont, co-leaders at the time in the Seaway, as they fell 56-36 to the Packers before NM would go on a modest winning streak.

NM, after relying mostly on offensive output from their front line of 6’5, Bob Hasper, 6’4 Roger Shaffer, and 6’3 Dan Cooper, received a big shot in the arm from their backcourt in their 73-38 blitz against Montague at the Northside gym. 5’4 Tommy Moyes, who sat out much of the first part of the season, led all NM scorers with 13 points while his backcourt mate Bill Shackelford added 11.

NM then traveled to Ravenna for the first time since the 1930s and came away with a 58-46 victory over a Ravenna team that was looking for their first victory of the entire season.

Trailing by 12 points heading into the final period NM put on a furious rally to upset Whitehall 51-49 in front of another packed house at the Northside gym. Steals by Tommy Moyes led to some easy layup baskets in the final period with a Roger Shaffer layup after a Moyes steal gave the Norsemen the game winning bucket.

The three-game winning streak came to a screeching halt when Reeths Puffer reversed the score from their earlier loss to NM with a 64-48 thrashing of the Norsemen on the Rockets home court.

NM nearly pulled off a stunner in their final game of the regular portion of the 1960-61 season but game up a couple points shy in a 48-47 loss to the Seaway champs from Coopersville. The Broncos John Johnson was a one-man wrecking crew for Coopersville as he scored 32 of his team’s 48 points. Although they lost, the junior dominated Norse showed they could stir up some trouble for their opponents in the upcoming district tournament.

The districts were held at the new Fremont gymnasium, and the Norse were looking to post an upset over a Fremont team that handled them easily in a pair of regular season contests. The Norse pulled off a shocker and nipped the Packers in overtime 65-64 as four NM players were in double figures, all underclassmen: Shaffer (18), Cooper (14), Hasper (13), and Moyes (11).

An even more daunting task then faced NM as they would next march up for the first time in NM history with Lakeview who had yet to taste defeat during the entire season. Boasting of a perfect 16-0 record Lakeview was stunned by the Norsemen 63-60. NM’s leading scorer for the entire season, Roger Shaffer, had but three points for the entire game. However, all three of his points game on free throws that tied up the game at 60-60. Tommy Moyes then hit a free throw with 38 seconds left that proved to be the winning point as Lakeview was unable to answer in the game’s dying moments. Sophomore Bob ‘Moose’ Hasper tallied a career high 33 points to lead the Norse. Earlier in the week it was announced that WOOD-TV in Grand Rapids would televise all state championship games, the first year for television of this traditional event in state history. After two emotional wins in the district tournament, the bubble burst for NM as they were soundly defeated by Big Rapids 65-39 to leave NM with an overall .500 record at 9-9. With their four top scorers returning the following season the Norsemen were very optimistic for the future.

N Muskegon 61 West MI Christ. 52 Dan Cooper 15, Roger Shaffer 8

N Muskegon 73 Montague 37 Shaffer 28, Bill Sheldon 11

N Muskegon 38 Fremont 51 Shaffer 18, Cooper 13

N Muskegon 62 Ravenna 27 Bob Hasper 14, Shaffer 12, Cooper 8

N Muskegon 63 Hart 48 Hasper 16, Shaffer 14, Mike Saunders 12

N Muskegon 65 Whitehall 74 Hasper 23, Shaffer 13, Cooper 11

N Muskegon 64 Reeths Puffer 47 Shaffer 20, Hasper 18, Cooper 13

N Muskegon 35 Coopersville 56 Hasper, Shaffer 7, Tom Moyes 5

N Muskegon 49 Musk Catholic 65 Shaffer 15, Cooper 10

N Muskegon 36 Fremont 56 Hasper 15, Shaffer 13 m

N Muskegon 73 Montague 38 Moyes 13, Shackelford 11, 4 with 8

N Muskegon 58 Ravenna 46 Hasper & Shaffer 17

N Muskegon 51 Whitehall 49 Shackelford 16, Shaffer 14

N Muskegon 48 Reeths Puffer 64 Dick Bultman 10, Shaffer & Cooper 8

N Muskegon 47 Coopersville 48 Shaffer 15, Hasper 10, Cooper 9

N Muskegon\*65 Fremont (ot) 64 Shaffer18, Cooper 14, Hasper 13, Moyes 11

N Muskegon\*63 Lakeview 60 Hasper 33, Cooper 14

N Muskegon\*39 Big Rapids 65 Hasper 17, Cooper 8

**1961-62 Coach Bob Morris (14-5 – Seaway & District champs)**

With four starters returning from the 1960-61 team that upset unbeaten Lakeview in the districts, expectations were high for veteran Coach Bob Morris and Norse followers. NM would field one of their tallest teams in school history with 6’6 junior Bob Hasper, 6’4 senior Roger Shaffer, and 6’3 Dan Cooper on the front line. The other returning starter was 5’4 Tom Moyes while 5’8 junior Rick Schanhals and 6’3 senior Harry Overhuel were slated to also see a lot of action.

Despite lofty expectations, the Norse didn’t look like a team that would have a good season as they were shelled by West Michigan Christian 73-50. With WMC not fielding a football team, Elmer Walcott’s Warriors had many more practice sessions to shake off any early season rust. A transfer student from Grand Rapids Christian, Rick Duistermars, led the way for a Warriors convincing 73-50 victory by pouring in 30 points. Bob Hasper had 15 for the Norse who played without starting forward Dan Cooper.

NM bounced back to defeat their longest rival Montague 57-52 with Roger Shaffer netting 18. Coach Morris was pleased to have Dan Cooper back in the lineup as the 6’3 junior was also in double figures with 11.

Cooper played even better in NM’s opening game in the Seaway Conference as the former well known used car dealer netted 22 points as NM snapped a five-game losing streak to Coopersville with a 49-40 victory.

Cooper, according to the NM reporter for the game Roger Rappoport, currently a well-known author, hit a 30-footer with 20 seconds remaining to give the Norse the lead in the 43-29 NM victory over rival Fremont. Sophomore Mike Baldwin then calmly canned two free throws in the closing seconds to insure a NM victory.

It was then off for the holidays for the Norsemen as they would go three weeks before returning to the hardwoods to play a long time WMC foe in Hart. After losing nine of their last ten games to the Norse, Hart pulled off an upset over the rusty Norse with a 55-46 win at the Hart gymnasium. It would be the last game on the old Pirate floor as Hart would christen their new gymnasium in February. NM led 29-22 at halftime but a disastrous 3rd quarter doomed the Norse.

Ravenna was as cold as the January weather as the Muskegon area had undergone a 14-inch snowfall earlier in the week. The host Bulldogs scored only one field goal in the first half as NM routed Ravenna 53-26.

With the temperature outside the NM gymnasium hovering at -15 degrees, it was much warmer inside as the Norse nearly pulled off an upset over West Michigan Christian. Behind 27 game leading points by Shaffer, NM led 51-45 at the end of the 3rd period against a Warrior team that would go on to win the Class C state championship in March. The rematch with WMC was a far cry from the season opener when the Class C state champs blew out NM by 27. One of the starters for WMC who scored eight points against NM was Eddie Douma. A future inductee into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame, Douma would go on to have a great coaching career at Calvin College and Hillsdale.

NM then made it four wins in a row in Seaway Conference play with a narrow 57-53 victory over Whitehall before a packed house in NM. Future long time Muskegon County Sheriff Bob Carter had 14 points in a losing cause for the Vikings. NM scored the final four points of the game after the score was knotted at 55-55 on a field goal by Shaffer and a pair of free throws by Rick Schanhals.

In a game plagued with numerous fouls, the Norse dropped an ugly game at Reeths Puffer 45-39 to fall back into a tie at the top of the heap in the Seaway standings with Fremont, each with a 4-1 record. NM starters Shaffer, Cooper and Moyes all fouled out of the contest.

Roger Shaffer and Bob Hasper combined for 50 points as NM won their fifth game in nine starts against Muskegon Catholic. NM got off to a great start against MCC and were never threatened by the visiting Crusaders. NM led by as many as 17 points at 55-38 before the Crusaders made a late surge. Shaffer finished with a game 29 points with Hasper adding 19 and Tom Moyes 8.

NM kept pace with Fremont for the top spot in the Seaway as they snapped a five-game losing streak to Coopersville in their 57-71 road win over the Broncos. The Norse big front line of Shaffer (18), Cooper (13) and Hasper (12) took command with a big fourth quarter run after the teams were in a tight 36-34 battle entering the final quarter.

The Norse were than matched up for the second time of the season against their long-time rivals from Montague in a battle between the leaders of their respective conferences. NM had to rally from an eight-point deficit in the game’s final minutes to pull off a 61-57 victory. It wasn’t until Dan Cooper hit a field goal with two-minutes remaining did the Norse take the lead for good.

In a pivotal game matching the league co-leaders in the Seaway Conference, NM took over first place with a 58-50 win over the Packers on the Fremont home court. Shaffer and Hasper provided the 1-2 punch for the Norse as Shaffer had 19 and Hasper 16 points.

NM had little problems in disposing of Ravenna 78-44 in their second meeting of the season. Veteran coach Bob Morris was able to substitute freely throughout the contest with Shaffer scoring 24 points before heading to the bench in the second half.

NM then clinched the Seaway Conference title with a dramatic 63-62 win over Whitehall, coupled with a Fremont loss. With Whitehall trailing NM 59-58, Tommy Moyes hit a couple of clutch free throws followed by a Roger Shaffer basket that gave NM the points needed to hold off a late Whitehall rally. Harry Overhuel had a career high 18 points to lead the Norse attack.

NM then avenged their lone setback on the season with yet another one-point victory over Reeths Puffer. A full house was on hand for the final home game of the 1961-62 season as the Norse ended the season with a 9-1 record and their lone championship as a member of the Seaway Conference. John Siscoe gave RP a late lead, but NM’s Tommy Moyes knocked down the winning field goal, the only field goal made in the game by the NM playmaker to make the final score read NM 51 Reeths Puffer 50. Sophomore Mike Baldwin had a season high 11 points and chipped with several rebounds to give NM a boost.

NM began tournament play by playing the host Fremont Packers in a game that was predicted to be a close encounter. That was not the case as NM easily defeated the Packers 54-36 to advance to the district finals. NM led at the end of the first quarter by only 13-11 but that was as close as Fremont would get to the Norsemen as NM made it a perfect 3-0 on the season against their rivals from yesteryear. Coach Morris was able to empty his bench as eight Norsemen broke into the scoring column led by Roger Shaffer’s modest 13 points, followed by Dan Cooper with 12. The Norse victory set up a rematch of last season’s district finals between NM and Big Rapids.

The Norse would go into the game with Big Rapids as decided underdogs, with Big Rapids perhaps still gloating over a lopsided 26-point victory over NM to end the Norsemen’s 1960-61 season. However, NM pulled off the stunner as reserve Rick Schanhals had the game of his life to power the Norse to victory. Schanhals came off the bench and scored 16 points, with eight of his tallies coming in the early part of the final quarter to bring the Norse roaring back after trailing 43-34 entering the final eight minutes of action. With the game tied at 53-53 and the capacity crowd of 2,000 fans on their feet screaming, Shaffer, who led all scorers with 19 points, hit one free throw and Schanhals a pair to give NM the victory and the district championship. The joyous NM players hoisted Schanhals on their shoulder and carried Rick, and the district trophy back to the NM locker room. It also would be the last game played to date between North Muskegon and Big Rapids.

In the only game NM played in more than 90 years at Central Michigan University, the Norse saw their season come to an end in the most heartless of ways, losing to Alma in overtime 56-53. It appeared NM was headed to victory in overtime after Tom Moyes hit two clutch free throws with, but 12 seconds left to give NM a 51-50 lead. However, Alma’s Dave Johnson, who tormented the Norse all night with 30 points, took the inbounds pass after the Moyes made free throws and raced down the floor only to be fouled. Johnson made one of two free throws to send the game into overtime. NM lost Dan Cooper and Roger Shaffer to foul trouble and were only able to score but two points in the overtime session to end their season.

Coach Bob Morris made the comment to NM reporter Roger Rappoport that in his 13 years of coaching, this was his best team. NM closed out the season by winning nine games in a row before the overtime loss to Alma, the only meeting between the two schools in program history. The 1961-62 Norsemen finished with a 14-5 season and winners of the Class B Seaway Conference. So strong was this team that four players made the All-Conference Seaway first unit of the 10 players selected: Tom Moyes, Roger Shaffer, Dan Cooper, and Bob Hasper.

Sadly, many of these NM players would pass away way too soon. Co-Captains Roger Shaffer and Tom Moyes would not make it to 30 years, nor would reserve forward Mike Baldwin. Starters Bob Hasper and Dan Cooper are no longer with us. Reserves Jim Nielsen, Charley Yonkers and Bob Halmond also have passed on leaving only three players on this great NM team still with us as of this writing in 2024.

N Muskegon 50 West MI Christ. 73 Bob Hasper 15, Roger Schaffer 11,

N Muskegon 57 Montague 42 Shaffer 18, Dan Cooper 11, Hasper 9

N Muskegon 49 Coopersville 40 Cooper 22, Shafer 12, Hasper 7

N Muskegon 43 Fremont 39 Shaffer 15, Cooper 12

N Muskegon 46 Hart 55 Shafer 16, Tom Moyes 10

N Muskegon 53 Ravenna 26 Shaffer 12

N Muskegon 63 West MI Christ. 67 Shaffer 27, Cooper 13, Moyes 10

N Muskegon 57 Whitehall 53 Shaffer 18, Hasper, 16, Cooper 9, Moyes 8

N Muskegon 39 Reeths Puffer 45 Shaffer, 15, Hasper 9

N Muskegon 69 Musk Catholic 60 Shaffer 29, Hasper 21, Moyes 8

N Muskegon 57 Coopersville 41 Shaffer 18, Cooper 13, Hasper 12

N Muskegon 58 Fremont 50 Shaffer 19, Hasper 16

N Muskegon 61 Montague 57 Hasper 18, Cooper 14, Shaffer 10

N Muskegon 78 Ravenna 44 Shaffer 24, Hasper 12, Cooper 10

N Muskegon 63 Whitehall 62 Cooper 18, Harry Overhuel 14, Moyes & Shaffer 11

N Muskegon 51 Reeths Puffer 50 Shaffer 14, Mike Baldwin 11

N Muskegon\* 54 Fremont 36 Shaffer 13, Cooper 12

N Muskegon\* 56 Big Rapids 53 Shaffer 19, Rick Schanhals 16

N Muskegon\* 53 Alma (ot) 56 Cooper 19, Baldwin 10. Hasper 10

**1962-63 Coach Bob Morris (13-6 –District champs, Whitehall Seaway Champs)**

With the loss of three of their starters from the previous season the prospects for another highly successful season for the Norsemen didn’t appear all that promising for the upcoming season. However, the Norsemen would once again be district champions with convincing victories over upstart Mona Shores and Reeths Puffer to bring home their second straight district championship trophy. Bob Hasper, a three-year starter as a center would be the leading scorer for the Norse while Harry Overhuel and Rick Schanhals, both of whom played huge roles in 1961-62 would return. Mike Baldwin, who had several good games for NM would earn a spot in the starting lineup with veteran coach Bob Morris welcoming Don Nielsen back as another senior who earned a lot of playing time in ’62.’ Adding considerable height to the NM lineup was 6’4 Craig ‘Stretch’ Cunningham, who showed considerable improvement during the offseason. With sophomore Dean Rosenberg and Tom Thiele added to the roster, the Norse would field a team with considerable depth.

If one could look back in hindsight, one could clearly see it was not a good idea to schedule West Michigan Christian for your home opener. Unfortunately, that was the case for NM for not only the 1962-63 season, but for five seasons in a row the Warrior would be NM’s opening opponent. Coming off a season where WMC would win the Class C state championship and have the luxury with not fielding a football team and having many more practice sessions than the Norsemen, WMC would hand NM a loss to begin the season 54-45. It was too much of the Duistermar brothers who combined to score 40 of the Warriors 54 points as many fans were turned away at the door at the sold-out NM gymnasium. The game was much closer than the 1961-62 opener as NM trailed 21-20 at the halftime break. WMC pulled away in the second for the win as NM was led by 6’6 senior center Bob Hasper with 19 points and Mike Baldwin with 14.

NM then made the short jaunt to Montague a successful journey as they rallied to edge the Wildcats 50-47. NM trailed early in the fourth quarter before Mike Baldwin scored seven straight points in the game’s final two minutes to turn the game in favor of the Norse.

It wasn’t pretty but NM prevailed 50-37 to earn their first, of what would prove to be a three-game sweep over Reeths Puffer.

NM, in a quest to defend their Seaway Conference Championship, made it two in a row against Seaway foes with a 55-35 win over Coopersville. Coach Bob Morris was able to empty his bench in NM’s 20-point victory over an outmanned Coopersville five. Bob Hasper and Mike Baldwin each scored a dozen points for NM while Rick Schanhals was in double figures with 10. Eight Norse players scored in the contest, including sophomore Dean Rosenberg who scored six.

After losing to NM in nine of their last ten games, Hart downed the Norse for the second year in a row with a 58-47 win over NM. Once again NM was rusty following a three-week holiday break without a game in falling to the Pirates.

The Norse incurred a bad break over the layoff as it was discovered Mike Baldwin had suffered a broken bone in his right arm that forced the Norse star to play with a cast that hampered his shooting. Baldwin did play against the Pirates but could only score two points. Bob Hasper again paced the losing Norse with 19 points, but no other Norseman was able to reach double figures. One positive sign for the Norse was the continued improved play from Craig Cunningham who helped NM on the boards and scored nine points in the losing cause.

There was a newcomer to NM schedule and a new four-year school when NM played Orchard View for the first time in school history. The Cardinals threw a scare into the Norse before big Bob Hasper took over in the tight final quarter as NM pulled away to a 51-46 victory. Hasper pumped in 22 game high points for the victors while Rick Schanhals added 11.

The one-two combo of Hasper and Schanhals kept NM undefeated in the Seaway following a low scoring 46-38 win over Fremont on the Northside court. The NM due accounted for 35 of NM’s 51 points as NM improved to 4-0 in Seaway Conference action.

NM then set up a battle of the unbeatens in the Seaway with a sloppy 57-49 win over Ravenna. With NM and Whitehall both boasting of perfect records in the conference, the winner of the big showdown battle would take a huge edge in taking the crown. Bob Hasper again paced NM in their win over the Bulldogs with 21 points while Harry Overhuel and Rick Schanhals had ten points and Dean Rosenberg eight.

Whitehall then showed NM why they are not only undefeated in the Seaway but overall as they made the Norse their ninth straight victim of the season with an easy 70-48 victory over NM. Only Bob Hasper was able to solve the Viking’s defense with 15 points. One piece of good news in the loss was the return of Mike Baldwin, out with an injury since December.

The Norse were still mired in a mild slump following their second loss in a row, a 62-45 loss to Muskegon Catholic.

NM found their winning edge with a 64-49 win over Reeths Puffer as the NM trio of Hasper, Schanhals and Overhuel scored 53 of NM’s points. The win over the Rockets would turn the tide on the season as NM would go on a nice run of winning seven of their next eight games.

Montague trailing 45-44 with less than a minute remaining, had a chance to take the lead but lost possession of the ball and NM held on to outlast Montague 45-44 to earn their second close win against their longest rival. The difference in the game was a pair of Rick Schanhals free throws to give NM their final score of 45. Hasper was once again the big gun for the Norse with 22 game leading points.

Hasper then converted on 12 of his 16 attempted shots good for 24 points as NM breezed to a 60-43 win over Coopersville.

NM then needed a 35-foot shot in the game’s final seconds to send the game into overtime before the Norse would survive a 63-57 win over Fremont in overtime. For the first-time all-season Bob Hasper was not the leading scorer for the Norse. Instead, it was Rick Schanhals who led NM in scoring with 24 points, with 10 of his points coming in overtime. Backup center Craig ‘Stretch’ Cunningham, a vastly improved big man had 16 points while Hasper was held to nine.

Craig Cunningham’s improved play of late had led him into a starting role for NM and the 6’4 senior had 15 points to help lead the Norse to a convincing 70-58 rout of Ravenna. Cunningham’s 15 points trailed Bob Hasper’s 20 markers and Mike Baldwin’s 17 as the win set up NM’s chance for a possible tie in the Seaway in their final game of the regular season with undefeated Whitehall. NM lost to Whitehall but the second matchup with the Vikings was a lot closer than their 22-point defeat from earlier in the season. NM lost 53-45 as Whitehall completed their regular season undefeated at a perfect 16-0. It was quite a season in Viking lore as their football team also posted an undefeated season. Bob Hasper was the only Norsemen in double figures with 12 points.

NM began their tournament play against a very young Mona Shores team that would be playing in their first post season MHSAA tournament game. Still two years away from a four-year school the Sailors oldest players were but sophomores and were no match against the experienced Norse, especially 6’6 senior center Bob Hasper as ‘Moose’ equaled his career high with 33 points in NM’s 68-47 rout of the Sailors. Playing their best basketball of the season and playing in their first pair of games at the LC Walker Arena, the Norse had four players in double figures as NM overwhelmed Reeths Puffer78-39 to claim their second straight district title in NM history. Bob Hasper with 19, Craig Cunningham 12, Dean Rosenberg 11, and Rick Schanhals with 10 led the balanced NM attack. The two schools would have to wait forty years before they would meet once again.

Last season the Norsemen played their only game in history at CMU’s fieldhouse. This 1962-63 season saw NM playing their only game in school history at Western Michigan’s fieldhouse. The Norse were heavy underdogs against the second rated team in the state, Hudsonville Unity Christian who entered the game with NM with a sparkling 20-1 record. The Norse came close to pulling off the huge upset but foul trouble in the game’s final quarter threw a roadblock into the Norse chances for the upset. NM and Hudsonville had seen the game tied 15 times before NM’s Mike Baldwin, who was a force on the backboards and Harry Overhuel fouled out. NM had stunned the large crowd on hand at WMU by taking a 34-33 lead at the half. For the game NM had more field goals than Hudsonville but the winners had a decided edge at the free throw line. Bob Hasper ended his outstanding NM career with 22 points, with Stretch Cunningham adding 16 and Rick Schanhals ending his career with 10. Hudsonville would go to finish in the game’s state final contest before losing to perennial Class B champions River Rouge.

N Muskegon 45 West MI Chr. 54 Bob Hasper 19, Mike Baldwin 14

N Muskegon 50 Montague 47 Hasper 20, Baldwin 11

N Muskegon 50 Reeths Puffer 37 Hasper 10, Baldwin 11 rebounds.

N Muskegon 55 Coopersville 35 Hasper & Baldwin 12, Rick Schanhals 10

N Muskegon 47 Hart 58 Hasper 19,

N Muskegon 51 Orchard View 46 Hasper 22, Schanhals 11

N Muskegon 46 Fremont 38 Hasper 21, Schanhals 14

N Muskegon 57 Ravenna 49 Hasper 21, Harry Overhuel & Schanhals 10

N Muskegon 48 Whitehall 70 Hasper 15, Baldwin returns from injury

N Muskegon 45 Musk Catholic 62 Hasper 13, Schanhals 10

N Muskegon 64 Reeths Puffer 49 Hasper 20, Overhuel 17, Schanhals 16

N Muskegon 45 Montague 44 Hasper 22, Dean Rosenberg 7

N Muskegon 60 Coopersville 43 Hasper 24, Baldwin 10

N Muskegon 63 Fremont (ot) 57 Schanhals 24 points, C. Cunningham 16

N Muskegon 78 Ravenna 58 Hasper 20, Baldwin 17, Cunningham 15

N Muskegon 45 Whitehall 53 Hasper 12, Cunningham, & Overhuel 9

N Muskegon\* 68 Mona Shores 47 Hasper 33, Cunningham 10

N Muskegon\* 78 Reeths Puffer 39 Hasper 18, Cunningham 12, Rosenberg 11

N Muskegon \* 63 Hudsonville Un. 73 Hasper 22, Cunningham 16, Schanhals 10

**1963-64 Coach Bob Morris (12-5–Whitehall Seaway Champs)**

The 1963-64 season would again see the Norsemen have a very good season, winning 12 games while dropping but five contests. It would be the 16th and final season for NM’s popular coach Bob Morris who would give up his successful coaching job to continue at NMHS as a teacher and athletic director. Not a great deal was expected for his final season with only Mike Baldwin returning as a starter. Baldwin, listed at ‘maybe’ 6’1 would be the tallest starter on an NM team that would field its smallest team in recent memory. Not only were the Norse short on height, but also short on experience as Baldwin would be the only senior. Somehow, the veteran Morris would squeeze every bit of talent out of this team to produce an outstanding record in his swan song at his beloved NMHS. Junior Dean Rosenberg, who saw plenty of playing time in his sophomore season would be a part of a NM team that would basically play with a four-guard offense. Tom Thiele saw action as a sophomore while Don Johnson, the leading scorer from the 1962-63 JV team would be a pleasant surprise for Norse fans.

Again, NM would open their season with a perennial powerhouse as their opponent, the Warriors of West Michigan Christian, a team that played for a state championship in three of their last six years, winning it all in 1958 and 1962. To compound the NM task the game was at WMC. However, Coach Morris’s scrappy Norsemen were up to the task and captured their first win over the Warriors in six meetings with a narrow 47-45 victory. With the score knotted at 45-45 Tom Thiele’s had a nifty block of a Warriors shot that gave the ball back to the Norse in the game’s final minute. Seconds later Dean Rosenberg was fouled and calmly made both free throws that proved to be the game winner. Rosenberg led Norse scorers with 15 points while Mike Baldwin added 12 and Don Johnson ten and for the first time in five seasons NM would open their schedule with a victory.

No longer a pushover in their brief tenure in the Seaway Conference, Ravenna threw a scare into the Norse in game number two on the season before falling to NM 57-54. So tight was this game that NM never took the lead for good until Don Johnson’s field goal with but 1:02 showing on the clock. Tom Thiele and Dean Rosenberg each had 15 points for NM with Johnson tossing in 10 markers and Mike Baldwin nine.

With a starting lineup without a player as tall as 6’2, it was imperative if this NM team was going to be a winner, then they would need some accurate shooters from out court. NM did indeed get that necessary out court shooting led by Don Johnson’s 23 points as NM defeated Montague 67-58. NM also was accurate from the free throw line by meshing 25 free throws in 31 attempts, nine of the charity tossed coming from Mike Baldwin. Baldwin would finish with 15 points and Dean Rosenberg added 14 as NM improved to a perfect 3-0.

Foul trouble and a pesky full court pressing Orchard View defense led to the Norse losing their first game of the season to the Cardinals 54-41. Tom Thiele and Dean Rosenberg were the only Norse in double figures as they each scored 14 points in the loss, the second ever meeting between the two local schools.

NM bounced back to win their seventh straight game against Fremont with a 57-47 victory. It was Tom Thiele who had the hot hand for the Norse by tallying 22 points to improve NM’s record to 4-1 on the young season. Don Johnson added 15 while Dean Rosenberg was also in double figures with 10.

Even playing without starting guard Don Johnson the Norse were able to put together one of their best showings of the season with a dominating 70-39 road win over Coopersville. With Johnson out with the flu bug coach Morris gave John Pattenger the start and the star on the NM baseball team delivered by pulling down several rebounds and chipping in with eight points. The 31-point margin would be the most lopsided victory in the 31 meetings between the two schools.

Instead of a three-week break over the Holidays, NM returned to the court in but two weeks as they would again face the Hart Pirates in the first game of the new 1964 year. NM held the cold shooting Pirates to one first half field goal enroute to a 68-24 thrashing of the Hart Pirates, ending a brief two-game losing streak to their long-time foe. Steve Peterson became the fifth player in NM’s first seven games as the team’s leading scorer as he pumped in a team high 19 points. Rosenberg had 11 while 11 Norsemen scored in the rout including seven points scored by future Navy Admiral John Hutson. It was not a good season for the Hart Pirates who had produced many outstanding teams in the past. That was not the case in 1963-64 as the Pirates failed to win a single game.

NM improved 4-1 in Seaway Conference play and 7-2 overall as they defeated Reeths Puffer and their head coach Bruce Benson 63-56. Benson had previously coached many of the NM players where he served as the NM JV basketball coach and head baseball coach before making the move to RP. Don Johnson led four Norsemen who scored in double figures with 19, with Tom Thiele, Dean Rosenberg and Mike Baldwin all scoring 13.

Once again, the gym at Whitehall proved to be a tough place to earn a Norsemen win over the years as Whitehall handed NM their second defeat in Seaway Conference play with a 75-62 victory. The NM cause wasn’t helped when three Norse players fouled out of the contest with Tom Theile exiting the contest before the end of three periods. NM had outshot the Vikings 27-22 from the field by it was at the free throw line where Whitehall prevailed, netting 31 free throws to the Norsemen’s slim total of eight. Don Johnson with his deadly out court shooting kept NM close with his game leading 25 points. Steve Peterson netted 16 but no other NM player scored more than six points as Whitehall took a firm grip of first place in the Seaway.

NM quickly righted the ship and would win their next five games to insure a successful season. After hanging on to just nip Ravenna in their first contest, the Norse found the Ravenna gym more friendly as they had little trouble in handing the Bulldogs a 62-47 loss in their second go around. Dean Rosenberg, recovering from an injured hand, regained his shooting eye and led NM with 19 points while his backcourt mate Don Johnson flipped in 14.

After losing earlier in the season to Orchard View by 13 points, coupled with OV pulling off a stunning upset over unbeaten Whitehall a week earlier, chances didn’t appear bright for a NM victory. However, the Norse pulled off the stunner over a cold shooting OV team that connected on only 21 of 80 attempts. Mike Baldwin had a monster game for the Norse, especially in rebounding as he was credited with 23 rebounds to go along with 14 points. Tom Theile had 16 points and Don Johnson 15, but it took a pair of free throws from Dean Rosenberg in the game’s final moments to ice the victory. With the win NM again had hopes for a tie for first in the Seaway as they were only one game behind league-leading Whitehall who stood in first place with a 7-1 record.

The Norse continued their domination in the 1960s with Montague as they defeated the Wildcats 64-41, a far cry from their first game in early December when NM won by only three points. Don Johnson garnered 19 points for NM while Dean Rosenberg pitched in with 13 and Mike Baldwin again controlled the boards as NM was never threatened after the first quarter.

NM would then win their fourth straight, and ninth in a row over Fremont. After the Fremont JVs destroyed the Little Norse 86-42 in the preliminary, it was clear that the nine-game winning streak was about to end. The game was close throughout the second half as the teams were deadlocked at 40-all heading into the final quarter before the NM trio of Johnson-Rosenberg-Baldwin took control. NM edged the Packers by one slim point 54-53.

It was parent’s night at NMHS as NM had to come from as many as 10 points behind before finally catching and then passing the Coopersville Broncos to earn their fifth straight victory 63-59. John Pattinger was inserted into the starting lineup, and he responded with 11 points, many of those coming in NM’s 3rd quarter rally. Dean Rosenberg led the NM scorers with 17 with Don Johnson adding 14.

The season didn’t end well as NM went from a 12-2 record to finish at 12-5.

NM enjoyed a five-point lead at 52-47 with four minutes left in the game but failed to score again as Reeths Puffer won 53-52. NM had a chance to tie and perhaps win the game but a free throw with just three seconds on the clock missed and NM’s chances to force a tie with a win in the final game of the regular season with Whitehall was now a moot point. Don Johnson with 19 points was the only NM player in double figures. Tom Theile with nine, while Steve Peterson and Mike Baldwin with eight were close.

Whitehall repeated as Seaway Conference champs and improved their regular season record to 14-1 after downing NM 75-60. The Norse once trailed by as many as 18 but got as close to six in the final stanza before the Vikings pulled away. Whitehall would lose but only one contest, an early season loss to Orchard View over the past two seasons. Don Johnson netted 15 points for NM with Tom Theile the other Norse to reach double figures with 10.

NM returned to the spacious LC Walker Arena once again for district play but their season came to a crushing end with a 60-52 loss to Reeths Puffer. The game was much closer than the final score as NM led late in the contest at 50-49 before the Rockets went on a 13-0 run to close out the game. Steve Peterson had a season high 20 points to lead NM. Don Johnson added 19 points with NM’s only senior Mike Baldwin capping his fine three-year career on the NM varsity with seven points.

Coach Bob Morris would retire as the Norsemen’s head coach after 16 seasons with a record of 143 wins as opposed to 117 defeats. If ever the term was applicable that “he was a player’s coach” that would be coach Morris. Morris started at NMHS for the 1948-49 season where he inherited no starters, and only one letterman and suffered through by far his worse season at 1-13. Coach Morris would mold that very young team where in but two years they would be co-champs of the WMC. Under his tutelage North Muskegon would win three conference championships, including one in the Seaway Conference. His Norsemen would often finish in second place during his tenure. In his final seven seasons as the head coach, he would post a record of 76 wins and only 46 losses, 2 conference championships and two district titles. No other NM coach ever posted a better record over seven seasons than Bob Morris. After Morris retired, Norse followers would have to wait 15 more years before NM would win another WMC title. How proud your author was to give the eulogy when his beloved coach, and very good friend passed away.

N Muskegon 47 West MI Christ. 45 Dean Rosenberg 15, Mike Baldwin 12

N Muskegon 57 Ravenna 54 Rosenberg & Tom Thiele 15

N Muskegon 67 Montague 58 Don Johnson 23, Baldwin 15

N Muskegon 41 Orchard View 54 Thiele & Rosenberg 14.

N Muskegon 57 Fremont 47 Thiele 22, Johnson 15, Rosenberg 10

N Muskegon 70 Coopersville 39 Baldwin 17, Rosenberg 16, Thiele 10

N Muskegon 68 Hart 24 Steve Peterson 19, Rosenberg 11

N Muskegon 63 Reeths Puffer 56 Johnson 19, Baldwin, Thiele and Rosenberg 13

N Muskegon 62 Whitehall 75 Johnson 25, Peterson 14

N Muskegon 62 Ravenna 47 Rosenberg 19, Johnson 14

N Muskegon 61 Orchard View 57 Baldwin 14 & 23 rebounds. Thiele 16

N Muskegon 64 Montague 41 Johnson 19, Rosenberg 13

N Muskegon 54 Fremont 53 Baldwin 16, Johnson 15, Rosenberg 14

N Muskegon 63 Coopersville 59 Rosenberg 17, Johnson 14, Pattinger 11

N Muskegon 52 Reeths Puffer 53 Johnson 19, Theile 9

N Muskegon 60 Whitehall 75 Johnson 15, Theile 10

N Muskegon\* 52 Reeths Puffer 60 Peterson 20, Johnson 19

**1964-65 Coach Don Boyink (3-14–Whitehall Seaway Champs)**

With only one starter lost to graduation, and coming off a very good 12-5 season, there surely had to be a great deal of optimism for the 1964-65 season. However, it didn’t happen. Not only did NM lose their only senior and inspirational leader in Mike Baldwin, but they also lost their coach with the retirement of Bob Morris.

It bears mentioning here the story of Mike Baldwin, a three-year regular for NM teams who produced a combined 39-16 record during Mike’s NM career. Baldwin was also a standout on the NM track team and one of the most well-liked boys at NMHS. Sadly, just a little more than a year after Baldwin played his last game for NMHS, he passed away from a brain hemorrhage in June of 1965 at the age of 20. Baldwin will always be remembered every year with the presentation at the final awards assembly with the Mike Baldwin award.

The new NM basketball coach was Don Boyink, who welcomed back a veteran team from the 12-5 team from the previous season that included four starters and a total of eight letterman. Yet, the Norse had their most dismal season since 1949. Coach Morris always emphasized defense during his 16 years at NM, and never did his Norsemen play anything but a man-to-man defense. Only two times in the previous season did an opponent score more than 61 points in a single game, both by a powerful Whitehall team that lost but one regular season game in two years. In ten of NM’s games in this 1964-65 season, NM’s opponents scored more than 70 points, and in six games the opponents scored more than 80, three more 80 points games allowed by a coach Morris team in his 16 years!

The Norse once again opened the season with a powerful West Michigan Christian team, a team so talented that they would win the state Class C Championship in March. NM scored 78 points against the Warriors, but the bad news was they gave up 85 points, the most points scored by a Norse opponent in school history. The Norse offense gave every indication that despite the loss, this could be a special season for NM. The lead see-sawed back and forth for much of the game but the big break for WMC came when NM’s Don Johnson incurred an elbow injury midway through the third quarter and never saw any further action. Johnson was a thorn in the side to veteran coach Elmer Walcott’s WMC team as Johnson had already scored 20 points, 14 of those coming from the free throw line. With Johnson on the sidelines WMC was able to pull away to earn the victory. Dean Rosenberg scored 25 points for NM while the other returning starters from the previous season, Tom Thiele and John Pattinger netted 14 and 10.

NM then encountered another tough foe in game number two as they traveled to Whitehall in hopes of pulling off the upset against the two-time defending Seaway champs. NM started off strong but faded in the second half as Whitehall won easily over NM 71-57. Don Johnson, with a week’s rest was able to return from his elbow injury suffered in their opener with WMC and led the Norse with 21 points. Steve Peterson added 11, Tom Thiele 10 and Dean Rosenberg 8 as NM fell to 0-2, with both losses coming against a pair of very good teams.

NM then showed all their potential in their next outing as they steamrolled Ravenna 87-36. So decisive was this trouncing that to this day (2024) this remains the most lopsided win against a WMC team in history. So dismal was the Ravenna shooting that the Bulldogs were only able to make but two of their first 13 free throws. Leading the Norse barrage was Don Johnson with 23 points. John Pattinger netted 16, Steve Peterson 15, and Tom Thiele 10, before NM reserves flooded the floor in the second half.

It appeared all was well for NM as they had a come-from-behind victory over Fremont to square their record at 2-2. At one point the Norse trailed 46-31 early into the third period before they ignited their rally. NM closed the gap to 63-52 at the end of the 3rd quarter as victory for NM still seemed dire. It didn’t take long for NM to tie the game at 65-all on a pair of free throws from John Pattinger. NM then pulled away in the final stretch to win 77-74. NM received balanced scoring in the win with five players reaching double figures with the leading scorer being Don Johnson with 16.

For the fourth time in five games the NM defense gave up more than 70 points as they were overwhelmed by Orchard View 84-59. Tom Thiele had 17 points for NM as the Norse would go on a long losing streak that would eventually reach nine games without tasting victory.

Playing before a standing room only crowd at NMHS, Reeth Puffer moved into first place in the Seaway with an 80-69 win over the Norse. Tom Thiele led NM scorers with 23 points followed by John Pattinger’s 13 but giving up 80 points to your rival was too much for the NM shooters to overcome.

It had been nearly 30 years since North Muskegon and Fruitport last met in basketball in 1936. Any my how the game had changed over the three decades. NM defeated Fruitport 32-15 in their long-ago matchup from the 1930s. The two teams 30 years later would combine to score 157 points with Fruitport winning 80-77 over the Norse. It was the third straight game NM allowed an opponent to score 80 points, the same amount a coach Bob Morris team allowed in his 16 years as NM’s head coach. NM’s fortunes were now heading due south in the loss to a Fruitport five that came to the NM gymnasium looking for its first win of the season. NM saw a 69-64 lead disappear as Fruitport took the lead for good in the final 10 seconds on a free throw and a tip in on the missed free throw to shock the Norse 80-77.

Just three days after their loss to Fruitport it would go from bad to worse for the Norsemen as head coach Don Boyink dismissed six players from the NM team. Coach Boyink was forced to bring up the starting five from the JV team as only Dean Rosenberg would be the lone starter not dismissed from the team. With a depleted roster Coopersville than snapped their six-game losing streak against the Norse in recent years by nipping the Norse 58-54. Scoring 12 points in the game was Steve Peterson. NM had two Steve Peterson’s on the team, but it was the younger Steve Peterson who remained on the team.

NM was no match for Whitehall and their 6’10 center Maurice Kennebrew, who scored 24 points, as NM was handedly defeated by Whitehall 69-37. Only Dean Rosenberg, the one starter remaining from the Norse team that began the season was able to get in double digit numbers for NM with 11 points.

What a turnaround it was from the first game between NM and Ravenna when the Norse handed the Bulldogs a 51-point whipping, the most lopsided win against Ravenna (or any other team they would face in West Michigan Conference history) 87-36. Ravenna’s Dan Schut’s 10-foot jumper in the final 10 seconds gave Ravenna a 62-60 win over NM to end a nine-game losing streak to the Norsemen. Dave Marchido, who only a few days earlier was playing on the Norse JV team, led NM scorers with 19 points.

History repeated itself a week later when it was Fremont’s turn to make amends for an earlier loss to NM as the Packers thumped the Norse in their return engagement 69-42. Once again it was Marchido who would lead the Norse in scoring with 18 points. No other Norse player was able to score more than six points as NM’s once high scoring offense again sputtered.

The very young Norsemen were no match for Orchard View and their star player Jim McClain as they were scorched by the Cardinals 82-53. The Cardinals put this game away early as they raced out to a commanding 23-6 lead after the first eight minutes. Only Mike Senecal was able to get in double figures for the host Norsemen with 10 points.

NM then snapped an eight-game losing streak while extending their mastery over Montague to 10 straight wins with a 60-57 over the host Wildcats. It wasn’t until former JV player Randy Hutson tallied a closing basket did the Norse clinch the win. Dean Rosenberg led NM scorers with 23 points while Hutson finished with 13.

The Norse then went back to their losing ways as they fell 76-54 to a heavily favored Reeths Puffer team on the Rocket’s home floor. NM was within 11 points of RP 56-45 at the end of three quarters, but the Norse then went five minutes without scoring a point as RP pulled away. Dean Rosenberg, the defending state champion in the mile run, topped Norse scorers with 15 while Steve Peterson added 14.

The young Norse had improved immensely since the dismissal of six varsity performers in January as shown in their one-point 77-76 loss to Fruitport. Fruitport overcame a one-point Norse lead when Dick Doctor made both free throws in the game’s final seconds to give NM a tough defeat. NM wasn’t helped when Dean Rosenberg, who had scored 25 points, fouled out late in the game. In their highest scoring game since scoring 77 points in their first matchup with the Trojans, Steve Peterson with 19 and Mike Senecal with 14 also scored well in a valiant losing effort. Randy Hutson and Jeff Peterson just missed scoring in double digit numbers with nine each.

In a near repeat of their earlier clash at Coopersville, the Broncos again handed NM a 55-50 defeat to close out the regular season. Scoring in double figures for the young Norse were sophomore Randy Hutson with 12 and junior Jeff Peterson with 10. NM wouldn’t have to wait long to begin tournament play as they opened play the following Monday to face Orchard View at the LC Walker Arena. It was a quick exit for the Norse as they fell to OV for the third time during the season 88-70 as Bayou bound Jim McClain of the Cardinals poured in 35 points. The disappointing season for NM came to a quick close but not before Steve Peterson found the spacious LC Walker Arena to his liking with a career high 28 points. Dean Rosenberg ended his three-year varsity career with 14 and Jeff Peterson 13 as NM finished their season with a 3-14 record. First year head coach Don Boyink’s career at NM was short-lived as Boyink resigned as NM coach.

N Muskegon 78 West MI Christ. 85 Dean Rosenberg 25, Don Johnson 20

N Muskegon 57 Whitehall 71 Johnson 21, Steve Peterson 11, Thiele 10

N Muskegon 87 Ravenna 36 Johnson 23-, Pattinger 16, Peterson 15

N Muskegon 77 Fremont 74 Johnson 16, Thiele & Peterson 13.

N Muskegon 59 Orchard View 84 Thiele 17, Peterson 12

N Muskegon 69 Reeths Puffer 80 Thiele 23, Pattinger 13

N Muskegon 77 Fruitport 80 Thiele, Johnson & Pattinger 10

N Muskegon 54 Coopersville 58 Peterson 12, Rosenberg 11

N Muskegon 37 Whitehall 69 Rosenberg 11, Peterson 8

N Muskegon 60 Ravenna 62 Marchido 19, Rosenberg 14

N Muskegon 42 Fremont 69 Marchido 18

N Muskegon 53 Orchard View 82 Mike Senecal 10, Jeff Peterson 9

N Muskegon 60 Montague 57 Rosenberg 23, Randy Huston 13

N Muskegon 54 Reeths Puffer 76 Roseneberg 15, Peterson 14

N Muskegon 76 Fruitport 77 Rosenberg 25, S Peterson 19

N Muskegon 50 Coopersville 55 Hutson 12, J Peteerson 10

N Muskegon\* 70 Orchard View 88 S Peterson 28, Rosenberg 14

**1965-66 Coach Tom Seroczynski (6-11–Fremont Seaway Champs)**

The Norse traveled to Coopersville for their opening game of the 1965-66 and the first game under head coach Tom Seroczynski who also performed duties as NM’s head football coach. Coach ‘Sero’ would have to wait for his first victory as NM’s much smaller Norsemen were outsized again by the taller Broncos and lost 50-46. After leading 29-26 at halftime the Norse managed to score but four points in a decisive third period as they were outscored by the hosts 14-4. Bob Rosenberg, younger brother of Dean, led NM scorers with 15 points, with Dave Marchido netting 12 to go along with 15 rebounds. Pat Kersh, in his first start in a Blue & Gold Norse uniform, chipped in with 11.

Coach Seroszynski had to wait until only his second game to earn his first win, a 78-55 defeat of Ravenna. The first-year coach received excellent balanced scoring by his Norsemen led by Randy Hutson’s 22 points. Dave Marchido had another good game on the boards with 17 rebounds while Hutson received scoring help from Bob Rosenberg with 15, as well as Pat Kersh and Steve Peterson with 12 points each.

The Norse were just simply outclassed by the defending Class C state Champs of Western Michigan Christian 74-45 to fall to 1-2 after three games played. Future Weber State Division 1 player Wes VanDyke had 17 points for the winning Warriors. Bob Rosenberg and Steve Peterson provided much of the NM punch with 16 and 12 points respectively.

NM toughened up their defense as they held the high scoring and undefeated Reeths Puffer Rockets to 57 points, nearly 25 points below RP’s average. The Norse, however, were only able to come up with 49 as they fell 57-49 to the host Rockets. A trio of Norse were able to reach double digits in points; Bob Swanson, back from a football injury had 13 while Dave Marchido had 12 and Steve Peterson 10.

NM evened their record at 2-2 with a 76-66 win over Fruitport on the Northside court. NM received balanced scoring from their cagers as Steve Peterson had 21, Bob Rosenberg 18, Randy Hutson 17, and Bob Swanson with 11 as NM survived the hot shooting of Fruitport’s Bob Sarachman who led all scorers with 27 points.

NM then ran into a red-hot Fremont Packer team who made the Norsemen its fifth straight victim with an easy 74-52 victory at the NM gym. Bob Rosenberg scored 13 of his 19 points in the first quarter to keep the Norse close but the Packers had too much firepower and blitzed the Norse in the final period to pull away. Pat Kersh followed Rosenberg in scoring honors for NM with 14 points.

The last time North Muskegon played Spring Lake before their encounter in late December of 1965 was back in 1934when NM wasn’t even a four-year high school. In 1965 Spring Lake scored 94 points, 80 more than they scored in a 14-8 low scoring affair in the 1933-34 season. The 94 points scored by the Lakers was the most points ever given up by NM in school history, a mark since surpassed.

It was no contest after the Lakers had a comfortable 45-24 lead at halftime. Dave Marchido paced the Norse with 22 points and 13 rebounds while Randy Hutson added 17 for the visiting Norsemen.

NM and Whitehall went into overtime for the first of six times in their long rivalry. The Vikings, who won five of those six overtime games, edged the Norsemen 66-63. NM scoring was so balanced that five NM players scored in double figures: Dave Marchido and Steve Peterson netted 13, Bob Rosenberg and Pat Kersh scored 12 and Bob Swanson 11. The Norse took the lead in regulation at 63-61 only to see the Vikings tie the game on a Art Pumphrey bucket to send the game into the three-minute OT.

In what would prove to be the final game played between the two schools in a rivalry that began in the 1942-43 season, Coopersville handed the Norse a 74-64 beating. Despite the loss NM would win 17 of the 31 games played between the two schools over the years. One of those 14 NM defeats is one your author will never forget when Coopersville defeated my 1959 team 58-56 in the districts, the only game in NM history decided in ‘sudden death.’ Randy Hutson, who was not one of the five Norse players in double figures in the overtime loss to Whitehall (he had only 2 points), was the high scorer in the loss to the Broncos with 18 points.

The Norse snapped their four-game losing streak in a big way with a lopsided 83-68 win over Ravenna. It was only the third win on the season and second over the Bulldogs. Once again, several Norse shared in the scoring department with Bob Rosenberg’s 17 points leading the way, one point more than Steve Patterson’s total of 16.

Playing perhaps their best game of the season, NM defeated Reeths Puffer 69-63 as four starters reached double figures for the Norse. NM also did very well at the free throw line as they converted on 19 of 24 charity tosses. Steve Peterson led the balanced attack with 18 points. Also in double digits for NM were Randy Hutson (13), Bob Swanson and Dave Marchido with 11 while Bob Rosenberg came close to making it 5-for-5 with 9 tallies.

NM then completed their longest winning streak at three wins with a narrow 77-75 victory over Fruitport. Dave Marchido had a huge game for NM with 27 points and a massive rebound total of 26. Bob Swanson joined Marchido with his own season high total of 23 points as NM improved to 5-6 in Seaway Conference action.

NM enjoyed a 44-30 lead at halftime and then held off a late Fruitport rally after Randy Hutson and Steve Peterson had fouled out.

Fremont clinched the Seaway Conference Championship with an explosive 91-59 conquest of the outmanned Norse. The Packers won despite missing the services of their leading scorer Bill Bekkering, out with an ankle injury. It didn’t matter as his replacement Chris Nelson poured in 17 points as NM never threatened the powerful Packer quintet. Steve Peterson with 16 and Bob Rosenberg with 13 led the Norsemen.

NM then rattled the hoops for 89 points, second only to the 104 scored by the Gordy Odell led Norsemen against Whitehall in 1955, in their 89-53 defeat of Montague. In the 189 games played to date between the two long-time rivals, this was the most lopsided win by a Norsemen team vs. the Wildcats. It was now Steve Peterson’s turn to have his highest scoring output of the season with his 27 points. Randy Hutson with 14 and Bob Rosenberg with 13, and Dave Marchido’s 10 markers also contributed to the high Norse total.

In the last meeting between the two teams in their brief rivalry for the next 45 years, Spring Lake won their second game of the season over the Norse 76-67. Larry Aldridge, who would play baseball in the summertime for the North Muskegon Independent baseball team, scored 31 points to lead the Lakers. Dave Marchido championed the Norse losing cause with a 19-point effort with Bob Rosenberg adding 14.

In their final game in the Seaway Conference NM fell to Whitehall 90-62, a far cry from their opening battle in early January when the game wasn’t settled until overtime. Whitehall’s win over the Norse was their ninth straight leading into the MHSAA playoffs the following week. The future looked good for Viking followers as their JV team posted a perfect 17-0 season at the expense of the Little Norse. Randy Hutson topped NM scorers in the varsity contest with 17 points, with Bob Rosenberg netting 12 and Dave Marchido 10. Showing promise that he will be a big help for next season’s NM team was 6-3 Mark Erickson who scored nine points.

With declining enrollment NM had dropped to the Class C level and with Laketon Township students all now a part of the Reeths Puffer School system, the Norse would move back to the West Michigan Conference in time for the 1966-67 school year. After playing at the Class B level for the past three years, with all games played at the LC Walker Arena, NM would now begin tourney play at Whitehall where their opponent would be a Scottville team that had won 16 of their 18 games. NM led at the end of the first quarter but the Spartans, co-champs of the WMC, pulled away behind the play of big Mike Hankwitz, to end the Norse season with a 62-47 victory. Hankwitz, a charter member of the Mason County Hall of Fame, would go on to become one of the leading defensive coordinators in NCAA football. Mark Erickson again showed his rapid improvement during the season as he led NM with 11 points and 12 rebounds, giving the Norse faithful hope that good things would come soon. Scottville would go on to advance to the state semi-finals where they lost in overtime to L’Anse when they made but 10 of 19 free throw attempts. Scottville fans will always wonder “What If” as L’Anse would win the following day in the state finals by 19 points.

N Muskegon 46 Coopersville 50 Bob Rosenberg 15, Dave Marchido 12

N Muskegon 78 Ravenna 55 Randy Hutson 22, Rosenberg 15

N Muskegon 45 West MI Christ. 74 Rosenberg 16, Steve Peterson 12

N Muskegon 49 Reeths Puffer 57 Bob Swanson 13, Marchido 12

N Muskegon 76 Fruitport 66 Peterson 21, Rosenberg 18, Hutson 17

N Muskegon 52 Fremont 74 Rosenberg 19, Pat Kersh 14

N Muskegon 74 Spring Lake 94 Marchido 22, Hutson 17

N Muskegon 63 Whitehall (ot) 66 Five NM players in double figures.

N Muskegon 64 Coopersville 74 Hutson 18, Rosenberg 14, Marchido 13

N Muskegon 83 Ravenna 68 Rosenberg 17, Peterson 16, Marchido 12

N Muskegon 69 Reeths Puffer 63 Petersson 18, Hutson 13, 2 more with 11

N Muskegon 77 Fruitport 75 Marchido 27 & 26 rebs, Swanson 23

N Muskegon 59 Fremont 91 Peterson 16, Rosenberg 13

N Muskegon 89 Montague 53 Peterson 27, Hutson 14, Rosenberg 13

N Muskegon 67 Spring Lake 76 Marchido 19, Rosenberg14

N Muskegon 62 Whitehall 90 Hutson 17, Rosenberg 12, Marchido 10

N Muskegon \* 47 Scottville 62 Mark Erickson 11, Peterson 12

**1966-67 Coach Tom Seroczynski (14-5–co-champs with Shelby WMC)**

North Muskegon was back in its favorite element, the West Michigan Conference and NM’s most successful football coach in NM history, Tom Seroczynski, would see some of his football magic rub off on his Norsemen basketball team as NM turned things around with a superb 14-5 record. Coach ‘Sero’ welcomed back nearly his entire starting unit from the previous season as well as 6’3 center Mark Erickson.

NM’s first opponent would be West Michigan Christian, a team that throttled the Norsemen by nearly thirty points the previous season. NM took the Warriors to overtime only to lose in one of the most frustrating games in school history. Ten seconds remained in regulation with NM leading 54-52 when WMC’s Bob Devries stepped to the free throw line in a one-and-one situation. Devries missed the shot that was rebounded by NM’s Mark Erickson. But wait ---- An official ruled, however that a group of youngsters seated at the Warriors end of the court had unduly distracted Devries and he was awarded the shot over. He then made both free throws to send the game into overtime where the Warriors eventually won.

Still early as a four-year school NM had no trouble in defeating a green Oakridge team 72-49 in the first game of more than 100 games these two teams will play one another over the years. Oakridge stayed with the Norsemen for three quarters before NM blitzed the host Eagles with 26 fourth quarter points to win in a runaway 70-49. Dave Marchido collected 18 points and Mark Erickson 16 to lead the Norse. Also in double figures for the Norse were Rick Homan and Bob Rosenberg 11 and 10 points.

NM welcomed their neighbors from Reeths Puffer to the Northside gym in a non-conference clash with NM using a big fourth quarter to pull away from the Rockets 60-50. RP was playing their first season coached by former Muskegon Heights standout Dan Wright. After a tight game after three quarters of play with NM holding a four-point lead, NM outscored the Rockets 15-9 over the game’s final eight minutes. Mark Erickson led NM with 16 points with Bob Rosenberg close behind with 11 as NM improved to 2-1 on the season.

NM would travel to Manistee, who joined the West Michigan Conference for a brief three-years stretch beginning with the 1966-67 season. It would be the first meeting between the two schools since they met in a district game in 1949 when Manistee defeated the 1-13 Norsemen in overtime. It was a long journey home on a frigid December night after Manistee defeated the Norsemen 67-61, the first loss in their return to the WMC for NM. Mark Erickson did yeoman like work for NM, both on the boards and in scoring as he led NM in scoring with 18 points, the only Norse player to reach double figures.

For the second time in their last three games, the Norsemen lost a game to Whitehall that went into overtime, 66-62. It was a frustrating final two minutes in regulation for both teams as neither scored after the game was tied at 59-59. Whitehall sophomore Tim Bloomberg scored five points in overtime to lead the Vikings to the non-conference victory as Whitehall remained in the Seaway Conference. Rick Homan, after playing on the JV team the previous season, has crashed his way into the starting lineup for NM and led Norse scorers with 20 points before fouling out in the fourth quarter. Mark Erickson added 13 and Dave Marchido 12 for the losing Norsemen.

Following a two-year absence from their schedule, NM would resume once again playing one of their oldest rivals in the Hart Pirates. Unlike the 1940’s and into the mid-fifties when Hart went 22-2 vs. NM, the tide had turned into the Norse’s favor, as NM had won 13 of the last 17 games vs. the Pirates. Coach Seroczynski’s Norse had little trouble downing veteran Coach Harvey Weaver’s Pirates as the 0-4 Hart five fell to NM 84-64. Five NM players reached double figures in the onslaught led by Dave Marchido’s 20-point output coming on making nine of his 10 field goals attempts. Bob Rosenberg added 16 markers, while Rick Homan, Randy Hutson and Mark Erickson all had 11 points as the Norse were now 2-1 in WMC conference competition.

In a rivalry that is separated by only one game over nearly 200 games played between NM and Montague, the 1960’s were dominated by the Norse as they won their 12th straight victory over the Wildcats 59-52. NM took a big lead into the final quarter before Montague rallied to make the final score look a little more respectable. Dave Marchido paced the Norse with 18 points, closely followed by Rick Homan with 16 as NM improved to 3-1 in WMC conference play.

Scottville, NM’s next opponent lost virtually their entire starting five from their 1965-66 team that came close to winning a state championship and were not even a shell of that powerful squad that would rank as one of the tops in Spartan history. NM poured in a season high 85 points to move to 4-1 in conference play to set up their next game with undefeated Shelby. Mark Erickson led the high scoring Norsemen with 22 points, with Bob Rosenberg adding 14.

Coach Jimmy Darrow’s Shelby Tigers put the Norsemen in a big bind early as their hot shooting, led by Bill Beckman and Gene Gifford propelled Shelby into a huge 45-23 lead at halftime. The win gave the Tigers a commanding two game lead in the WMC with the Norsemen dropping back into a second-place tie with Manistee at 4-2. Only Randy Hutson with 15 and Dave Marchido with 10 would score in double figures for the Norse.

NM then found the competition much easier as they bounced back to tumble Oakridge 80-51 just three days after their big loss to Shelby. NM wasted little time in showing this was going to be a long night for the visiting Eagles as they raced out to an early 17-3 lead after the first eight minutes of play and would then go on to coast to an easy victory. Eleven of the 13 Norse players who played in the game got into the scoring column led by Randy Homan’s 16 points followed by Mark Erickson who had 15 points and 17 rebounds. The win would begin a nine-game winning streak for the Norsemen.

North Muskegon then handed Fruitport and their Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame coach Ken Vandyke a 66-54 defeat in a non-conference clash on the Northside court. Mark Erickson had a big game for NM with 23 points while Bob Rosenberg and Rick Homan added 13 and 12 respectively.

NM than showed they are a much-improved team from earlier in the season when they made amends for an earlier loss to Manistee with a 75-63 win on the Northside court. Manistee came out cold from the long bus ride and quickly dug themselves in a hole they could not get out of as NM bolted out to a 15-1 lead before Manistee could hit a field goal. Dave Marchido and Mark Erickson were a nice one-two punch for the Norse as they scored 20 and 17 points. All five starters were in double figures for NM; Rosenberg and Bob Swanson 11 apiece while Randy Hutson netted 10.

NM then set up a big battle the following night with the league leaders as the Norse used a 31-point barrage in the final quarter to roll past a determined Hart five 67-47. NM might have been looking ahead to their big rematch with Shelby as they led only 36-34 before heading into the deciding quarter. It was not a pretty game as five Norse players would eventually foul out of the contest while four Pirate players were also retired before the end of the contest on fouls. Bob Rosenberg with 16 and Mark Erickson with 14 led Norse scorers.

After being demolished by Shelby in January in a 32-point debacle, NM did the unthinkable and held the high scoring Shelby squad to just 47 points as NM moved into a first-place tie with the Tigers in the WMC following their 51-47 upset. NM tightened up their defense considerably since that first encounter and held future Bowling Green University cager Bill Beckman to a season low 11 points. Even Tiger sharpshooter Gene Gifford, who remains as of this writing in 2025 as the veteran head coach of the Muskegon Community College Jayhawks, was held in check with nine points. The game was tight all the way and was knotted up at 39 after three quarters had been played. NM took the lead for good on a Bob Rosenberg jump shot at the 1:13 mark to give NM the lead at 49-47. Rosenberg led the balanced Norse scoring with 14 points followed by Mark Erickson with 11. Randy Hutson netted eight points, but it was his solid defense on Beckman that contributed heavily to the win. In the spring Hutson showed his athletic ability as he became the first Norsemen to ever win the 100-yard dash at the Greater Muskegon Track Championship.

NM perhaps suffered a little letdown just three days after their thrilling Saturday night win over Shelby but still had enough firepower to edge Montague 58-55 to remain tied with Shelby at the top of the WMC. Bob Swanson, whose two free throws late in the game iced the win for NM, led NM scorers with 14 markers while Mark Erickson had 12 and Rick Homan 11.

There was no letdown in NM’s next contest as they kept their winning streak intact with a 65-40 win over Ravenna. Coach ‘Sero’ was able to empty his bench early in the rout as points were distributed among nine Norsemen. Chris Jacobi came off the bench to score eight points, just four less than starters Bob Swanson and Mark Erickson’s game high 12 points. NM was just one win away from sharing their first conference title since NM’s 1959 team won the title outright.

Mission accomplished! NM made the journey to Scottville on a night when four inches of snow fell accompanied by subzero temps. Fortunately for the Norsemen, NM didn’t have to play in Scottville’s legendary old bandbox gymnasium with the low ceiling and a backboard at one end of the gymnasium attached to the wall. NM clinched a tie with Shelby for the WMC title with a businesslike 74-66 win over a school that was amid changing its ‘official’ name to Mason County Central. Balanced scoring, the trademark for this 1966-67 team paved the way for their 8th straight victory with all five starters for NM in double figures.

NM would open tournament play with Kent City, the first meeting between these two teams in more than 30 years. The Eagles used stall tactics in their bid to upset the Norse, but after the stall temporarily worked, as Kent City led 7-4 at the end of the first quarter, NM regained the lead and then cruised to a 65-49 victory at the Class C districts held in Whitehall. Mark Erickson’s 14 points and 17 rebounds paced the NM victory as they posted their 9th straight and 14th victory on the season.

There was no controversial finish in the second matchup between West Michigan Christian and the Norsemen. The Warriors, who played a tough schedule against mostly Class B and A opponents pulled away after a tight first half to end NM’s season with a 66-47 victory.

The 14 wins for NM equaled their highest win total in school history in the second, and final season for head coach Tom Seroczynski. With a full-time job, as well as the time committed as the head football coach, ‘Sero’ would hand the coaching duties to Dave Cooke, who would spend decades at NM guiding Norse athletes in football and basketball. It’s doubtful if any Norse team in more than 90 years of basketball on the Northside could boast of a more balanced team than the 1966-67 Norsemen. NM primarily went with six players that took up most of the minutes during the season, and at one time or another all six were the high scorer in a Norse game. The six Norsemen were Bob Rosenberg, Rick Homan, Randy Hutson, Dave Marchido, Bob Swanson and Mark Erickson. Only Rick Homan would return for the next NM basketball season with his five teammates all having graduated.

N Muskegon 54 WMC (ot) 64 Bob Rosenberg 12, Rick Homan 10

N Muskegon 72 Oakridge 49 Dave Marchido 18, Mark Erickson 16

N Muskegon 60 Reeths Puffer 50 Erickson 16, Rosenberg 11

N Muskegon 61 Manistee 67 Erickson 18

N Muskegon 62 Whitehall (ot) 66 Homan 20, Erickson 13, Dave Marchido 12

N Muskegon 84 Hart 64 Five in double figures led by Marchido’s 20

N Muskegon 59 Montague 52 Marchido 18, Homan 16

N Muskegon 85 Scottville 58 Erickson 22, Rosenberg 14

N Muskegon 50 Shelby 82 Hutson 15, Marchido 10

N Muskegon 80 Oakridge 51 Homan 16, Erickson 15 & 17 rebounds WIN 300

N Muskegon 66 Fruitport 54 Errickson 23, Rosenberg 13, Homan 12

N Muskegon 75 Manistee 63 Marchido 20, Erickson 17

N Muskegon 67 Hart 47 Rosenberg 16, Erickson 14

N Muskegon 51 Shelby 47 Rosenberg 14, Erickson 11, Marchido 9

N Muskegon 58 Montague 55 Swanson 14, Erickson 12, Homan 11

N Muskegon 65 Ravenna 40 Swanson & Erickson 12, Chris Jacobi 8

N Muskegon 74 Scottville 66 Marchido 14, four other starters with 13.

N Muskegon\* 65 Kent City 49 Erickson 14 points & 17 boards.

N Muskegon \* 47 WMC 66 NM season 14-5 season ends to WMC.

**1967-68 Coach Dave Cooke (7-10 Oakridge WMC Champs)**

Dave Cooke would begin his first of many years associated with sports at NMHS when he succeeded Tom Seroczynski as the new basketball coach. Coach Cooke, a three-sport star in high school at Muskegon High, and a three-year regular for Western Michigan’s football team, was also a three-sport coach, after serving as first, the Whitehall JV football coach and then the varsity head football mentor, also was the Whitehall varsity track coach and guided the 1965-66 Whitehall JV team to a perfect 17-0 record. However, the cupboard was pretty much empty when Cooke took over at NMHS with only Rick Homan returning from the WMC co-champs from 1966-67. Despite the lack of experience, as well as height, Cooke was able to guide NM to seven victories in his rookie season at NM. 1967-68 would be a season of streaks, both winning and losing. A four-game losing streak would be followed by three straight wins. NM would then drop five in a row before bouncing back to win four. And for the second straight year NM had the misfortune of again playing a loaded WMC in the playoffs.

While the ‘ole announcer’ was making his debut as a broadcaster up north calling the Traverse City – Grand Rapids South basketball game, Coach Cooke was coaching the first of hundreds of NM games for both basketball and football at NMHS. However, the Norse opened the season on the road against a Shelby team anxious to atone for their surprising loss to NM last season that resulted in Shelby having to share the WMC title with NM. Coach Jimmy Darrow’s Tiger tripped up the Norse 63 to 54 as legendary long time area coach Gene Gifford scored 22 points for the winning Tigers. Rick Homan, the lone returning regular from last season’s co-champs led all scorers with 24 points in a losing cause as no other NM player was able to score more than seven points.

It’s not often when you lose all five starters due to foul trouble but that was the case when NM invaded the home of the West Michigan Christian Warriors. To no one’s surprise WMC won the foul plagued contest 62-50 before a full house at the WMC gym. The Warriors broke open a close game at halftime to pull ahead of the Norse in a second half that sent NM players regularly going to the bench due to foul problems. Football quarterback Pete Speier was the big gun for the Norsemen with 16 points while Tom Burmeister came off the bench to tally 11. Rick Homan, playing less than half the game due to foul problems, was held to eight points before eventually fouling out of the game.

NM dropped their third straight game to begin the season to a vastly improved Oakridge team 48-45. Only two Norsemen were in double figures for the game, Pete Speier with 12 and Rick Homan with 11. It was early in the season, but Oakridge would get even better under head coach Bob Goryl and would embark on a long winning streak.

NM was able to shake their offensive doldrums but again were plagued by foul troubles as NM dropped a high scoring 80-79 contest to Manistee. Five players didn’t foul out in this loss as opposed to their game with WMC, but three players did exit with foul problems as NM dropped its fourth game in a row to start the season. Rick Homan led the Norse with 18 with Rod Raymour adding 16 and Pete Speier 14.

North Muskegon’s cagers gave their new head Dave Cooke an early Christmas present just three days before Xmas with a 61-49 win over Montague, the first win for both the Norsemen and their head coach. The game was much tighter than the final score as NM didn’t take the lead for good until Rod Raymour hit a jump shot with about five minutes left in the game. NM then went on a 13-3 run to ice the game over the visiting Wildcats. Rick Homan hit a career high 27 points for the Norse with Rod Raymour netting 13.

NM then made Hart their second victim of the season with a 67-62 road win in Hart. NM gave themselves a nice cushion by taking a 44-31 lead at halftime that proved too much for a possible Hart rally. Sophomore Rod Raymour led the way for the Norse both in scoring and rebounding with 19 points and a massive 23 rebounds. Rick Homan added 15 and Pete Speier 12.

North Muskegon welcomed a newcomer to their schedule as they defeated Pentwater 61 to 57 in the first of more than 30 contests to be contested over the ensuing years. Rick Homan led NM scoring with 20 points with Pete Speier adding 12 and Rod Raymour 10.

NM gave the eventual Seaway league champion Whitehall a battle in a non-league Saturday clash at the Northside gym before losing to the Vikings 70-54. It was dead even between the two long-time rivals at halftime 27-27 before Whitehall opened some distance on the Norse in the second half. Rick Homan had 15 to pace the Norse scorers with Rod Raymour adding 12. Once again foul problems hurt NM chances to pull off the upset as three Norse players fouled out.

The Norse made the long trip to Scottville with high hopes of getting back into the win column prior to facing the Spartans of Mason County Central who were still looking for its first win in WMC action. However, it was Mason County Central who came out on top 78-74 in the see-saw battle with the visiting Norsemen. The Spartans saw a four-point lead at halftime expand slightly to six as they began action in the fourth quarter. NM rallied and even took a brief lead at 62-61. Three times the lead changed hands during the frenetic final period before Mason Co Central iced the contest late. Rick Homan had another big game for the Norse with 22 points with Pete Speier close behind with 18. Chris Jacobi netted 10 points while four other Norsemen who saw action all had six points.

North Muskegon threw a scare into Shelby in their second meeting as a couple of free throws from Chris Jacobi tied the score at 57-all with just 2:21 left to play in the game. Four North Muskegon fouls turned into eight clutch free throws made by Shelby as they made it two in a row over the Norse on the season with a 65-59 victory. Brad Griffin and Gene Gifford combined for 42 points for the winners while Chris Jacobi had his season high point total for the Norse with a team leading 16 markers. Sophomore Rod Raymour had nine points and 23 rebounds as the Norse came just short of pulling off the upset.

A standing room only crowd was on hand at Oakridge to watch the WMC’s most surprising team win their 10th straight game with an easy 61-39 win over NM. Coach Bob Goryl’s Eagles were the whipping boys of the conference a year ago but what a turnaround a year later. With the crowd in a frenzy, the host Eagles jump all over the jittery Norsemen to race off to a commanding early 16-2 lead. “This was our team’s best game all year,” said the proud coach following the easy victory. Only Rod Raymour and George Fisher with 10 points were in double figures for the Norse.

In perhaps the only game played on the Northside court on a Saturday afternoon in NM basketball history, Manistee made NM walk the plank for their fifth straight loss with a 68-61 win. Coach Cooke brought sophomore Jamie Woodruff up from the JV team and the future NM star football quarterback responded well with nine points in the losing cause. Rick Homan meshed 17, Tommy Burmeister 12 and Rod Raymour 10.

The losing streak had come to a merciful end, and the streaking Norse would now go on their own streak, a winning streak. It took a while but after the teams were knotted up at the end of three periods, the Norse scored 28 fourth quarter points while holding the Pirates to only six to turn a tight game into the proverbial ‘laugher’ with the final score NM 77, Hart 55. Rick Homan delivered 20 points to the Norse cause with help from George Fisher with 15 and recent callup Jamie Woodruff tossing in 10.

Call me a little ‘old fashioned’ but they just made them tougher back in the 1960s. Despite blizzard conditions and windchills in Michigan hovering around minus -40, the games went on back in February of 1968. It took three hours for a busload of Muskegon High students to just to get from Traverse City to Baldwin after the big Reds game at Traverse City. Fortunately for this author who called that game for the local Traverse City station, I had just a short jaunt back to the comfort of my Traverse City home following the game – with a quick stop at Sleders Tavern. The Norse had the frigid Friday night off but returned to the hardwoods on Saturday to host Fruitport in the cozy warm Northside gym. After burning the nets for 26 points in the fourth quarter against Hart a week earlier, NM outdid themselves against Fruitport by scoring 30 points in the final stanza in an 83-65 win over Fruitport. Four Norsemen were in double digits in scoring: Rick Homan led with 24, followed by Pete Speier with 15, with Rod Raymour and Tommy Burmeister scoring 11 each.

For only the second time in NM’s basketball history NM scored more than 90 points in a game with a 92-78 win over Mason County Central. The highest scoring game by a NM team was 104 points in a 1955 NM win over Whitehall when the game was played at the old NM band-box gym. Rick Homan and Pete Speier each scored 24 points in the high scoring contest, while 16 and 15 points were posted by George Fisher and Tommy Burmeister as NM won their third straight game.

The Norse concluded their regular season by winning their fourth straight and their 15th win in a row over Montague 64-53. NM led after every stop to improve their regular season record to 7 and 9. Rick Homan again led NM in scoring with 23 points with Rod Raymour helping the Norse cause with 14.

NM’s first season on first year coach Dave Cooke came to a quick end as the Norse had the misfortune to draw West Michigan Christian in the first game of the MHSAA playoffs. The Warriors led by as many as 21 points before the never-say-die Norsemen made the final score read WMC 77 NM 63. Rick Homan ended his career with a career high 29 points with Pete Speier the only other Norse in double figures with 10.

The ’ole announcer’, who spent 10 years in Traverse City before returning to my hometown in 1976, journeyed three times to the Port City for the Class A districts, two to broadcast a pair of games and the other taking the 150-mile trek to watch Muskegon defeat Muskegon Heights in a game played between two teams both ranked in the top ten in the final Class A rankings. The game for the district championship between Traverse City and Muskegon (a double overtime win for TC) to this day was the most exciting high school game I had the pleasure of broadcasting over more than 40 years of calling games on the airwaves. What was also special was my broadcast partner that night was Gene Young, my sidekick for many years.

N Muskegon 54 Shelby 63 Rick Homan 24

N Muskegon 60 WMC 72 Pete Speier 16, Tom Burmeister 11

N Muskegon 45 Oakridge 48 Speier 12, Homan 11

N Muskegon 79 Manistee 80 Homan 18, Rod Raymour 16, Speier 14

N Muskegon 61 Montague 49 Homan 27, Raymour 13

N Muskegon 67 Hart 62 Raymour 19 and 23 rebounds, Homan 15

N Muskegon 61 Pentwater 57 Homan 20, Speier 12, Raymour 10

N Muskegon 54 Whitehall 70 Homan 15, Raymour 12

N Muskegon 74 Mason Co 78 Homan 22, Speier 18, Chris Jacobi 10

N Muskegon 59 Shelby 65 Jacobi 16, Speier 14, Raymour 23 rebounds

N Muskegon 39 Oakridge 61 George Fisher & Raymour 10

N Muskegon 61 Manistee 68 Homan 17, Burmeister 12, Raymour 10

N Muskegon 77 Hart 55 Homan 20, Fisher 15, Jamie Woodruff 10

N Muskegon 83 Fruitport 65 Homan 24, Speier 15, Burmeister & Ramour 11

N Muskegon 92 Mason Co 78 Homan & Speier 24, Fisher 16, Burmeister 15

N Muskegon 64 Montague 53 Homan 23, Raymour 14

N Muskegon\* 63 WMC 77 Homan career high 29, Speier 10

**1968-69 Coach Dave Cooke (5-13 Shelby WMC Champs)**

Dave Cooke would enter his second year as the NM coach and would return three players who saw considerable action from the previous season, 6’3 Rod Ramour, and a pair of six footers in George Fisher and Jamie Woodruff. Also returning from last year’s rotation was Tommy Burmeister. Departed via graduation was high scoring Rick Homan who averaged 20 points per game and was NM’s leading scorer in 12 of their 17 games. Pete Speier, the team’s second highest scorer left to become a future starting quarterback at Northern Michigan University. Playing once again a daunting schedule, the Norse would only win five games during the season but were competitive in nearly all their contests. Surprisingly, two of their wins game in their first three games against a pair of perennial powers of this era.

The Norsemen opened at home with Shelby and would also face in their first three games defending WMC champion Oakridge and a West Michigan Christian team that could boast of three state championship teams over the last decade. The Norse got off on the right foot with a surprising 63-53 victory over a Shelby team that was highly regarded and featured a high scoring center in 6’8 Art Huston. Tommy Burmeister scored 11 points in the pivotal second quarter as NM shocked the visitors by scoring 27 points in the quarter while limiting the Tigers to only 13 as the Norse enjoyed a 40-28 lead at halftime. Shelby did cut the NM lead to three points in the fourth quarter before NM iced the game late. Burmeister scored a career high 18 points to lead the Norse while George Fisher and Jamie Woodruff each had 12.

Interest in basketball was sky high at Oakridge following their WMC title the previous season at a jam-packed Oakridge gymnasium as the Eagles defeated NM 74-65. It was a scoring dual between the Eagles Kelly Johnson, who set an Oakridge single game scoring record with 31 points, and NM’s Rod Raymour. The 6’3 NM center scored 24 points but that wasn’t enough to overtake the Eagles. George Fisher had 14 and Tommy Burmiester 10 as the Norse evened their record at 1-1.

It's hard to believe when one look’s back to review NM’s overall 5-13 record from 1968-69 that one those five wins was at the expense of West Michigan Christian. The Norse had won but one game in the previous 12 meetings, but the Norsemen did indeed pull a surprise and upset the always strong Warriors 59-56. The Warriors were just coming off a 20-point win over Hudsonville Unity Christian and were positioned to add another win over NM into the victory column. It appeared WMC was indeed destined for another victory over NM when they had a 48-41 lead over the Norse. However, entering back into the game for NM were Jamie Woodruff and Rod Raymour, who had been sitting on the pines for some time with four personal fouls. A George Fisher free throw tied the game at-56-56 with 1:03 remaining. Raymour’s jumper then tallied the deciding points with about a half minute remaining, and Bob Steele’s free throw with three seconds remaining was the clincher for the Norse. Raymour, despite sitting several minutes with foul trouble, finished with 21 point and Woodruff added 14 more for the Norsemen. Unfortunately for Norse followers, they would not capitalize on the momentum and went into a tailspin.

Manistee let NM know early that it was going to be a long bus ride back to the Port City. Manistee led 42-23 early into the second half as NM was totally outgunned by the hosts. Rod Raymour with 12 points was the only NM player in double figures.

After losing five straight to the Norse, and opening the current season with five losses, the Hart Pirates broke both streaks with a 56-42 victory over NM. The poor shooting Norsemen only connected on one fourth of their field goal attempts with Rod Raymour once again the only Norsemen in double digits in scoring with 14 points.

An even longer streak was broken by Montague in the next game for NM early in January of 1969. Montague snapped a 15 games winless streak against NM by the narrowest of margins with a 74-73 victory on their home court. Sophomore Dave Erickson had a season best 17 points for the Norse, while Bob Steele had 16, Rod Raymour 14 and Jamie Woodruff 11 as NM fell to 2-4.

The Norse failed to take advantage of Whitehall having three starters not suited up for disciplinary reasons as the Vikings still had enough firepower to nip the Norse 72-67 in a non-league contest between the two long-time rivals. Rod Raymour topped Norse scorers with 21 points, but the Norse were unable to contain the Viking’s Tim Hatcher who ripped the nets for 31 points.

Trailing at halftime the Norse went on a 16-4 run in the third period and went on to win their first game in five weeks with a 67-64 victory over Mason County Central. Rod Raymour again led NM in scoring with 18 tallies with Jamie Woodruff and Bob Steele chipping in with 15 and 11. NM would have to savor this game for a while as they would again go on a long skid.

The Norse then traveled to take on the league leaders in the WMC, the Shelby Tigers who were sitting on top of the standings with a 6-1 league record, with their only loss coming to the Norsemen in game one. Rod Raymour had 18 for the Norse with George Fisher adding 13 as NM fell to 3-6 overall and 2-5 in the WMC in the 60-50 loss to the Tigers. Judging by the score of the JV game won by the Tigers convincingly 60-37, it appeared that Shelby would be well stocked in the future with a JV team that featured a promising looking freshman by the name of Paul Griffin, a future NBA star.

NM jumped out to a quick 10-0 lead to begin the contest but couldn’t hold on as Oakridge kept their second place standing in the WMC with a 77-72 overtime victory over the upset minded Norsemen. An old bad habit that had plagued the Norse in recent years reared its ugly head again – foul trouble. After the game was tied at 67-67 after regulation, Oakridge scored all 11 of their points in the three-minute extra session on free throws.

Fruitport then handed NM their third straight loss 76-63 in a Saturday night game played on the Fruitport home court. Jamie Woodruff had a season high 21 in a losing cause for NM closely followed by Rod Raymour with 17.

It looked like the Norse were on track to snap their losing streak that had reached three as they held a 20-point lead over Hart at 29-9 early in the second quarter. Hart, however mounted a furious rally to trail by on only seven at the half 38-31. The Pirates went on a 14-0 run in the second half to doom the Norse and would eventually win 75-68. NM had four players in the double figures: Rod Raymour (18), George Fisher (17), and Jamie Woodruff and Dave Erickson with 10.

For the fourth game in a row, and their second in as many nights, the Norse failed to hold on to a halftime lead as they fell to Ravenna 62-49. A career high 27 points by George Fisher went for naught as NM dropped to 3-10 on the season. One key to the Bulldog win was their tight defense that held NM’s leading scorer Rod Raymour to a season low of five points.

Sophomore Dave Erickson led NM to their first victory in nearly in nearly a month in a 58-50 over Montague on the Norse home court. Erickson pumped in 29 points on 14 field goals and a free throw to snap a five-game losing streak. Erickson also snatched 10 rebounds in one of the finest performances in NM’s long history by a sophomore.

NM acquired their fifth (and final) victory on the season and their lone road win with a 87-58 beating of Class D Pentwater. NM grabbed an early 40-21 lead at halftime and did not suffer their usual letdown in the second half. George Fisher led NM with 20 points with Rod Raymour close behind with 17. A harbinger of perhaps thongs to come in the following year was the NM Junior Varsity scoring 100 points in the preliminary. Could the varsity also top the century mark a year later?

A total of 45 fouls were called resulting in Manistee connecting on 27 of 33 free throws as NM fell 83-80 to Manistee. No one could call the two officials ‘homers’ as both referees, Harry Voss and Ralph Weiss, were one-time teachers at NMHS. NM also took many trips to the charity line and scored 20 of their 80 points on charity tosses. The three-point loss was a big improvement from their earlier meeting when NM lost to their northern visitors by 33 points back in December. The two teams would have to wait more than 40 years before they would meet once again on the hardwoods.

North Muskegon’s regular season ended as Mason County Central made amends for an earlier loss to NM and dropped the Norse into a tie in the cellar of the WMC with the Spartans. The 73-63 loss left the Norse with a regular season record of 5-2. Once again, the Norse penchant for fouling their opponents aided in their defeat as Scottville was able to attempt a whopping 42 gift shots, making 27 while the Norse were limited to 14 free throws. Rod Raymour finished with 20 points for NM with Bob Steele adding 16 and Tommy Burmiester 14.

To say that NM had a poor shooting performance in their district opener would be an understatement. NM cashed in on only 16 per cent of their field goal tries as their season ended with a 53-42 loss to Montague. NM’s poor shooting only went from bad to worse in the final quarter as they failed to connect on a single shot as their season ended with a 5-13 record. Rod Raymour ended his junior season with 15 points while Tom Burmiester cashed in 11.

N Muskegon 63 Shelby 53 Tom Burmeister 18, G. Fisher & Woodruff 12

N Muskegon 65 Oakridge 74 Rod Raymour 24, George Fisher 14.

N Muskegon 59 WMC 56 Raymour 21, Jamie Woodruff 14

N Muskegon 43 Manistee 76 Raymour 12, Chuck Cousineau 8

N Muskegon 42 Hart 56 Raymour 14

N Muskegon 73 Montague 74 Dave Erickson 17, Bob Steele 16, Raymour 14

N Muskegon 67 Whitehall 72 Raymour 23, Woodruff 14, Erickson 12

N Muskegon 67 Mason Co 64 Raymour 18, Woodruff 15, Steele 11

N Muskegon 50 Shelby 60 Raymour 18, Fisher 13

N Muskegon 72 Oakridge(ot) 77 Raymour 16, Fisher 14, Woodruff 13

N Muskegon 63 Fruitport 76 Woodruff 21, Raymour 17

N Muskegon 68 Hart 75 Ramour 18, Fisher 17

N Muskegon 49 Ravenna 62 Fisher 27

N Muskegon 58 Montague 50 Erickson 29, Woodruff 9

N Muskegon 87 Pentwater 58 Fisher 20, Raymour 17

N Muskegon 80 Manistee 83 Erickson 18 & Steele 18, Woodruff 13

N Muskegon 62 Mason Co 73 Raymour 20, Steele 16, Tom Burmeister 14

N Muskegon\*42 Montague 53 Raymour 15, Burmeister 11

**1969-70 Coach Dave Cooke (10-9 Shelby WMC Champs)**

The 1969-70 school year would welcome Ravenna into the West Michigan Conference and the WMC would remain with the same eight teams for more than 50 years before six more teams would be added to the venerable conference in 2022.

The Norsemen would post a winning 10-9 record for coach Dave Cooke who was beginning his fourth season as the basketball coach. NM would return a solid front line that included third year starter Rod Raymour along with Dave Erickson and Jamie Woodruff. A junior and a sophomore appear to be the leading prospects to start in the backcourt. Steve Mooney appears locked in as one of the starters in the backcourt while sophomore Rick Jones would earn one of the guard sports. With Jones and Woodruff on the court at the same time NM could boast of having two of NM’s all-time best quarterbacks from their football team attempting to win a basketball game.

The Norse got off to a great start as they defeated a Montague team that was regarded as one of the front runners in the WMC 65-54. The backcourt of Steve Mooney and Rick Jones were instrumental in the NM victory with 16 and 10 points respectively. It was a pair of veteran returnees who led NM in scoring with Rod Raymour scoring 18 and Woodruff 17 in a very balanced NM offensive attack.

NM made the journey to Scottville to play a Mason County team that had generally been a tough team to beat on their home court. However, not the case this season as NM was in command all the way in a 71-60 win over the host Spartans. Rod Raymour was the top NM gunner with 23 points with Dave Erickson chipping in with 16 points. The backcourt combo of Steve Mooney (13) and Rick Jones (12) had another good night for NM while Jamie Woodruff added 9 markers before fouling out late in the game.

NM nearly made it three in a row to begin the season as they gave the always tough West Michigan Christian Warriors a battle before losing 90-80. With just five minutes left in the game it was anybody’s game to win as the score was knotted up at 74-74 before the host Warriors outscored NM by 10 points in the game’s final minutes. NM’s starting five scored 79 of their 80 points. Jamie Woodruff had 21, Rod Raymour 18, Rick Jones 17, Steve Mooney 14 and Dave Erickson added nine. The only other Norse point came on a free throw from future NM football great Jeff Chrystal.

After giving up 90 points in their previous game to WMC, the Norse tightened up their defense and limited Oakridge to 27 points, 63 fewer then allowed against Christian as NM won 45-27. The low scoring affair could also be attributed to a very patient Oakridge team who took only 16 shots through the first three quarters. Rod Raymour with 14 and Dave Erickson with 13 led NM as once again the starting five scored all the points for NM as the Norse stayed perfect in the WMC at 3-0.

NM moved to 4-1 on the season and in the process snapped an 11-game losing streak to Whitehall with a 79-61 victory. NM gained a 57-24 edge on the visiting Vikings on the boards. Once again NM had a very balanced scoring attack with Raymour collecting 24 markers, followed by Woodruff (21, Jones (13) and Mooney (12). The 4-1 start for the Norse was their best start to open the season in six years.

The Norse team bus traveled through 11 inches of snow to Ravenna but all games in the area went on as scheduled. Eleven inches of snow in today’s wimpy day and age would probably have caused a postponement, and that would have been a good thing for the Norse as they lost to Ravenna 52-38. The Norse were as cold as the January weather outside the Bulldog gymnasium as they shot 0-11 in the third period. Dave Erickson was the only Norsemen in double figures with 13 points as NM dropped their first game in the WMC to a Ravenna team playing in its first season in the West Michigan Conference.

NM scored 24 third quarters points, 24 more than they made in the same quarter in their previous game with Ravenna to improve their record to 5-2 on the season with a 79-61 win over Hart on the Northside court. Rod Raymour had another big scoring night for NM with 23 points with Dave Erickson adding 18. Jamie Woodruff, in addition to his 14 points, led all rebounders with 14.

NM then were trounced by a young Shelby team that was beginning a three-year run that would prove to be the best run by a team in WMC history. The Tigers unveiled the Griffin combo – sophomore Paul and his cousin, junior Kim Griffin and the pair would combine to score 41 points in the Tigers 74-50 win over the Norse. Jamie Woodruff, the all-state quarterback on NM’s football team, led NM with 22 points.

The Norse moved into second place, two games behind Shelby following a 61-56 win over Montague to complete a season sweep over the host Wildcats. Rod Raymour led NM once again in scoring with 21 points with Jamie Woodruff adding 10. Coach Cooke strengthened his team with the callup from the Junior Varsity of sophomore Mike Schalk who came off the bench to score seven points in his varsity debut.

In a non-league contest the next night Orchard View stunned the Norse 76-66. OV coach Gale Noel, whose wife was my speech teacher at NMHS, saw his Cardinals win their third straight game and fourth win in a row in the brief series between the two teams. Raymour and Woodruff each scored 17 for NM with Mooney (13) and Erickson (12) all in double figures in the Norse loss.

NM had to go into overtime to hang onto second place in the WMC as Jamie Woodruff scored a career high 28 points for the Norsemen. NM earned 24 of their points from the free throw line with Raymour notching nine of his 17 points from the charity stripe. Also scoring well for NM were Rick Jones with 17 and Dave Erickson with 14.

NM went into overtime in their second straight outing, but the results were not as good as they were nipped in the extra session by Oakridge 69-68. The game was a total contrast from the first game played between the two when the Eagles scored but 27 points in their loss to NM. John Scraver of the Eagles hit the basket to send Oakridge into overtime and then hit the winner in the extra session to give Oakridge the victory. Jamie Woodruff scored 18 points before fouling out in the fourth quarter, one point behind team leader Rod Raymour’s 19 tallies.

6’9 Ravenna center Dan Lawrence was too much for the Norse to handle as he scored 35 points to lead Ravenna to their second win on the season over the Norse 66-57. Dave Erickson led the Norse with 19 points with Rod Raymour adding 13 and Jamie Woodruff 10 for the Norse. The two teams would meet later in the opening round of the playoffs. Would the Bulldogs make it three straight over NM?

In a game for the ages, NM shattered the single game scoring record by scoring 118 points in a 118-78 victory over outmanned Pentwater. NM scored 33 in the first quarter and 31 in the second stanza to take a 63-32 halftime lead over the Falcons. NM dominated in the rebounding department with 79 boards to but 17 for the much smaller Falcons. Eleven players scored for NM with six players reaching double figures for the Norse. Those in double digits included Rod Raymour (26), Jamie Woodruff (21), Steve Mooney (14), Rick Jones (12), Dave Erickson (11) and sophomore Mike Schalk (10). It was the second game NM would tally over 100 points and remains 54 years later still a single game scoring record.

Hart then stunned the Norse with an 83-77 win over NM to split the season series between the two rivals. The loss dropped the Norse into a second-place tie with Ravenna in the WMC. So evenly matched were WMC teams behind league leader Shelby that a 6-5 record was good for second place. Rick Jones tossed in 18 points to lead the Norse with Woodruff meshing 16 and Erickson 15. NM chances for victory were hampered when Rod Raymour left in the second half with an ankle injury.

While the Norsemen was losing to the Hart on February 20, 1970, the ‘ole announcer’ was still in Traverse City calling the play-by-play for Traverse City’s game with Muskegon. It was a night that Muskegon’s Larry Tatum will long remember as he set a still standing Muskegon scoring record with 50 points. The officials for the JV game never got the message that they were to work the JV game and never showed. I was then asked to fill in as the sole referee so the JV teams could at least play a game. After working up a sweat from this game I then had to bring my now smelly body up to the broadcast booth to call Tatum’s 50-point record. Muskegon was credited with a 2-0 JV forfeit victory.

Scoring points was seldom a big problem for the Norse as they went over the 90-point mark in a 91-76 victory over Fruitport. Jamie Woodruff became the fifth NM player in school history to score 30 or more points in a single game. Dave Erickson was a field goal shy of also scoring 30 as he finished with 28 points. Also scoring in double figures were sophomores Rick Jones (16) and Mike Schalk with 10 as Rod Raymour sat out the contest nursing an ankle injury.

Although they didn’t win, the Norsemen gave a good account of themselves in their 84-72 loss to WMC league champs Shelby. The Norse welcomed back Rod Raymour to their lineup, but NM had no answer for 6’5 junior Kim Griffin who scored 35 points. Raymour scored 16 points in his return to the lineup while Jamie Woodruff had his second consecutive high scoring game with 26 points and 16 rebounds.

There’s the often-used term that it’s tough to defeat a team three times in a season. Whether that is true or not it was applicable this season when NM stopped a Ravenna three-peat with a 65-58 victory over the Bulldogs in the playoff opener. NM took advantage of Ravenna’s 6’9 center Jim Lawrence getting into foul trouble and having to sit for major minutes of the second half. NM. With Lawrence sitting, the Norse led 46-42 heading into the final period. Jamie Woodruff was a steady performer for NM with 15 points and 14 rebounds. Rick Jones led Norse scorers with 16 and Rod Raymour 12 as NM earned a date in the district finals in Whitehall with West Michigan Christian.

The Warriors had a tough draw in the Class C district and were forced to play three games to advance to the district finals. WMC defeated the WMC champs Shelby in begin the playoffs and were heavy favorites to defeat NM. The Norse gave the Warriors a real scare and once enjoyed a 45-34 lead over the Warriors. WMC then showed their poise and bounced back to overtake NM and took the lead for good at the end of the third period at 53-51. Rod Raymour had a great game in his final appearance in a Norsemen uniform with 22 points. Rick Jones added 14 for NM while Jamie Woodruff was held to four points.

The Norse season came to an end with a winning record and a season that was most entertaining for Norse followers. NM would have a team comprised of several three-sport participant’s that would be back for the 1970 football season, a team that could arguably stake their claim as one of the best in NM history.

N Muskegon 65 Montague 54 Rod Raymour 18, Jamie Woodruff 17

N Muskegon 71 Mason Co 60 Raymour 23, Dave Erickson 16, S. Mooney 13

N Muskegon 80 WMC 90 Woodruff 21, Raymour 18, Rick Jones 17

N Muskegon 45 Oakridge 27 Raymour 14, Erickson 13, Woodruff 9

N Muskegon 79 Whitehall 61 Raymour 24, Woodruff 21, Jones 13

N Muskegon 38 Ravenna 52 Erickson 13

N Muskegon 74 Hart 61 Raymour 23, Erickson 18, Woodruff 14.

N Muskegon 50 Shelby 74 Woodruff 22

N Muskegon 61 Montague 56 Raymour 21, Woodruff 10, Mike Schalk 7

N Muskegon 66 Orchard View 76 Raymour & Woodruff 17, Mooney 13

N Muskegon 80 Mason Co (ot) 75 Woodruff 28, Raymour, 17, Jones 17

N Muskegon 68 Oakridge (ot) 69 Raymour 19, Woodruff 18, Jones 14

N Muskegon 57 Ravenna 66 Erickson 19,

N Muskegon 118 Pentwater 78 Six Norse in double figures: Raymour 26

N Muskegon 77 Hart 83 Woodruff 16, Erickson 15

N Muskegon 91 Fruitport 76 Woodruff 30, Erickson 28, Jones 16

N Muskegon 72 Shelby 84 Woodruff 26, Raymour 16, Schalk 14

N Muskegon\*65 Ravenna 58 Jones 16, Raymour12

N Muskegon\*62 WMC 70 Raymour 22, Jones 14

**1970-71 Coach Dave Cooke (9-9, Shelby WMC Champs & State champs)**

NM would begin the season with five lettermen returning from their winning season from the previous year but the loss of All-conference performers like Rod Raymour and Jamie Woodruff would create big holes for the upcoming season. Many of the NM players would be coming off from performing on one of the top football teams in NM annals where they posted a perfect 8-0 record and were never threatened in any game. Rick Jones is back as a returning starter along with Mike Schalk, a callup from the Junior Varsity team who moved into the rotation midway through the 1969-70 campaign. Jeff Chrystal, arguably the best wide receiver in NM’s football history also earned his letter from last season’s basketball team. All three of the above-mentioned players were juniors.

Although still rusty from their incredible football season the Norsemen had enough firepower to open their season with a 74-69 win against Montague. All five starters for NM were members of the undefeated football team with three-year starter Dave Erickson leading the way with 20 points. All-Conference quarterback Rick Jones followed with 17 while Mike Schalk added 15 and all-conference linebacker in football Jim Dagen had 10 in his first year on the NM varsity.

A cold shooting first quarter put the Norsemen into an early hole, and they couldn’t recover as Mason County tripped up the host Norse 81-73. Four Norsemen were in double figures in the loss with Dave Erickson and Steve Mooney each with 15 points followed by Rick Jones with 14 and Jim Dagen with 10.

For only the third time in 16 meetings were the Norse able to defeat a West Michigan Christian team. With former Warrior Eddie Heethuis taking over the coaching duties from Elmer Walcott, WMC had no answer for the NM trio of Rick Jones, Mike Schalk and Dave Erickson as the threesome scored 61 of NM’s 73 points. The Norse led at the end of every stop in a rare win over WMC. Taking some time off from coaching, Walcott in February was a hero when he noticed his next-door neighbor in February of 1971 had not been seen for a couple of days. Walcott broke into his neighbor’s home and found his 75-year-old neighbor on the basement floor suffering from a broken hip, saving the lady’s life.

The Hart Pirates turned a close game at halftime (31-29) into a runaway as the host Pirates scored 32 points in the third period in a 76-60 win over NMHS. Rick Jones led the losing Norsemen with 21 points while his favorite receiver in football Jeff Chrystal added 12 as the Norse evened their record at 2-2 but only 1-2 in conference play.

For the second season in a row, NM would surpass the century mark in points scored with a 101-54 rout of Kent City. The Norse might not have reached the 100-point mark if not for a ‘Jack Cooper’ moment by a Kent City player to begin the game. Much like Cooper did for NM in a game with Hart in 1953, a confused Kent City player scored a basket in the wrong bucket, giving NM an early 2-0 lead. From there NM would score 99 points from their own shooters in only the third game ever played between NM and Kent City, with the first meeting going back to 1935. Dave Erickson led the 11 Norse players who scored in the game with 22 points, followed by Jeff Chrystal with 18.

They didn’t score 100 points, but the Norsemen came close as their athletic team poured in 93 points, including 32 in the final period to hand Ravenna a 93-62 beating. Dave Erickson, Mike Schalk and Rick Jones combined to score 67 of NM’s 93 points as all eleven NM players suited up for the game in Ravenna scored.

The run and gun Norsemen scored 90 or more points for the third consecutive game as they poured in 91 points in a 91-62 win over Oakridge. It didn’t appear the long three-week layoff between games for the holidays affected the Norse shooters. The Norse put this game away by halftime with a commanding 50-21 lead as coach Dave Cooke used mainly subs in the second half. Mike Schalk led NM with 20 points as 10 Norsemen scored in the contest. Dave Erickson had 18 points in the NM balanced attack with Jim Dagen adding 15 and Jeff Chrystal 13 more as NM improved to 3-2 in the conference with a big contest with Shelby next on the schedule.

Shelby showed NM and the rest of the area basketball fans that this Tiger team was indeed special as they dominated the Norsemen 87-50. Kim Griffin and his cousin Paul combined to score 46 points to nearly match the entire NM team total as Shelby moved to 7-0. Only Dave Erickson with 17 and Rick Jones with 10 were able to score in double figures for the Norse. The Tigers would be the only team to hold NM under 60 points in the entire season, and the Tigers did it twice.

NM regained their shooting eye once again at the expense of Montague as NM once again surpassed 90 points in a 92-83 shootout with Montague. NM moved to 6-3 on the season and 4-3 in the WMC. Once again NM relied on several scorers in the shootout highlighted by Dave Erickson’s 30 points, the sixth Norseman to score 30 or more in a single game. NM unleashed 81 shots during the contest with 32 finding the range. Rick Jones added 21, Jim Dagen 18 and Mike Schalk 12.

NM scored 29 fewer points in their 1971 win over Pentwater as opposed to their record-breaking scoring barrage with the Falcons last season. Still, NM was able to post 89 on the scoreboard in an 89-73 win over Pentwater. In the back-to-back Friday-Saturday games with Montague and Pentwater NM scored 181 points.

NM then outdid themselves in their next game against a winless Orchard View team as NM came one point shy of the century mark with a 99-61 thumping of the Cardinals. Steve Mooney had his highest scoring output of the season with 25 points as five Norsemen reached double figures. Rick Jones (20), Mike Schalk (14), Jeff Chrystal (13, and Dave Erickson (11). Just when it seemed NM was playing its best basketball, the final one-third of the season would see NM’s fortunes going in the wrong direction.

For the first time in nearly 40 years an NM basketball a game was postponed due to weather conditions as the NM away game with Mason County Central was postposed to February 9th due to blizzard conditions. However, most of the other games in the Muskegon area went on as scheduled. It was de ja vu just one week later as a Friday scheduled game with Hart was postponed for one day. Once again, the Norse were able to score at will, but so did their rivals from Hart who outscored the Norse 88-84. The Saturday night game at the Northside court saw NM’s Dave Erickson tally 24 points, followed by Mike Schalk with 18, Steve Mooney had 17 and Rick Jones netted 10 as NM dropped their second game of the season to the Pirates.

Once again 90 points were scored in a NM game but unfortunately for Norse followers, it was Mason County Central who had the high scoring honors with a 93-70 win over the Norse. NM was doomed at halftime as the host Spartans had a commanding 47-31 advantage as the Norse sputtered in the Tuesday make-up game played in Scottville. Mike Schalk led the Norse with 15, while Rick Jones had 13 and Tom Kesteloot a season high 12.

After beating Ravenna by nearly 30 points in December, the Bulldogs gave NM a real scare in the rematch as NM survived 63-61. A baseline jumper by Rick Jones broke a 61-61 deadlock late in the game to insure NM of their ninth win of the season. There was still nearly a minute to play after the Jones two-pointer, but Ravenna turned the ball over on a traveling call, NM missed two free throws, and Ravenna missed a possible tying basket at the end as coach Dave Cooke breathed a sigh of relief. Dave Erickson had 19, Rick Jones 17 and Mike Schalk 11 to lead the Norsemen.

NM then played back-to-back games on Friday and Saturday and lost on both nights, first to Whitehall and then it was Oakridge who handed the Norse a defeat 24 hours later. To lose at Whitehall was no surprise as the Vikings gym was always a tough place to come away with a win. Whitehall led all the way as the hosts connected on nearly fifty per cent of their shots. So balanced was the NM scoring that Dave Erickson, Jeff Chrystal and Rick Jones all scored 16 points, while Jim Dagen, Mike Schalk, and Steve Mooney all had eight.

After earlier losing to the Norse in front of their home fans, the Eagles found the Norsemen gym much better to their liking as they rebounded from an earlier 29-point defeat to stun the Norsemen 86-81. Dave Erickson had scoring honors for the Norse with 21 points while Mike Schalk collected 17.

A powerful Shelby team rolled to its first unbeaten season in school history as the Tigers methodically destroyed the Norse 89-56 to end the regular season at 17-0. It would only get better for the Tigers, and they would romp to the Class C state championship. So special was this Tiger team that they would be inducted into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame. Dave Erickson was the only Norsemen in double figures with 23 points. The 1970-71 state champs from Shelby defeated all their foes by an average of 30 points per game.

History didn’t repeat itself after NM had lost twice to Ravenna during the regular season last year before winning in a playoff game. There was no third game jinx for Hart as they rolled to their third straight win over the Norse 84-65 to end the Norsemen’s season at 9-9. Dave Erickson ended his splendid career for the Norse with 24 points and 15 rebounds as NM ended their season by dropping their final four games.

For those who like high scoring games then the 1970-71 would be your team.

Employing a helter-skelter offense and a full court pressing defense, this Dave Cooke coached team can boast that they were the highest scoring team in more than 90 years of NM basketball. The Norse averaged 77 points per game. However, that mark should be tempered by knowing that they gave up more than 75 points per game, also the most scored against an NM team.

N Muskegon 74 Montague 69 Dave Erickson 20, Rick Jones 17, M Schalk 15

N Muskegon 73 Mason Co 81 Erickson & Steve Mooney 15, Jones 14

N Muskegon 73 WMC 67 Jones 23, Erickson 21, Mike Schalk 17

N Muskegon 60 Hart 76 Jones 21, Jeff Chrystal 12

N Muskegon 101 Kent City 54 Erickson 22, Chrystal 18, Jones & Mooney 12

N Muskegon 93 Ravenna 62 Erickson 25, Schalk 23, Jones 19

N Muskegon 91 Oakridge 62 Schalk 20, Erickson 18, Dagen 15, Chrystal 13

N Muskegon 50 Shelby 87 Erickson 17, Jones 10

N Muskegon 92 Montague 83 Erickson 30, Jones 21, Dagen 18, Schalk 12

N Muskegon 89 Pentwater 73 No report in MC played Jan 23

N Muskegon 99 OV 61 Mooney, 25, Jones 20, Schalk 14, Chrystal 13

N Muskegon 84 Hart 88 Erickson 24, Schalk 18, Mooney 17, Jones 10

N Muskegon 70 Mason Co 93 Schalk 15, Jones 13, Tom Kesteloot 12

N Muskegon 63 Ravenna 61 Erickson 19, Jones 17, Schalk 11

N Muskegon 72 Whitehall 83 Erickson, Chrystal & Jones 16 points.

N Muskegon 81 Oakridge 86 Erickson 21, Schalk 17

N Muskegon 56 Shelby 89 Erickson 23

N Muskegon\* 65 Hart 84 Erickson 24, Jones 10

**1971-72 Coach Dave Cooke (9-9, Shelby- MCC co- Champs, Shelby State Champ)**

There was euphoria heading into the 1971-72 basketball season as NM was still celebrating their 1971 mythical state championship football team. However, football did take its toll early into the season as football injuries would sideline a couple of returning starters to begin the season; all-state football player Jeff Chrystal and all-conference linebacker Jim Dagen. Chrystal’s injury appeared to be the most serious of the two and Jeff would miss the first six games of the season. NM would return four of their five starters from their 9-9 record from the previous season but would surely miss their leading scorer, all-conference front line performer Dave Erickson. The four starters returning, all football players along with Dagen and Chrystal, included Mike Schalk and all-state quarterback Rick Jones. Yet another football player who lettered and saw considerable action from last season was Tom Kesteloot, the tallest Norse player at a modest 6’2. Cooke would utilize these all-around athletes and once again employ a running game that would produce another high scoring team.

NM would have the disadvantage of opening the season with a Montague team that had already had the experience of playing a game while the Norse would play without their two starters injured in football. Mike Schalk with 24 and Rick Jones with 19 tried to take up the scoring slack as the two three-sport standouts scored 43 of their teams 55 points in an 81-55 loss to the visiting Wildcats.

NM welcomed Jim Dagen back to their lineup and Dagen responded with a team high 20 points, but it wasn’t enough as NM dropped a road win to Mason County Central 82-75. The game was tight all the way with the host Spartan leading the visiting Norsemen 58-54 heading into the final quarter. Mike Schalk had 17, Rick Jones 14 and Gary Ray 10 for the losing Norsemen.

North Muskegon had no answer to stop the towering West Michigan Warriors from controlling the backboards in a 77-54 loss to the Warriors. WMC outrebounded the smaller Norse by an astounding 77-31 margin. Jim Dagen again led NM in scoring with 18 markers with Gary Ray tossing in 13 and Rick Jones 12. The Warriors were fortunate that Mike Schalk had an off night as the senior guard was held to a season low of 3 points.

Mike Schalk bounced back from his season low to score 27 points but fouled out late in the game that led to a Hart Pirate run that culminated in a 59-53 victory over the Norse. The defeat was the fourth straight loss to begin the season and the eighth straight defeat over a two-year period for the Norsemen. Gary Ray chipped in with 13 points and Jim Dagen 10 and in this game, it was Rick Jones who had a season low with two points.

Both Rick Jones and Mike Schalk had big games as each scored 26 points to lead NM to their first victory of the season, 76-69 over Ravenna. Jones and Schalk had identical stat lines of 10 field goals and six free throws to give their team their first win after losing eight straight over a two-year period. “It was the first time this year we did a real good job on the boards,” said NM coach Dave Cooke.

Kent City gave up 101 points in their last meeting with the Norse losing by 47 points, but it was much closer a year later as NM escaped with an 84-82 victory over the host Eagle team. Rick Jones sank a pair of free throws with three-seconds left for the game winning points. Five Norse were in double figures in their second straight victory after starting the season with four losses. Mike Schalk pumped in 31 points to lead all Norse scorers and became the seventh player in Norse history to surpass the 30-point mark. Rick Jones and Dave Moore each scored 12 while Tom Kesteloot with 11 and Jim Dagen with 10 gave Schalk some much needed support in the two-point victory.

NM resumed action from the Holiday break by winning their third straight with an 82-51 rout of a winless Oakridge team. Jim Dagen notched 23 points with plenty of help from Mike Schalk with 19 and Tom Kesteloot with 12. Coach Cooke was happy to welcome back to the lineup Jeff Chrystal who came off the bench to score nine points.

Shelby had to have all the incentive when NM visited the home of the Tigers on Jan 14, 1972. Just a week earlier Shelby had their 39-game winning streak come to an end in a loss at Mason County Central. NM had to pay the price for the Shelby anger as the Paul Griffin led Tigers trounced the Norsemen 90-53. NM ‘held’ the future WMU Bronco and NBA star to 37 points and 26 rebounds. Mike Schalk continued his fine scoring with 21 points with Rick Jones chipping in with 12.

NM found Montague to be a much easier opponent. After losing to the Wildcats in the season opener NM won their second match 72-59. NM led at every stop as Mike Schalk poured in 22 points to lead Norse scorers while Jim Dagen netted 13.

Twenty-four hours after the win over Montague NM needed a career game from Tom Kesteloot to just edge Pentwater 73-72. The Norse trailed the Falcons by four points with two minutes to go before Kersteloot led NM to the narrow victory. Kesteloot popped in three quick field goals in the final two minutes to rally the Norse to their fifth win in their last six starts. Kesteloot was also a force on the boards with 15 rebounds to go along with his career high 21 points. Mike Schalk added 15, Rick Jones 14 and Jim Dagen 10.

For the second straight year the Norse scored more than 90 points against Orchard View with a 94-75 win on the Cardinals home court. For the second time this season Mike Schalk and Rick Jones scored 26 points in the same game. Jeff Chrystal had his best game since recovering from a football injury with 17 markers while Jim Dagen notched 10 as NM kept their winning effort going with their sixth win in their last seven meetings after a bad 0-4 start.

Coach Dave Cooke’s Norsemen had shown remarkable improvement since the 0-4 start to begin the season. NM led for most of the game against a Mason County team that only a few days earlier had handed Shelby their first WMC defeat in 39 games. The Spartans entered the Norse gym ranked as the number one team in Class C but never took the lead over a game NM team until the final minutes in a hard fought 76-72 win over the Norse. Five times the game was tied in the final period before the Spartan would pull away. In what must be a first, all five starters from North Muskegon would foul out of the game. with Mason County taking full advantage of the tightly called game by making 32 of 42 free throws. Mike Schalk was magnificent for the losers with 26 points while Jeff Chrystal had 17 and Jim Dagen 13.

It appeared the Norse were headed for an easy victory in their rematch with Hart as they took a 25-14 lead into the second quarter. Hart then switched into a zone press that bothered the Norse as Hart roared back to earn a 75-69 lead. Mike Schalk had yet another big night with 22 points to pace the Norse with Jeff Chrystal adding 10 and Tom Kesteloot 10.

Whitehall was still in the Seaway Conference throughout the 1970s but the two close rivals were always on each other’s schedule and would remain so for more than 50 years until the WMC expanded in the 2021-22 season. Bothered by a press in their loss to Hart the Norse had no trouble with a Whitehall press to post an 88-73 victory on the friendly Northside court. For the 10th time during the season Mike Schalk scored more than 20 points as he poured in 28 markers in the game labeled as an upset in the Muskegon Chronicle. Future Whitehall head coach Mark Will paced Whitehall with 22 points while NM’s Jim Dagen and Tom Kesteloot had 16 and 14 points while also collecting 15 rebounds each.

For a brief period, they played in the dark in Ravenna. Early into the junior varsity game an auto hit a power pole and knocked out the lights in much of Ravenna, including Ravenna high school. It would be two hours before the lights came back on and play resumed with NM winning 77-72. Rick Jones led NM with a career high 28 points while Mike Schalk again surpassed the 20-point barrier with 21 markers.

North Muskegon won their ninth game of the season as Tom Kesteloot scored a career high 33 points as NM defeated winless Oakridge 91-72. High scoring Mike Schalk was content to feed his teammates as he scored but seven points in the contest. Subs played much of the game as ten Norsemen entered the scoring column.

NM had no answer for Paul Griffin who had 37 points and 24 rebounds as Shelby defeated NM 110 -73, the most points ever allowed by a NM team. Mike Schalk played his final home game on the NM court and scored a career high 35 points. Only Gordy Odell had scored more points than Schalk’s 35 points up to this date in 1972.

There would be no March Madness for the Norse this year. Thanks to this being a leap year, the first round of the playoffs came on February 29th and perennial power West Michigan Christian ended NM’s season 91-76 in the Class C districts held in Hart. NM stayed with the 7th ranked Warriors as they trailed by only a single point, 38-37 at halftime. The Warrior then broke a 45-45 tie by going on a nine-point run to pull away from the Norse. Mike Schalk ended his career with 31 points, his third game scoring 30 or more points in a game. Earlier in the season the Warriors held Schalk to a season low three points. Rick Jones capped his career in splendid fashion with a career high 29 points.

When I look back at the 1971-72 season, I find the WMC conference, as well as NM’s schedule, as arguably the strongest in NM history. Shelby would advance to win the Class C state championship for the second year in a row. One of Shelby’s losses was to Mason County Central. Following MCC’s win over Shelby the Spartans moved to number one in the state rankings. Shelby also lost once to West Michigan Christian but then came back to beat WMC twice, with the big win coming in the district championship in a game that may have decided a state champion. Six of NM’s losses during the season came against these three powerhouse teams. Coach Dave Cooke, again utilizing the athleticism of his team, ran a run and gun offense that averaged 73 points per game, second only to the 1970-71 team that put up 77 points each game, far and away the top two offensive seasons in NM annals. Mike Schalk had one of the best seasons in NM history as he poured in 404 points, an average of more than 22 points each game. Three times Schalk scored more than 30 points in a game, a feat only accomplished up to this date by the great Gordy Odell in 1955. And Schalk didn’t score his points against mediocre competition. Schalk in his final six games of the season scored 26 against Mason County, 35 against the state championship Shelby team, and in his final appearance in a Norse uniform, scored 31 against 7th ranked WMC. Only in NM’s 30-point victory over a very poor Oakridge team did Schalk not score more than his 22-point average. Instead, he scored but seven points, as he was content to set up his teammates instead of padding his own stats. Mike Schalk left us all too soon in an automobile accident. How proud Mike would be to see what his son, who was too young at the time of Mike’s passing to remember what his father had accomplished. Ryan Schalk was named the coach of the year in the GLIAC conference as the head coach of the GLIAC championship Saginaw Valley University softball team

N Muskegon 55 Montague 61 Mike Schalk 24, Rick Jones 19

N Muskegon 75 Mason Co 82 Jim Dagen 20, Schalk 17, Jones 14

N Muskegon 54 WMC 77 Dagen 18, Gary Ray 13, Jones 12

N Muskegon 53 Hart 59 Schalk 27, Ray 13, Dagen 10

N Muskegon 76 Ravenna 69 Schalk & Jones 26 points, Dagen 10

N Muskegon 84 Kent City 82 Schalk 31, Jones & Dave Moore 12

N Muskegon 82 Oakridge 51 Dagen 23, Schalk 19, Tom Kesteloot 12

N Muskegon 53 Shelby 90 Schalk 21, Jones 12

N Muskegon 72 Montague 59 Schalk 22, Dagen 13

N Muskegon 73 Pentwater 72 Kesteloot 21, Schalk 15, Jones 14, Dagen 10

N Muskegon 94 Orchard View 75 Schalk & Jones 26 points, Jeff Chrystal 17

N Muskegon 72 Mason Co 76 Schalk 26, Chrystal 17, Dagen 13

N Muskegon 69 Hart 75 Schalk 22, Chrystal 13, Kesteloot 10

N Muskegon 88 Whitehall 73 Schalk 28, Dagen 16, Kesteloot 14

N Muskegon 77 Ravenna 72 Jones 28, Schalk 21, Crystal & Kesteloot 10

N Muskegon 91 Oakridge 72 Kesteloot 33, Jones & Dagen 12

N Muskegon 73 Shelby 110 Schalk 35,

N Muskegon\*76 WMC 91 Schalk 31, Jones 29

**1972-73 Coach Dave Nelson (5-16 overall, Ravenna WMC champs)**

Dave Cooke left North Muskegon (but he would return) to take over as the head football coach at Reeths Puffer. Replacing Cooke was former Muskegon High, Central Michigan star, and Muskegon Panther professional basketball player Dave Nelson. Nelson, who would come to North Muskegon after serving as the head coach at Holton, would inherit virtually an entirely new team as all five starters and a few reserves from the previous year had all departed via graduation. Only Dave Moore, Jerry Brevick and Chris Laundra saw spot action from the previous season. NM would take their lumps early into the season, but they did improve in the second half of the season and would get way better the following year. The new coach was candid about his upcoming season: “We don’t have any experience, height, or lettermen back,” said a forthright Nelson.

The same could be said for Shelby as they too lost almost their entire roster from the back-to-back Class C state champs. The Norse gave the host Tigers a real battle before coming out on the short end of a 70-69 score. Jim Duplissis scored 20 points with Tom Thornton netting 16 for NM. Jerry Brevick, who played sparingly in a reserve role last year added 17 points for his new coach Dave Nelson.

It took only the first few minutes of their second game of the season to see that the Norse were headed for a long season with their young club. WMC bolted out to a 25-7 lead at the end of the first quarter and by the time the final horn had sounded NM was staring at the scoreboard of a 96-37 defeat, the most lopsided loss up until that date in program history. Tommy Thornton led the low NM output with 11 points.

It didn’t get any better in their next contest with Mason County Central as NM was walloped by the visiting Spartans 84 to 49. Once again, this game was over by the end of the first stanza as MCC led 17-5. Tom Thornton had 14 while Jerry Brevick netted 10 for the 0-3 Norseman.

New NM coach Dave Nelson recorded his first win as the NM cage coach, and he has Tom Thornton to thank. Thornton scored 32 points, the ninth Norsemen to score 30 or more points as the Norse defeated Montague 60-52. Thornton was uncanny from the free throw line as he buried 14 of his 15 attempts. Jerry Brevick also reached double figures for the first-time winners with 12 points.

One may find it hard to believe that a team that led 11-10 at the end of the first quarter would find themselves losing by 45 at game’s end but that was true in Hart’s 85-45 victory over NM. Hart led by 12 at halftime but then just blitzed the Norsemen on the Pirates home floor in the second half to keep the Pirates undefeated in the early part of the season while the Norsemen would fall to 1-4. Tom Thornton topped all scorers with 22 points as no other NM player scored more than six points.

It’s a good thing NM had Kent City on their schedule as two of their five wins on the season came against Kent City. Tom Thornton continued his fine scoring with 22 points with 10 of his points coming at the charity strip where he swished 10 of his 11 attempts. Jerry Brevick was second in scoring for the Norse with nine points.

The Norse were aided in their victory when Kent City shot a woeful 13 of 31 free throws.

In the final game of 1972 for the Norsemen the Norse hung with the much taller Ravenna Bulldogs for three quarters, but the Norse caved in to the Bulldogs when Tommy Thornton fouled out early into the last quarter. Ravenna turned a close game into an 83-56 laugher after Tom Thornton fouled our early in the fourth quarter after scoring 23 points. The Bulldogs went on a 27-7 run in the game’s final eight minutes.

NM returned from the Holiday break looking to continue their unbeaten record against Pentwater. That did not happen as Pentwater handed NM an 80-42 trouncing. The Norse shot an abysmal 4 for 44 in the second half with only Jerry Brevick in double figures with 13 points.

A big time second half by their opponents sent the Norse to an 80-59 defeat by Oakridge. NM was in contention at the halftime break, trailing 40-36, but were soundly outgunned in the second half beginning with a 25-9 run against the Norsemen in the third period. Jerry Brevick with 13 and Jim Peters with 11 paced the Norse.

NM coach Dave Nelson couldn’t have asked for a better Christmas present. Tom Fillipow, arguably the most talented transfer student in NM history, moved with his family from Florida to North Muskegon and immediately made a huge impact for Norsemen basketball. The 6’4 Fillipow scored 20 points, picked off 16 rebounds and dished off seven assists to lead NM to a 65-55 victory against the 1971 & 72 Class C state champs, the Shelby Tigers. Fillipow wasn’t the only addition to the Norse lineup as football star Tom Achterhoff also made his debut and scored 16 points.

There was good news across the country on January 26, 1973, as the Vietnam War was ending, but not so good news for NM basketball as the Norsemen dropped their game 48-40 to Montague. NM was 0-1 at the free throw line while Montague made 13 charity throws for the difference in the victory. Tom Fillipow netted 14 and Jerry Brevick scored NM 10 as NM struggled to put points on the board.

Mason County continued their home court dominance over the years against the visiting Norsemen with a 79-54 triumph. Tom Thornton kept NM in the game early with 18 of his team high 24 points coming in the first half as NM fell to 3-9 on the season.

The Norse kept within range of Hart as NM trailed the Pirates 29-27 in a slow game that was in complete contrast from the Dave Cooke years at NMHS. Hart then outscored the host Norsemen 15-10 in the final period to earn a 44-37 victory. Tom Fillipow with 20 points, scored more than half of NM’s total points. Hart would have one of their best teams ever, even though they did not win the WMC. The Pirates did win the Class C regional before losing to Saginaw St. Stephens in the quarterfinals.

NM had the unenviable task of attempting to derail the Ravenna Express on the Bulldogs homecourt. Ravenna was boasting of perhaps their best team in Ravenna history as they improved their record to 17-1 with an easy 78-44 romp over NM. Tom Fillipow, hampered by early fouls, still led NM with 11 points. Tim Coletta led the balanced Ravenna machine with 22 points.

Orchard View was never in trouble in an 81-66 victory over North Muskegon on the Norsemen’s home court. First year head coach Mike Henry’s Cardinals improved their edge over NM in every quarter to even their record at 9-9 while the Norse were still looking for that elusive number four victory. Tom Thornton tossed in 21 points and Tom Fillipow 14 with Jerry Brevick also in double figures in the loss with 11.

Although they lost, it was apparent that NM was improving despite losing to Whitehall 81-68. The game was tied at one point at 51-all, and the Norse trailed by only four at 60-56 heading into the final quarter. Tom Thornton had his second 30-point game on the season to lead the Norse while Tom Fillipow had 14 points and 15 rebounds.

NM lost to Oakridge 86-75 in the final game of the regular season but served notice that with junior Tom Fillipow returning for the following season, NM fortunes would be on the rise. Fillipow poured in 35 points in the loss, but the Norsemen committed a whopping 32 turnovers. NM wouldn’t have to wait long to see if they would earn at least one win on the season with Oakridge as they drew the Eagles as their first-round opponent in the playoffs.

Once again NM showed that it’s tough to beat a team three times in a season, or twice in a week, as NM pulled a mild upset with an opening round 76-65 playoff victory over Oakridge, just five days following their previous meeting. Tom Fillipow scored 32 points, his second straight 30 plus output over Oakridge while also pulling down 15 rebounds. Jerry Brevick added some additional firepower for NM with a season high 20 points.

NM surely received a favorable draw in the Class C District tournament played at Spring Lake High School. NM made it two straight wins in the tournament as well as two wins on the season over Kent City with a commanding 88-49 win vs. the Eagles, easily their highest scoring output on the season. Four Norsemen were in double figures topped by Tom Thornton’s 23 points with Tom Fillipow close behind with 20. Jerry Brevick with 13 and Chris Laundra with 10 added to the Norse total as they advanced to the Class C district championship against 19-1 Ravenna.

NM gave the Bulldogs a much better game than in their first two blow-out losses to the Bulldogs before losing in the district title match 64-54. Ravenna was playing without their star point guard Tim Coletta who was injured in the final minutes of Ravenna’s win over West Michigan Christian in the district semi-finals. Juniors Tom Fillipow with 21 and Tom Thornton with 15 gave notice that NM will be a much tougher out when the following season begins.

N Muskegon 69 Shelby 70 Jim Duplissis 20, Tom Thornton 17

N Muskegon 37 WMC 96 Thornton 11

N Muskegon 49 Mason Co 84 Thornton 14, Jerry Brevick 10

N Muskegon 60 Montague 52 Thornton 32, Brevick 12

N Muskegon 45 Hart 85 Thornton 22, Brevick 6

N Muskegon63 Kent City 41 Thorton 22

N Muskegon 56 Ravenna 83 Thornton 23

N Muskegon 42 Pentwater 80 Brevick 13

N Muskegon 59 Oakridge 80 Brevick 13, Jim Peters 11

N Muskegon65 Shelby 55 Tom Fillipow 20, Tom Achterhoff 16

N Muskegon 40 Montague 48 Fillipow 14, Brevick 10

N Muskegon 54 Mason Co 79 Thornton 24

N Muskegon 37 Hart 44 Fillipow 20

N Muskegon 44 Ravenna 78 Fillipow 11

N Muskegon 66 Orchard View 81 Thornton 21, Fillipow 14, Brevick 11

N Muskegon 68 Whitehall 81 Thornton 30, Fillipow 14, 15 rebounds

N Muskegon 75 Oakridge 86 Fillipow 35

N Muskegon\*76 Oakridge 65 Fillipow 32, Brevick 20

N Muskegon\*88 Kent City 49 Thornton 23, Fillipow 30, Brevick 13

N Muskegon\*54 Ravenna 64 Fillipow 21, Thornton 21, Brevick 10

**1973-74 Coach Dave Nelson 14-8 overall, District & Regional Champs – Montague WMC Champs)**

Three starters returned from last year’s team as for the first time in since 1935 NMHS would drop down in enrollment where they would compete in Class D. In 1935 the Norsemen advanced all the way to the quarterfinals. Would history repeat itself in 1973-74? One of the returnees would be 6’4 Tom Fillipow, one of the finest to ever don the Blue & Gold uniform for NM. He would be joined by Tom Thornton, a prolific scorer who twice as a junior scored 30 points in a single contest. Coach Dave Nelson would welcome back Tom Achterhoff, an outstanding football player who could also play roundball very well. 6’2 junior Larry Williams, arguably the best baseball player in Norse history would bring his wiry 6’2 frame to the Norse starting lineup. One who saw but limited time in his junior season, but who had improved immeasurably over the offseason was 5’7 Bob Cordo. 6’1 all-state football player Jerry Crocker would add some muscle to the lineup while 5’8 Nick Nedeau would provide Coach Nelson with some valuable minutes.

A name that is synonymous with Shelby basketball, Rock Zoulek connected on a 25-footer with two seconds remaining to defeat North Muskegon 64-62 to begin the 1973-74 season. Fifty years later, Rick Zoulek continues to lead Shelby as their long-time (and I do mean long-time) head basketball coach. Zoulek’s game winning shot spoiled the opening game for NM’s Tom Fillipow who had 27 points and 18 rebounds. Coach Nelson following the game was not happy with how NM was not able to handle Shelby’s pressing defense.

Western Michigan Christian welcomed back their former coach who returned to guide the Warriors after taking a few years off. Elmer Walcott, who had already won four state championships was back in charge and WMC responded with an 88-72 win over the visiting Norsemen.

After Montague handed the Norsemen their third straight loss 63-50, it was imperative if NM was to turn their season in the right directions they needed to go on a streak. Lack of rebounding hurt NM with Tom Fillipow again leading the Norsemen with 18 points with Tom Thornton adding 10.

Overshadowing NM’s first win of the season, a 50-39 victory over Hart was the play of the first NM girls’ team in school history. The Lady Norse defeated Memphis High 47-43 to advance to the first ever state finals for the gals to be played in MHSAA history. Nancy Dean led the gals in scoring with 15. One oddity in the game was the gals from Memphis were wearing uniforms from Alma High, the site of the state finals in 1973, as there was a mix-up as both teams arrived with only uniforms in dark colors. NM would go on to play in the state championship game only to lose to Ewen-Trout-Creek. The Lady Norse played their quarterfinal game in Traverse City City against Hillman. What a surprise I got when three of my teachers, who I surely caused all three some premature gray hairs as a student in the late 1950s, asked if I would join them to attend the game. How thrilled I was to go with Homer VanHoesen, John Joza, and my high school basketball coach Bob Morris as we enjoyed watching the gals win a one-point thriller over Hillman.

In the boys win over Hart NM tightened the screws on defense and received an all-around game from Tom Fillipow. The 6’4 junior scored a modest 10 points, well below his average, but had 24 rebounds and dished off for eight assists. Tom Thornton led NM in scoring with 15 while Larry Williams also had 10 points. History will show it would be the only Norse win over the Pirates covering a 13-game span.

In a game played at Sparta High School, Tom Thornton scored 36 points, second only to Gordy Odell in a single game as NM topped Kent City 71-57. Thornton was the recipient of several passes from versatile Tom Fillipow who added eight assists 19 rebounds and 14 points.

After dropping all three games to Ravenna the previous season, NM made up for those losses by treating the Bulldogs to an 89-54 beating. Tom Thornton and Tom Fillipow combined for 60 points (32 & 28) and Larry Williams added 17 as NM evened their record at 3-3 heading into the Holiday break.

A long three-week break for the Holidays didn’t affect NM’s dynamic duo of Tom Fillipow and Tom Thornton. Fillipow poured in 30 and Thornton 25 to account for all but 30 of NM’s points in a 75-66 victory over Oakridge. Fillipow was also a monster on the boards with 22 rebounds.

The Norse made sure there were no Rick Zoulek heroics in their rematch with Shelby as NM won by eight points in their 64-56 road win at Shelby. Fillipow and Thornton teamed for 45 points as the streaking Norsemen won their sixth straight game after starting the season 3-0.

Montague all but wrapped up the WMC title as they downed the Norse for the second time on the season and snapped NM’s winning streak at seven with a 52-48 win on the Wildcats home court. NM was held without a free throw attempt in the entire second half as all of Tom Fillipows 26 points came on field goals.

Larry Williams, a fire balling righthanded pitcher for the NM baseball team came out firing strikes at the basket as he scored a season high 20 points to lead NM to a rare victory over Mason County Central 67-57. Tom Thornton had a team high 26 points while Tom Fillipow chipped in with ‘only’11 but set up his teammates with 11 assists.

Hart made amends for an earlier loss to the Norsemen with a 63-52 win over NM on the Pirate’s home court. The Pirates held Tom Fillipow to nine points as the Norse dropped to 5-4 in WMC action. The red-hot Pirates won their 8th game out of their last nine. Larry Williams continued his improved play with 17 points to lead the Norse with Tom Thornton also in double figures with 13.

Tom Fillipow netted 31 points as NM won an easy 86-64 victory over Ravenna, a near identical score as their earlier win. Four Norsemen were in double figures, including Tom Thornton with 14, while Tom Achterhoff and Nick Nedeau each scored 10 points. After winning the West Michigan Conference the previous season, the Bulldogs regressed as they were still looking for their first win in the WMC.

The Norse again scored 86 points just days later with an 86-60 trouncing of Orchard View. Tom Thornton singed the nets for 34 points, with Fillipow adding 18 and Williams 15 as NM shot better than 50% from the field for the entire contest.

Whitehall employed a box and one defense to stop Tom Fillipow, leaving the door open for Tom Thornton, Larry Williams and point guard Bob Cordo. Fillipow garnered eight of his 14 points at the free throw line as NM received excellent balance. Tom Thornton scored 20 points, Larry Williams 17 while Cordo scored a season high 12 points in a game rated as an upset.

Mason County Central took advantage of a flu-stricken Tom Fillipow who was able to play in only brief stretches of the game but still managed to tally 16 points as the Spartans downed the Norsemen 79-70. Tom Thornton scored 18 to lead NM scorers with Bob Cordo and Larry Williams each adding 12.

Not playing until the second half Tom Fillipow, still ailing with the flu, the Norsemen would lose their final game of the regular season to Oakridge 70-64. Fillipow gamely came off the bench in the second half to score nine points. Larry Williams had a season high 25 points to lead the Norse with Tom Thornton netting 16 and Bob Cordo 10. Coach Nelson and Norse fans were hoping Fillipow will be at full strength for the upcoming tournament.

Playing in their first MHSAA Class D tournament game since 1935, NM had to withstand four of their starters fouling out of the contest to hang on to a 58-57 win over Pentwater. Before fouling out Tom Fillipow had 19 points, Tom Thornton 14, and Larry Williams 12. Toom Achterhoff also went to the sidelines after fouling out of a game that turned into a free throw contest. NM trailed at the end of the third quarter by one point before outpointing the upset minded Falcons by two in the final eight minutes to survive to advance to the finals.

The Norsemen won their first district championship in 11 years with a 60-44 win over Hesperia in a Class D tournament held at Holton High. In the first matchup between the two teams since 1938, the Norse trio of Fillipow, Thornton and Williams proved to be too much for the losing Panthers. Fillipow had 15 rebounds while Tom Achterhoff pulled down 12 caroms as NM advanced to the Class D regionals at Kenowa Hills High School.

It took a three-minute overtime period for NM to advance to the regional championship as they nipped Potterville 71-67 in the only meeting thus far in NM history between the two schools. Coach Dave Nelson needed help from other Norsemen not named Tom Fillipow as the 6’4 senior fouled out of the game with still four minutes to go in regulation. Tom Thornton had a big game for the Norsemen with 29 points while Fillipow grabbed 16 rebounds, had nine assists and 17 points before fouling out. Coming through big time late in the game for NM were Larry Williams, Nick Nedeau and little Bobby Cordo. In the overtime period Nedeau hit two big free throws to get the Norse started, Williams added a rebounding basket, and Cordo clinched the game for NM with two free throws with six seconds remaining.

The Norse would enter the regional championship clash with Allendale as underdogs to the 19-4 Falcons. NM would win their first regional championship in 39 years with a thrilling 62-61 victory. The two Toms, Fillipow and Thornton combined for 46 points with Larry Williams’ 11 points combining for all but three of NM’s total points. NM was helped in the victory by some poor free throw shooting by Allendale as they hit on 11 of 22 charity tosses, including a pathetic 1 for 8 in the first half. Williams scored four of his points in the game’s final moments on made free throws to ice the victory and send NM to the quarterfinals against highly ranked Traverse City St. Francis.

North Muskegon moved down from Class C to Class D to begin the current season. Unfortunately for NM, so did Traverse City St. Francis, a team who advanced to the state final four in Class C in 1973. This game caused mixed feelings for your author. At this time, I was residing in Traverse City and was part of a good independent team. During the practice time leading up to this game our team, which consisted of players that included Frank Majerle (father of Thunder Dan) and Joe LeMeiux, former Muskegon Catholic star and basketball coach at Traverse City Central, would scrimmage TCSF to get them prepared to play my alma mater. My role in these practice sessions was to simulate the play of NM point guard Bobby Cardo. I must confess that while watching the quarterfinal game between these two teams in Ludington, I was ‘silently’ pulling for my alma mater. However, TCSF was too strong for the Norse. NM was doomed as early as the first half when Tom Fillipow drew his fourth foul with the game still in doubt. Just two minutes into the second half Fillipow drew his fifth foul. “That was really too bad Fillipow had to foul out,” said St Francis coach and my good friend Jim Rossi. “It was the turning point of the game when we had them in foul trouble.” Fillipow fouled out in minimal playing time with a career low of four points. Stepping up big time for the Norse was their only junior player on the floor, Larry Williams. The 6’2 thin man with a blazing fast ball in the spring, kept NM in the game with a career high 32 points, the 11th NM player in program history to score 30 points in a game. St. Francis all state guard Ron Fewins had 26 points, but their best player was their 6’5 jumping jack Center Jim Swaney who would go on to college stardom at Toledo.

N Muskegon 62 Shelby 64 Tom Fillipow 27, Larry Williams 10

N Muskegon 72 WMC 88 Fillipow 33, Tom Thornton 15, Williams 10

N Muskegon 50 Montague 63 Fillipow 18, Thornton 10

N Muskegon 50 Hart 39 Thornton 15, Fillipow & Williams 10

N Muskegon 71 Kent City 57 Thornton 36, Fillipow 14 & 19 rebounds

N Muskegon 89 Ravenna 54 Thornton 32, Fillipow 28

N Muskegon 75 Oakridge 66 Fillipow 30 & 22 reb., Thornton 25

N Muskegon 65 Pentwater 41 Fillipow 12

N Muskegon 64 Shelby 56 Fillipow 25, Thornton 21

N Muskegon 48 Montague 52 Fillipow 26, Tom Achterhoff 8

N Muskegon 67Mason Co 57 Thornton 26, Williams 20, Fillipow 11

N Muskegon 52 Hart 63 Williams 17, Thornton 14, Fillipow 9

N Muskegon 86 Ravenna 54 Fillipow 31, Thornton 14, Nick Nedeau 11

N Muskegon 86 Orchard View 60 Thornton 34, Fillipow 18, Williams 15

N Muskegon 69 Whitehall 60 Thornton 20, Fillipow 14, Bob Cordo 12

N Muskegon 70 Mason Co 79 Thornton 18, Fillipow 16, Williams -Cordo 12

N Muskegon 64 Oakridge 70 Williams 15, Thornton 16, Cordo 10

N Muskegon\*58 Pentwater 57 Fillipow 19, Thornton 14, Williams 12

N Muskegon\*60 Hesperia 44 Fillipow 18, Thornton 12

N Muskegon\*71 Potterville(ot) 67 Thornton 29, Fillipow 17, Williams 14

N Muskegon\*62 Allendale 61 Thornton 24, Fillipow 22, Williams 11

N Muskegon\* 62 TC St Fran. 84 Williams 32, Thornton 12

**1974-75 Coach Rande Horn 6-14 overall, Shelby champs)**

Dave Nelson would serve only two years as the Norsemen head coach, freeing Dave to pursue his favorite pastime-golf. His replacement would be Rande Horn who would only have one starter returning from the previous season’s regional champions --- Larry Williams. Horn was more than familiar with Larry as he was married to Larry Williams’ sister. It’s doubtful if the Norsemen would have won a single game in the upcoming season without the presence of Larry Williams in the Norse lineup.

First year coach Horn was awarded with a victory in his coaching debut as NM opened the season with a 72-64 win over Pentwater. John Duplissis scored 22 points in his first varsity appearance while the only Norse starter returning, Horn’s brother-in-law Larry Williams, showed he still has his shooting touch as he netted 20 points. Another newcomer to the Norsemen lineup, Rob Hansen, was in double figures with 13.

The Norse took to the road once again but in their second game they were on the losing end of a 54-36 loss to Oakridge. Just as NM was playing for their first-year coach Randy Horn, the Eagles were also playing their first game under their new coach, former WMC Warrior ace Denny Vanderstelt. Larry Williams scored 16 for NM, while Jerry Crocker, recently named to the all-state football team, chipped in with 10.

The Norse kept it close in their third game of the season but 32 points by NM sharpshooter Larry Williams wasn’t enough as the Norse fell to the Warriors 77-69. Williams repeatedly was fouled by Warrior players on drives to the basket and connected on 16 of 18 free throws. Jerry Crocker muscled his way to the hoop to score 16 points as the Norse fell to 1-2.

It looks like Shelby, after a sub-par season a year ago after posting back-to-back state titles, is a team to be respected once again as they pummeled the Norse 88-55 by scoring at least 20 or more points in all four quarters. Larry Williams scored 14 points before fouling out in the second half. Jeff Guy led the Norse with 15 points while Rob Hanson added 11. The 14 points scored by Williams would prove to be his lowest output of the season.

NM and Mason County went to overtime with the Spartans taking advantage of NM playing the overtime period without their leading scorer Larry Williams who had fouled out in the fourth quarter. With Williams taking his 18 points to the bench, the visiting Spartans outscored the Norsemen 10-0 in overtime to send the Norsemen to their fifth straight defeat. Jerry Crocker scored a season best 23 points while Jeff Guy added 14 for NM.

The losses continued to pile up for the Norse has they fell to 0-4 in the WMC following their 68-57 loss to Montague. NM held a 19-14 lead at the end of the first stop, but Montague then took over for the final three quarters. Larry Williams netted 20 points for the 1-5 Norsemen with Rob Hansen chipping in with 14 and Jeff Guy 12.

Its’s probably a good thing that Holton was added to the NM schedule beginning in the 1974-75 season as wins would be tough to come by over the next three seasons. NM snapped a five-game losing streak with a comfortable 69-49 win over the Red Devils as Larry Williams again led NM in scoring with 23 points.

The Norsemen dug themselves into a deep hole by being outscored 20-12 in the opening period in their 75-69 loss to Hart. The Pirates shot over 50% in the win while only Larry Williams with a game high 30 points was able to consistently find the range for NM. Williams also grabbed 19 rebounds in the loss while Jerry Crocker gobbled up 11 boards and added 13 points.

Down by 18 points at one stage, NM put on a desperate press in the fourth quarter to outscore Ravenna 24-7 to rally for a 63-61 victory over Ravenna. Larry Williams got the game winning field goal for the Norse when he rebounded his own missed shot and made the put back with just two seconds left on the clock. Williams would finish with 20 while Jerry Crocker had a season high 22 and Jeff Guy 10 points as the Norse would win their first game in the West Michigan Conference.

NM would win their third victory in their last four games with a low scoring 40-38 non-league victory at home over Kent City, their 8th straight victory to begin their series over the years with the Eagles. Larry Williams scored half of NM’s points with a game high 20 with half of his points coming at the free throw line.

NM allowed an opponent to score more than 100 points in a single season for the second time in school history (Shelby 110 in 1972) in a 104- 73 loss at Whitehall.

The Vikings sent a notice to NM fans early that this was not going to be the Norsemen’s night at they raced out to a 30-17 first quarter bulge. Larry Williams continued his hot scoring with 25 points, the only Norsemen in double figures.

Oakridge made it a clean sweep in the season series with an 82-60 conquest of the Norsemen. Larry Williams and Jeff Guy shared scoring honors for NM with 15 points with John Duplissis adding 12.

Shelby kept their record spotless in WMC play with an 82-67 win over NM while the Norsemen were still looking for that elusive 2nd conference victory. Shelby cruised to the win thanks to a 40-22 lead at halftime. Larry Williams scored 29 for the Norsemen, the only NM player in double figures as NM fell to 4-8 overall and only 1-7 in conference play.

NM wasn’t the only team still looking for that elusive second victory in WMC action. The other team was Montague, whose only conference win came against the Norse in their first meeting. It was NM who would win that 2nd WMC conference game in a narrow 63-61 win over the Wildcats. Bruce Bos broke the tie with a couple of free throws in the game’s final moments. Bos iced the victory when he came up with a vital steal and his mates were able to stall out the final seconds. Larry Williams scored 18 of his 20 points in the first half and then was doubled teamed in the second half. John Duplissis and Jeff Guy than took advantage of that strategy with 18 and 17 points respectively.

The winning edge went away quickly as NM loss decidedly at Mason County Central 74-46. Larry Williams was a one-man show for the Norsemen with 19 points and 18 rebounds.

After being eliminated by the Norsemen in the 1974 regional final in the first meeting between the two schools, Allendale was surely fired up to make NM pay for that loss as Allendale thumped the Norse 84-58. It didn’t hurt the host Falcons when NM ace Larry Williams had to sit the entire third period with four fouls. In three quarters of play Williams was still able to muster 25 points, the lone Norse player to hit double digits.

Hart continued their dominance over NM in the 1970s with a 66-61 win over the Norsemen. Only a late fourth quarter flurry of NM points when NM outscored Hart 26-13 did NM make the final score reasonably close. Larry Williams again surpassed the 20-point mark with 23, while Jeff Guy added 14 as they approached the final week of the 1974-75 season.

NM won their sixth, and final game of the season by defeating Holton for the second time 82-71. Larry Williams continued his hot shooting with 24 markers, just above his 22 point per game average for the campaign. Ron Hansen added 14 for the 6-12 Norsemen.

It appeared NM was headed for victory in the game’s final seconds when Bruce Bos hit one of two free throws to give NM a two-point lead. Ravenna’s Mark Stancliff was fouled after receiving a court length pass. Stancliff missed the shot but was fouled on the play with no time showing on the clock. Stancliff, who finished with 29 points calmly made two free throws to send the game into overtime. Stancliff and Brian Wright, the longtime baseball coach at Shelby, and still the head coach of the Tigers after more than 40 years at the helm, then combined to score nine points in overtime to send the Norseman to another defeat. Larry Williams did his part for the losers with 26 points and 13 rebounds.

After one year playing at the Class D level, the enrollment at NM went up slightly, just enough to move them into the Class C bracket where they would be pitted in the first round against perennial Class C power West Michigan Christian.

Larry Williams, arguably the finest baseball player in NM history, wasn’t too shabby in basketball. NM had their season end with a 78-59 defeat to the WMC Warriors despite yet another 30-point output by Williams, his fourth in his prep career. No other Norseman was in double figures as NM ended the season with a 6-14 record. Williams would score 450 points in the 20-game season, an average of 22.5 points per game, an average second only to Gordy Odell’s 30 ppg. average in 1954-55.

After the Norsemen posted a mediocre 6-14 record it would get worse for NM, much worse over the next two seasons.

N Muskegon72 Pentwater 64 John Duplissis Larry Williams 20

N Muskegon 36 Oakridge 54 Williams, 16, Jerry Crocker 10

N Muskegon 69 WMC 77 Williams 32, Crocker 16

N Muskegon 55 Shelby 88 Jeff Guy 15, Williams 14, Rob Hanson 11

N Muskegon 63 Mason Co(ot) 73 Crocker 23, Willians 18, Guy 14

N Muskegon 57 Montague 68 Williams 20, Hanson 14, Guy 12

N Muskegon69 Holton 49 Williams 23, Crocker 10

N Muskegon 69 Hart 75 Williams 30, Crocker 13, Hanson 10

N Muskegon63 Ravenna 61 Crocker 22, Williams 20, Guy 10

N Muskegon40 Kent City 38 Williams 20, Guy 8

N Muskegon 73 Whitehall 104 Williams 25

N Muskegon 60 Oakridge 82 Williams & Guy 16, John Duplissis 12

N Muskegon 67 Shelby 82 Williams 29, Guy 10

N Muskegon 63 Montague 61 Williams 20. Duplissis 18, Guy 17

N Muskegon 46 Mason Co 74 Williams 19

N Muskegon 58 Allendale 84 Williams 25

N Muskegon 61 Hart 66 Williams 23, Guy 14

N Muskegon 82 Holton 71 Williams 24, Hansen 14

N Muskegon 64 Ravenna (ot) 73 Williams 26

N Muskegon\*59 WMC 78 Williams 30

**1975-76 Coach Rande Horn 3-18 overall, Shelby champs)**

The Norsemen would take their lumps in the forthcoming season, with virtually their entire starting five from the previous season lost to graduation. Expected as regulars to begin the season would be Scott Wickland, Randy Breen, and Parker Cooper up front with Mike Hekkema and Jeff Guy at the guards. Due to injuries and suspensions this lineup would often change throughout the season.

NM would open the season with Pentwater; a team NM had defeated in eight of their first nine meetings. The lone loss to Pentwater was a resounding 42-80 defeat in 1973. That score was nearly matched by the current Pentwater team who trounced the Norse 80 to 45. Pentwater was a much-improved team from earlier years bolstered with the addition of Pete Dumont, a transfer from Hart who was the leading scorer for the Pirates in the previous season. Lack of height was going to pose a big problem for NM throughout the season as Pentwater controlled the boards and were never challenged by the smaller Norsemen. Scott Wickland, who saw a lot of action last season for NM, but never scored in double figures in any game, did get into double figures in his first game as a senior with 10 points.

It was not much better in the second game for the Norse as they had a two-fold problem. They had trouble both scoring points and trouble with stopping their opponent as Oakridge rolled over the Norse 75-36. The Eagles busted out to a 27-8 lead after the game’s first eight minutes and never looked back. Wickland again led the Norse in scoring with a modest eight point.

One would think it couldn’t get any worse for the Norsemen, it not only got worse, but NM suffered their biggest loss in program history as they were embarrassed on their own court 113-41 by Shelby. Unfortunately for the Norsemen, there was no mercy ruling coupled with no running clock as there is in the current era as Shelby continued to pour in the points, the most allowed ever by a NM team. Joe Sheehan had 13 and Parker Cooper 14 for the winless Norsemen.

A pair of teams looking for their first win of the season saw Mason County win their first game of the season over the still winless Norsemen 80-51. Once again NM was never in the game as they trailed the Spartans 38-25 at halftime. A 24-11 Mason County run in the third quarter put the game out of reach.

The Norse had but two points after the first quarter had come to an end and only 39 as the final horn sounded as Montague defeated the Norsemen 53-39. If anybody was looking for a sign for a better future for NM basketball, then one would have to look at the junior high level as the NM junior varsity team was also winless. The good news, there were some promising players in middle school at NM as well as a couple of freshmen on the Jayvee team.

NM had high hopes for breaking their five-game losing streak as Hart was also looking for their first win. The Norse clawed their way back from a large deficit to close the gap to 44-42 in the final quarter only to see the Pirates break NM’s back by scoring the next five markers to put the game out of reach and hand the Norse another setback 59-47. Parker Cooper had 13 points and as many rebounds in a losing cause with Joe Sheehan and Jeff Guy tallying 12 for NM.

The new year began with NM losing their seventh straight game to Ravenna 85-55 but there was a ray of light for NM as Terry Lough joined the Norsemen and wasted no time in displaying his basketball skills as he scored 27 points, nearly double the previous high for a Norse player.

One of the last teams one would expect for NM to snap a season long losing streak would be a win over the Whitehall Vikings. However, it did happen much to the joy of the loyal Norse followers who saw NM edge the visiting Vikings on a Saturday night 62-56. It was Terry Lough who had his second straight 20 points plus game with 22 markers. Chris Morgan also had the hot hand as he scored 15 points as NM’s losing streak ends at seven.

NM lost to Oakridge by 39 points in their first outing, but the Norsemen didn’t have Terry Lough in game one. The transfer student scored 30 points as NM stunned Oakridge 64-60 in a game that wasn’t decided until the team had played two overtimes. The win was the first game NM played that went into the second OT since Coopersville defeated the WMC champs of NM in the 1959 playoffs. Neither team scored in the first overtime as Jeff Guy scored six of NM’s nine points in the second OT.

Holton held NM’s recent scoring ace Terry Lough to but four points as Holton just edged the Norse 47-46. NM had the ball with seconds left in the game but mishandled the ball and Holton prevented NM from securing their third straight win. Jeff Guy had a career high 18 for NM while Parker Cooper added 11.

Just days after losing a battled tested game to Muskegon Height, Shelby passed the century mark for the second time on the season against NM with a thorough 105-58 romp over the Norsemen. Parker Cooper in a losing cause had a season high 20 points for the Norse while Terry Lough finished with 17.

Trailing by four points with 16 seconds to go Chris Morgan stole the ball and went in for a layup to narrow the Montague margin to but two points. Just seconds later Jeff Guy stole another pass and went in to score to send the game into overtime and the never-say-die Norsemen would go on to win 59-55. It would be the last time NM would taste victory in the season. Jeff Guy had 20 for NM, followed by Scott Wickland and Chris Morgan with 12.

“It just seemed the ball players had no hustle,” said a disconsolate NM coach Rande Horn following NM’s 63-43 loss to Mason County Central as NM now stood 2-8 in the WMC. NM had 23 turnovers in the loss to the Spartans. Randy Breen led the Norse in scoring for his first time with 12 points, all coming in the fourth quarter.

Allendale had three players score more than 20 points, including 22 by future NFL football star Robert Jackson as Allendale crushed the Norsemen 98-59. Chris Morgan and Parker Cooper each had 12 for the Norsemen.

The Pirates of Hart made the Norsemen Walk the Plank as they defeated NM 79-63 for their second win on the season over the Norsemen. Hart led 44-20 at the half as NM never threatened. Randy Breen had his highest scoring output of the season with 18 points.

It was apparent that all was not well with NM basketball as four of NM’s regulars didn’t make the game for disciplinary reasons. Holton took advantage and handed the Norsemen a 63-51 defeat. Mike Hekkema was not one of those suspended as he had a season high 15 points in the defeat while Parker Cooper led NM in the rebounding department with 10.

Most people remember Brian Wright as first and foremost a baseball guy. However, the veteran baseball coach for more than 40 years at Shelby was also a very good basketball player in his prep days at Ravenna. Wright scored 26 points to lead Ravenna to a resounding 91-47 victory over a thin NM team. Parker Cooper scored a career high 23 points for NM with Mike Hekkema adding 11.

North Muskegon met Newaygo in basketball for the first time in 24 years and it was the Lions who nipped the Norse 57-54 as the final week of the basketball season was coming to a merciful close for NM. Luck was not kind to the Norsemen as they had the ball with 14 seconds left and a tie score only to have the ball stolen by Newaygo’s Art Barton where he was fouled. Barton made both free throws to send the Norsemen to their 16th defeat on the season. Chris Morgan netted 19 points and Mike Hekkema 12 to lead the Norse.

Allendale defeated NM 59-39 to close out the regular season. Although NM lost by 20, it was still superior to their 39-point licking administered by Allendale earlier in the season. Called up from the junior varsity team was freshman Bruce Baty. Baty would score the first of his many points in his outstanding prep career with a modest 8 markers in the loss. Rob Hansen netted 15 and Parker Cooper 10 for NM.

After giving up more than 100 points in their two previous meetings, the Norse could take some consolation in holding Shelby to 68 points in their opening round loss in the district tournament. However, on the other side of the spectrum NM was able to only score 20 points in the 69-20 loss to the WMC champs. Nearly 50 years has come and gone in program history and never has a NM team in the ensuing years scored less than the 20 points in a game. It was no disgrace to lose to the Tigers, WMC, district as well as regional champs.

The Norse were plagued all season with injuries and suspensions and had to play a lot of jayvees and even freshmen at the season’s end. A big blow for NM was the loss of Terry Lough with an injury after he transferred to NM at the start of the new year in January. The three wins for NM in 1975-76 however, would be three more than they would win the following season.

The 1975-76 team had the dubious distinction of allowing the most points scored in a game (113 to Shelby) while the 20 points scored by NM in their district loss to Shelby was the lowest point total in NM history since 1948. Unfortunately, it would only get worse in the upcoming next season.

N Muskegon 45 Pentwater 80 Scott Wickland 10, Jeff Guy 8

N Muskegon 36 Oakridge 75 Wickland 8

N Muskegon 41 Shelby 113 Parker Cooper 14, Joe Sheehan 13

N Muskegon 51 Mason Co 80 Sheehan 14, Guy 11

N Muskegon 39 Montague 53 Wickland 10

N Muskegon 47 Hart 59 Cooper 13, Sheehan & Guy 12

N Muskegon 55 Ravenna 85 Terry Lough 27

N Muskegon 45 Kent City 62 No report in paper

N Muskegon62 Whitehall 56 Lough 22, Chris Morgan

N Muskegon64 Oakridge (2ot) 60 Lough 30

N Muskegon 46 Holton 47 Guy 18, Cooper 11, Mike Hekkema 5

N Muskegon 58 Shelby 105 Cooper 20, Lough 17

N Muskegon 59 Montague (ot) 55 Guy 20, Wickland & Morgan 12

N Muskegon 43 Mason Co 63 Randy Breen 14, Sheehan 8

N Muskegon 59 Allendale 98 Cooper & Morgan 12

N Muskegon 63 Hart 79 Breen 18

N Muskegon 51 Holton 63 Hekkema 15, Cooper 10 rebounds

N Muskegon 47 Ravenna 91 Cooper 23, Hekkema 11

N Muskegon 54 Newaygo 57 Morgan 19, Hekkema 12

N Muskegon 39 Allendale 59 Rob Hansen 15, Cooper 10, Bruce Baty 8

N Muskegon\*20 Shelby 68 Hekkema & Baty 4 points.

**1976-77 Coach Rande Horn 0-20 overall, Shelby champs)**

NM would experience their only winless season in 90 years of Norse basketball. It was such a bad season for NM that in only three of their 20 games did the Norse come within ten points from an opponent. The young Norsemen took the road in an early start to the 1976-77 season and fell 11 points short in a 55-44 loss at Pentwater. Dan Dekker got 11 points while sophomore Bruce Baty tallied nine points and a game high 10 rebounds. Mike Hekkema and Mike Hogan added eight points and Mark Zettell six to complete NM’s scoring.

Shelby continued their dominance over the Norsemen as they won their sixth straight game over NM by a margin of 25 or more points with a resounding 72-29 win over NM. The Norse were outscored badly in every quarter with Dan Dekker, the high point man for NM with a modest 9 points.

It might have been a typo, but perhaps not, when NM head coach Rande Horn was quoted in the game report in NM’s 87-47 loss to Mason County Central that the Norsemen committed 57 turnovers. Mason County bombed NM with 34 first quarter points by using an early press. Dan Dekker scored 13 and Bruce Baty 11 for NM.

The 42-40 loss to Montague would prove to be the closest NM would come for a victory during the long season. The game was tied with one minute remaining before Montague put in a last second rebound off a missed shot to come away with the win in a low-scoring affair. Bruce Baty’s 13 points were high for the Norsemen with Dan Dekker adding 11 and Brad Coon nine.

Although they lost the game, NM’s sophomore Bruce Baty displayed his potential as he poured in 29 points in NM’s 84-68 loss to Hart. NM fell behind 40-25 at the half but did play the Pirates even in the second half to give NM at least a glimmer of hope. Dan Dekker had 12 and Brad Coon eight.

The score was dead even with about three minutes to play in NM’s next game with Ravenna. The Bulldogs, with some hot shooting from my future broadcast partner in later years, Joe Coletta, went on a 15-1 run to discard any Norsemen’s thoughts they were going to win a ball game. Bruce Baty was stellar in the loss with 19 points and 8 rebounds. Brad Coon followed up with a dozen points and Dan Dekker reached double figures with 10.

Victory again eluded NM although they did keep the score close in a non-league 69-60 loss to Newaygo. Playing mostly juniors and sophomores NM was only able to shoot a dismal 20 percent for the game. Bruce Baty once again handled the bulk of the scoring chores for the Norse with 19 points with junior Mike Hogan adding 10.

There would be no upset of Whitehall in 1977 after NM spun a surprise on the Vikings a year earlier. A pressing Whitehall press frustrated the Norse and turnovers led to easy baskets for the Vikings as they continued their home court dominance over the Norse with a 76-49 victory. Sophomore Bruce Baty was again the star of the show for the losing Norsemen with 22 points followed by Dan Dekker with 10.

Oakridge forced NM to once again commit too many turnovers as the Eagles cruised to a 69-51 victory. Only a NM 26-13 run mainly against Oakridge subs kept the game reasonable as NM continues to struggle. Bruce Baty, who has averaged more than 20 points per game over his last five games, led the Norse with 21.

After losing by more than 40 points in their first meeting, the Norse did show some improvement in their second meeting with Shelby as they lost by ‘only’ 20--- 77-57. Once again turnovers are a big problem for NM as they committed 25 miscues. Bruce Baty led NM with 17 markers, the only Norsemen in double figures. Shelby, for the second consecutive year, would not only win the WMC, but would again be district and regional champs.

Kent City used their fast break and pressing defense to rout the Norse 80-48 on the Norsemen’s home floor. No report was given on point getters for NM.

Expectations were high as NM eagerly anticipated their next game with Montague; a team NM lost to by a mere two points earlier in the season. Those hopes faded quickly when the Norse missed 12 of their first 13 shot attempts and were outscored in every quarter by a Montague team that had only won three games on the season, with two of those wins coming at the expense of the winless Norsemen. Bruce Baty and Dan Dekker shared scoring honors for NM with 11 points.

NM led at the end of the first quarter, but it was all Holton from that point on as Holton made it an unlucky 13 losses on the season following an 80-56 loss to the Red Devils. Bruce Baty had 15 and Mike Hekkema 11 for the 0-13 Norsemen.

‘Old Man Winter’ likely saved North Muskegon from another loss as their game at Scottville with Mason County Central was cancelled due to blizzard conditions. With wind chill temps at minus -41 degrees, and heavy snow, all sporting events for the entire weekend were cancelled in the Muskegon area that was experiencing one of its coldest winters in history.

Hart added to NM’s misery with a resounding 84-48 victory over the Norse as NM was only able to make 6 of 16 free throws. Mike Hogan was the only Norsemen in double figures with 10 with point guard Jim Kueny just behind Hogan with nine. Mike Hekkema had 8 points while Bruce Baty was held to 7.

Future NFL star defensive back Robert Jackson scored 28 points in Allendale’s 86-54 win over NM in a game that was rescheduled from Tuesday to Saturday due to the inclement weather conditions that created havoc in the winter of 1977. Dan Norris worked his way into the NM rotation and led Norse scorers with 15 points with Bruce Baty and Mike Hekkema adding 11 each.

The sophomore dominated Norsemen fell to Ravenna 78-57 as hopes for at least one win on the season became dimmer and dimmer. Bruce Baty led NM with 14 with Jim Kueny adding 11 in the NM lost cause.

The Norse just couldn’t stand prosperity as they saw a seven-point halftime lead quickly dissipate when they could only score five third period points and were then outscored by 11 in the final period in a 59-53 loss to Holton. Bruce Baty tallied 19 for NM with Jim Kueny netting 10.

NM scored a season high 80 points but also gave up a season high 102 as they dropped their 18th straight contest of the season to Oakridge 102-80. Bruce Baty scored 17 for NM while a sophomore teammate making his first appearance in an NM varsity uniform, John Nedeau, added 12.

NM’s hopes for at least winning one single game vanished as Allendale thumped the hapless Norsemen 78-46. Robert Jackson led the way for Allendale with 22 points, but no Norsemen scorers were mentioned in the report to the Muskegon Chronicle.

The 1976-77 season came to a merciful end for NM as there was no March Madness for the Norsemen. In fact, they never played in March as they lost their 71-50 playoff game to Grant on February 28. It would be the first game played between the two teams since the 1947-48 season and to this date they have never met since the 1977 playoff game. NM finished the season at 0-20 and it could have been worse. A game scheduled with Mason County during mid-season was cancelled due to bad weather and never made up. Probably a good thing as NM had lost earlier to the Spartans by 41 points.

Rande Horn would be replaced as NM’s head coach after posting a 9-51 record in his three seasons by John Wolfe. Bruce Baty was selected to the 10-member all-WMC team where it was reported the 6’4 sophomore averaged 16 points and 10 rebounds per game. The new NM coach was hopeful that the experience gained by the very young NM team that started three sophomores would pay off in a few victories for NM the following season. The Norsemen would win more than a ‘few’ games, much more!

N Muskegon 44 Pentwater 55 Dan Dekker 11, Bruce Baty 9

N Muskegon 29 Shelby 72 Dekker 9

N Muskegon 46 Mason Co 87 Dekker 13, Baty 11

N Muskegon 40 Montague 42 Baty 13, Dekker 11, Brad Coon 9

N Muskegon 68 Hart 84 Baty 29, Dekker 12, Coon 8

N Muskegon 52 Ravenna 64 Baty 19, Coon 12, Dekker 10

N Muskegon 60 Newaygo 69 Baty 19, Mike Hogan 10

N Muskegon 49 Whitehall 76 Baty 22, Dekker 10

N Muskegon 51 Oakridge 69 Baty 21

N Muskegon 57 Shelby 77 Baty 17, Hekkema, Dekker & Mark Zettell 8

N Muskegon 48 Kent City 80 No scorers mentioned for NM

N Muskegon39 Montague 65 Baty & Dekker 11, Mike Hekkema 9

N Muskegon 56 Holton 80 Baty 15, Hekkema 11, Dekker 9, Coon 8

N Muskegon Mason Co Cancelled

N Muskegon 48 Hart 84 Hogan, 10, Jim Kueny 9

N Muskegon 65 Allendale 84 Dan Norris, 15, Baty & Hekkema 11

N Muskegon 57 Ravenna 78 Baty 14, Kueny 11, Hekkema 9

N Muskegon 53 Holton 59 Baty 19, Kueny 10, Hekkema 7

N Muskegon 80 Oakridge 102 Baty 17, John Nedeau 12

N Muskegon 46 Allendale 78 No NM scorers reported

N Muskegon\*50 Grant 71 Baty 14, Hekkema 12, Pat Bowen 8

**1977-78 (Coach John Wolfe, 13-7 overall, Shelby WMC Champs)**

There was only one way to go for North Muskegon’s basketball team in 1977-78, and that was to go up. However, not many would realize how far up this still young NM team would go in the upcoming season. John Wolfe, an Indiana native with a keen basketball mind, took over the head coaching duties after NM had suffered through three bad seasons. Bruce Baty, a 6’4 sophomore, an all-conference performer would headline the returnees for coach Wolfe. One weakness for NM from their winless season was the lack of a skilled point guard. That weakness would turn into a strength with the play of 5’9 junior guard John Nedeau. Another big weapon at Wolfe’s disposal would come from a freshman, 6’3 Jeff Cooke. A valuable performer on the football team Cooke would not only be NM’s leading rebounder, but the leading rebounder in the entire West Michigan Conference --- As a freshman! Junior Pat Bowen and Brad Billinghurst returned as did a couple of guys who saw extensive action the previous season in Brad Coon and Dan Norris.

Before a large crowd at the northside gymnasium, the first few minutes of the opener had to give Norse fans thoughts that it would be more of the same as NM trailed Pentwater 12-4 early in the first game of the season. NM then picked up the pressure in the second quarter and took over the game with some outstanding play from point guard John Nedeau and Bruce Baty. With Baty (19) and Nedeau (14) and the young Jeff Cooke adding 10 points as well as controlling the rebounds, NM defeated Pentwater 60-52 to finally quell at 28 games the longest losing streak in NM history.

Even in a loss the Norse showed early on that this was not going to be an easy win for their opponent. NM trailed Shelby by only two points late in the game only to see Shelby pull away when NM intentionally fouled the Tigers late in the game. The 3-time WMC champions and 2-time regional champs had too much height for the Norse and came away with a 57-48 victory over NM. Bruce Baty had 14 and Dave Billinghurst had 10 points to lead the Norse.

A slow first half and the inability to shoot a high percentage from the field, a trait not uncommon over the years when NM traveled to Scottville, led to Mason County Central edging the Norse 41-39 in what would prove to be the lowest scoring output of the season for NM, and their opponent. Bruce Baty had 10 points while John Nedeau and Brad Coon had nine for the Norse with Jeff Cooke leading all NM rebounders with nine. The Norse would go to 0-2 in the WMC but that would quickly change.

Freshman Jeff Cooke had his first double-double of his career to lead NM to a 52-46 win over Montague. Cooke had 10 points and led all rebounders with 14. Bruce Baty had 14 before fouling out late in the game while Pat Bowen and Brad Coon each chipped in with nine points as NM wins their first WMC game since defeating Montague in the 1976-77 season.

NM then ran into a hot shooter from Kent City named Brian Summers who scored 31 points and was so sizzling hot he made his last 12 shots in a row as the Eagles downed the Norse 83-68 on the Kent City home court. Jeff Cooke had 19 points and eight rebounds to lead the Norse while Bruce Baty had 18 and Pat Bowen 10 for NM.

North Muskegon trailed by as many as 19 points in a road game at Ravenna before rallying to overhaul Ravenna and earn a 62-51 victory over veteran coach Gene Gifford’s Bulldogs. After trailing Ravenna 21-10 after the first quarter, NM would outscore the Bulldogs 52-30 the rest of the way. Bruce Baty had a season high 21 points, with Brad Coon adding 15 and John Nedeau 10 to even NM’s WMC record at 2-2.

NM would finally attain a winning record following a 71-63 win against Whitehall. NM connected on 25 -36 free throws in the foul marred battle with the Vikings. Jeff Cooke poured in 23 points; the most points ever tallied by a NM freshman in a single game to lead the Norse. Bruce Baty added 18 and John Nedeau 12 as the Norse moved above the .500 mark for the first time in four years.

NM would head into the Holiday break with a winning record after defeating Grand Rapids St. Joseph Seminary 66-54 in the only game played between the two teams in program history. Point guard John Nedeau continued his fine play with 18 points while his buddy Bruce Baty added 15. Jeff Cooke controlled the backboards with 16 caroms while Brad Coon added 13 points as the Norse will go into the 1978 new year with a 5-3 record.

NM received terrific games from their two big men, 6-3 freshman Jeff Cooke and 6’4 junior Bruce Baty in NM’s 77-67 victory over Oakridge. The duo combined for 46 points (Baty 26 and Cooke 20) and controlled the boards as Cooke pulled down 15 and Baty 12. John Nedeau directed the offense and contributed 10 points for NM as they won their sixth straight contest.

It was no disgrace for NM to lose a game by ten points to the 3-time defending WMC champion and the state’s top-rated team in Class C in the Shelby Tigers. Shelby’s 6-7 Dave Kuipers, 6’4 Paul Huffman and 6’3 Brian Beckman were too much for the visiting Norsemen. NM took a 17-14 lead at the end of the first quarter only to see the Tigers outscore NM 17-10 in the second quarter and never looked back as Jim Tate’s Tigers stayed undefeated on the season. The game was postponed from Tuesday to the next night due to heavy snow, just a prelude to what mother nature would have in store for the Muskegon area in just a few days. Bruce Baty topped NM scorers with 20 while Brad Coon with 12 and John Nedeau with 10 were also in double figures.

From the basement of the WMC to second place in one year could the Norsemen boast after their 70-61 victory at Montague. Freshman Jeff Cooke netted 23 points and a game high 11 rebounds, a mark nearly matched by his teammate Baty who banged in 19 points and grabbed 12 rebounds.

In the first of three games played between Hart and North Muskegon, the biggest margin of victory in the three games would be just a two-point difference. It was a one-point difference in their first matchup, a game originally scheduled in December but cancelled due to a snowstorm. That December snowstorm would seem like a day in the tropics with what would lay ahead for Muskegon and the entire state of Michigan the next week. NM needed a career high 31 points by Bruce Baty to defeat Hart 57-56 as the Norse improved to 8-4 overall on the season.

Brad Coon sank a 14-footer with just one second left to give NM a dramatic 56-55 win over Mason County Central. Earlier the Spartans had handed NM a 2-point loss. The win gave NM undisputed possession of second place in the WMC behind undefeated Shelby. NM received balanced scoring in the thriller played on the northside court with John Nedeau scoring 13, Bruce Baty and Pat Bowen, 12, Jeff Cooke 9 and Coon with a modest 6 but two of those points turned into the game winner.

The Norsemen were schedule to play Hart on Friday January 27, 1978. The mightiest blizzard in Greater Muskegon history had shut off everything; schools, sports, and even the Muskegon Chronicle did not publish as Code Red was applied to the area, meaning all automobiles were not permitted access to the roads. Every sporting event in the entire state of Michigan was cancelled. The only business open in North Muskegon was the World-Famous Bear Lake Tavern. The fabled BLT did a record business despite the fact there wasn’t one car in the lot. All the patrons came via snowmobiles or just walked to escape cabin fever.

Even though schools remained closed through the following Tuesday on January 31, NM made the journey to Newaygo to play a Newaygo team who would sport an impressive 11-3 record after edging the Norse 49-45. It was the 8th win in a row for Newaygo while NM would slip to a still impressive 9-5 record after the loss. Bruce Baty scored 20 of NM’s 45 points in the losing Norse with Brad Coon close behind with 16.

The Norsemen got back on the winning path as freshman Jeff Cooke had an 18 & 18; 18 points and 18 rebounds as NM defeated Ravenna 71-51. Bruce Baty was also a strength on the backboards as the junior pulled down 14 rebounds to go with his 16 points. Junior point guard John Nedeau had his usual steady game with 17 points and Brad Coon reached double figures with 12.

Bruce Baty drilled a mid-range jumper with five seconds showing on the clock as NM won their second game in six tries against Allendale 62-61. The game winner was good for two of his game high 21 points for Baty. Jeff Cooke and Brad Coon each had 11 and John Nedeau 10. Cooke again was a tower of strength on the backboards with 16 rebounds.

Bruce Baty’s 29 points with many of his points coming off Jeff Cooke rebounds and John Nedeau passes led to a 72-49 romp over Holton. Cooke had another big day on the boards with 16 rebounds and 12 points as NM improved to 12-5, making that 0-20 record from a year ago look like a distant past.

With Bruce Baty and Jeff Cooke sitting many minutes in the second half with foul troubles, point guard John Nedeau took up the slack and scored a season high 24 points as NM defeated Oakridge 66-58. The victory clinched second place in the WMC, a huge step up from their sitting all alone in the basement the previous season. Baty managed to supply 13 points in his limited minutes while Cooke had 12 and his usual bushel basket full of rebounds with 16.

Bruce Baty went out with a back injury early in the first half as Hart defeated NM 66-64 in overtime. Overtime games with Hart were not kind to Norse in their long history with the Pirates as NM lost all four games that went into the extra session with the Pirates. NM was just a second away from walking away with a big win over the Pirates, but Hart’s Mike Bursley was fouled snaring a rebound and made one of his two free throws that forced overtime. Jeff Cooke and John Nedeau each netted 20 points for NM.

NM traveled to White Cloud for their final game of the regular season, the first meeting between the two teams since 1935. Playing without their leading scorer Bruce Baty, NM gave a White Cloud team with a solid 15-4 record all they could handle before losing 57-51. Jeff Cooke had 18 points and 13 rebounds for the Norsemen while John Nedeau had 16 and Brad Coon 12.

Once again there would be no March Madness for the Norsemen. And more importantly there would be no Jeff Cooke, out with the first of his many future knee injuries, and a less than healthy Bruce Baty as Hart ended North Muskegon’s season with a 52-50 win. The district tournament was played on the Pirates home floor which didn’t help the visiting Norsemen.

Following the end of the 1977-78 season three Norsemen were selected to the WMC All-Conference team, with all three being underclassmen including one freshman. Juniors Bruce Baty and John Nedeau were joined on the select team along with freshman Jeff Cooke. Shelby, who reached the state quarterfinals for three straight years only to lose each year to the eventual 1978 state champs from Buchannan, also had three on the first 10 listed. Nedeau was the floor general for NM while Baty scored 349 points in 20 games and surely would have scored more if not for an injury early into the 19th game of the season with Hart. As for Cooke, he was second in scoring on the team to Baty and was the leading rebounder, not for just the Norse, but the entire conference with 233 rebounds in 20 games. Cooke has etched his name in NM history as one of their program’s finest as a coach and an AD but if not for several serious knee injuries one can only imagine on what his athletic career at NMHS would have been if he had been fully healthy as a student athlete.

N Muskegon 60 Pentwater 52 Bruce Baty 19, John Nedeau 14, Jeff Cooke 10

N Muskegon 48 Shelby 57 Baty 14, Brad Billinghurst 10

N Muskegon 39 Mason Co 41 Baty 10, Nedeau & Coon 9

N Muskegon 52 Montague 46 Baty 14, Cooke 10 points & 14 rebounds

N Muskegon 68 Kent City 83 Cooke 19, Baty 18, Pat Bowen 10

N Muskegon 62 Ravenna 51 Baty 21, Coon 15, Nedeau 10.

N Muskegon 71 Whitehall 63 Cooke 23, Baty 18, Nedeau 12

N Muskegon 66 St Joe Sem. 54 Nedeau 18, Baty 15, Coon 13, Cooke 16 reb.

N Muskegon 77 Oakridge 67 Baty 26, Cooke 20 & 16 reb, Nedeau 10

N Muskegon 55 Shelby 65 Baty 20, Coon 12, Nedeau 10

N Muskegon 70 Montague 61 Cooke 22, Baty 18, Coon 12

N Muskegon 57 Hart 56 Baty 31, Nedeau 12, Cooke 9

N Muskegon 56 Mason Co 55 Nedeau 13, Baty & Bowen 12

N Muskegon 45 Newaygo 49 Baty 20, Coon 16

N Muskegon 71 Ravenna 51 Cooke 18 & 18, Nedeau 17, Baty 16, Coon 12

N Muskegon 62 Allendale 61 Baty 21, Cooke & Coon 11, Nedeau 10

N Muskegon 72 Holton 49 Baty 29, Cooke 12 points & 16 rebounds

N Muskegon 66 Oakridge 58 Nedeau 24, Baty 13, Cooke 12

N Muskegon 62 Hart (ot) 64 Cooke & Nedeau 20, Billinghurst 8, Baty 6

N Muskegon 51 White Cloud 57 Cooke 18, Nedeau 16, Coon 12

N Muskegon\*50 Hart 52 Nedeau 12, Coon 11, Baty 6

**1978-79 (Coach John Wolfe, 16-6 overall, NM WMC Champs)**

NM was picked as the pre-season favorite to dethrone four-time champion Shelby as the West Michigan Conference Champions, and for good reason. NM finished second to Shelby in last season’s WMC race and return virtually their entire team. Three of the returnees were first team All-WMC in Bruce Baty, point guard John Nedeau and 6’4 sophomore center Jeff Cooke. NM returns all five starters as Brad Coon and Pat Bowen all will be in the starting five for second year head coach John Wolfe. However, NM will have to start the season without Cooke, who suffered a freak knee injury at a summer football camp. Wolfe was hopeful of having Cooke, the leading rebounder as a freshman in the WMC and who averaged 11 points per game, would return by the Holiday break.

NM made those who predicted a WMC title for the Norse look good as NM opened their season with a 92-72 win over Mason County Central. The 92 points scored by the Norse still stands today as the most points ever scored by NM over the lads from Scottville. Bruce Baty led the Norse offensive onslaught with 25 points. John Nedeau had a double-double with 10 points and 10 assists. Brad Billinghurst and Bruce Jones were also in double figures with 10 and 12 points respectively.

NM in their second game scored less than half of the points they tallied in their first game as they lost to Montague 50-45. Perhaps the Montague boys were mad that their girls team lost to the NM gals in the district finals a week earlier. Only Bruce Baty of the Norse was able to get in double figures with his 15 game leading points.

John Nedeau scored a career high 31 points, had six assists and four steals to lead the Norse to a 72-60 win over Kent City. NM trailed by one at halftime before coming alive in the second half. Bruce Baty scored 16 points and had 12 rebounds and four steals for NM as the Norse moved to 2-1 early in the season.

It was now Bruce Baty’s turn to score 31 points as he led NM to a 73-58 victory over Hart. The game made amends for Baty who played hurt when Hart knocked NM out of the playoffs last year. John Nedeau played his usual fine floor game and chipped in with 15 points.

With Bruce Baty and Bruce Jones sitting on the bench for much of the game with foul troubles, guard John Nedeau and Brad Billinghurst took charge leading NM to a 75-54 road win at Ravenna. NM put the game away with a 27 -14 edge in the third quarter. NM’s pressing defense forced Gene Gifford’s Bulldogs into committing 38 turnovers in the game.

NM broke up the Holiday break by playing in a four-team tournament at Hesperia. While millions of people were at home watching Ohio State coach Woody Hayes throw a punch at a Clemson football player that would end the legendary Buckeye coaches’ career, NM was defeating Pentwater 52-42. Bruce Baty was back in form with 22 while no other Norse player had more than four points. However, ten NM players did score in the contest. NM returned to Hesperia the following night and defeated the hosts 56-50 as Baty had 17 points and 10 rebounds while Brad Coon added 14 as NM ended 1978 with a fine 6-1 record.

West Michigan Christian, a team that would advance to the Class D championship game in March in Ann Arbor, stopped the NM winning streak at five with a 77-65 victory over the Norsemen. WMC’s Dave Doorn scored 27 points, many on rim-rattling dinks to lead the Warriors who were playing their last season under legendary coach Elmer Walcott. The good news for the Norse was the first appearance of the season for 6’4 center Jeff Cooke. Cooke had his right leg bandaged from thigh to ankle to give support to his injured knee. John Nedeau paced NM in scoring with 19 points while Brad Coon and Bruce Jones had 12. In addition to his 27 points, the Warriors Doorn did an outstanding job in defending NM’s high scoring Bruce Baty. Baty was limited to six points for the game, far below his average.

NM displayed balanced scoring in their 86-62 win in WMC conference play against a winless Oakridge team. John Nedeau had 18, Bruce Baty 14, Brad Coon 11 and Tom Wright 10 while Jeff Cooke, playing with a heavy brace that surely slowed him down, added nine as NM resumed their winning ways and were now 4-1in the WMC.

How the mighty have fallen. After winning four consecutive WMC titles and three regional titles, Shelby was pummeled by NM 77-48 as the Norsemen broke a nine-game losing streak vs. Shelby. Bruce Baty had 18, Brad Coon 16, and John Nedeau 10 while Jeff Cooke gutted his way to score eight points and pull down 7 rebounds.

NM made the long trip to Scottville driving through the snow-covered roads worthwhile as the Norse nipped Mason County Central 69-65. With Jeff Cooke sitting out to rest his ailing knee, the Spartans controlled the backboards, but the Norse had just enough fire power to post a victory. Brad Coon had a career high 23 points to lead the Norse balanced attack. Bruce Baty had 15, Brad Billinghurst 11, Bruce Jones 10, and John Nedeau 8 as NM stayed on top of the WMC.

NM won their 13th straight game on their home court with a 62-54 victory over Orchard View. The Norse moved to 10-2 on the season with the win as Bruce Baty had 19 points and Brad Coon 14. John Nedeau had nine points and the leading assist man in the WMC had six assists. On an ominous note, Jeff Cooke was only able to play limited minutes on his ailing knee.

NM atoned for their only loss to Montague to pad their lead in the West Michigan Conference with a 77-58 victory over Montague. Bruce Baty poured in 26 points while pulling down 11 rebounds. A 25-point fourth quarter put NM in the win column. A hobbled Jeff Cooke helped Baty on the boards with 10 rebounds while Brad Coon and Brad Billinghurst added 10 points.

In a battle of league leaders NM snapped a long Newaygo winning streak with a 63-51 victory. NM won the battle of the boards with an ailing Jeff Cooke grabbing 13 boards. Bruce Baty, Bruce Jones and Brad Coon each grabbed eight rebounds as NM improved their record to 12-2. Playing virtually on one leg Cooke also had a season best 13 points, just behind Bruce Baty’s leading NM total of 17. Bruce Jones also tallied 13 for the Norse who won despite John Nedeau missing the game due to illness.

The Norse were stunned on their home court as Hart pulled off the 70-61 upset to hand NM their 3rd loss and 2nd in conference play. A big fourth quarter won for Hart as NM cooled off after a good start in the game’s opening quarter. Bruce Baty and Brad Coon each had 15 in a losing cause while Jeff Cooke had a dozen points as NM lead’s lead in the WMC was whittled down to a one game edge.

That edge almost dissipated as NM struggled to a 54-52 victory over a Ravenna team they had defeated earlier in the season by over 20 points. NM had to overcome a big deficit as they went on a 12-2 run to close out the game with a victory. NM played without Bruce Baty who was out with an illness. John Nedeau and Brad Billinghurst led NM scorers with 15 points while Jeff Cooke added 9 points and 16 rebounds to keep the Norsemen at the top of the standings in the WMC.

With Bruce Baty still suffering from the flu Jeff Cooke took up for the loss of Baty and scored a career high 27 points and pulled down 10 rebounds. However, that wasn’t enough as Whitehall continued their home court mastery over NM with a 68-65 victory of the Norsemen.

North Muskegon lost more than a game in their 73-57 defeat at the hands of neighboring Reeths Puffer. With 5:31 to go in the fourth quarter the once energetic crowd turned suddenly to stone silence as NM’s sophomore center Jeff Cooke laid in agonizing pain on the floor after reinjuring his knee. Situated high above the court broadcasting the game I could hear the break from our catbird seat at the old Rocket gymnasium. Reeths Puffer’s Sam Hughes, whose father with the same name was a state champion in track as well as an outstanding basketball player at North Muskegon in the late 1950’s, led RP with 22 points. John Nedeau had 14 and Bruce Baty 12 in the losing cause.

NM then used a big first quarter to earn a share of the WMC with an 85-63 win over an overmatched Oakridge team. NM put the game away early with a 31-8 lead after the games first quarter was in the books. John Nedeau and Bruce Baty each had 14 points for the victors with ten Norsemen getting into the scoring column.

Bruce Baty became the first NM player in program history to score 1000 points as NM clinched the outright WMC title with am 88-64 win over Shelby. Baty netted 23 points and picked off 13 rebounds. With Jeff Cooke out and Bruce Jones at home with an illness NM needed production from their reserves. All state football linebacker Scott Cooper responded with a career high 14 points and Tom Wright added 11 as NM finished the regular season 15-5 and regular season champs.

The injury and flu riddled Norsemen had enough horses to defeat Hart 82-64 in the first round of the Class C district tournament held in Shelby. Bruce Baty netted 22 while the Norseman received season highs from reserves Mark Boukamp and Bob Pickle who each came through with a dozen points. Point guard John Nedeau had several assists and chipped in with 12 points for the 16-5 Norsemen.

Injuries and illnesses finally caught up with the Norsemen as they were eliminated from the playoffs after a 56-53 loss to Montague. With Jeff Cooke out for the season, and Bruce Jones as well with mononucleosis, a third starter and orchestra conductor of NM’s offense, John Nedeau had been slowed by a virus in recent games. Nedeau didn’t even start but volunteered his services when NM fell behind the Wildcats, who split the season series with NM and were hammered 77-58 by NM in an earlier meeting. “We needed our experienced big guys to help on the boards. If we could have rested Bruce Baty it would have helped but we couldn’t do it,” said Norse coach John Wolfe after the game. A less than healthy Nedeau scored 16 points, just shy of Baty’s 18 with Bob Pickel coming off the bench to contribute 10 as NM’s season ended with a 16-6 record, the most wins in program history.

Head coach John Wolfe lamented late in the season that NM never once was at full strength for a single game. Although NM won a program record at the time 16 games, one must wonder how many games and how far could NM have advanced in the playoffs with five healthy starters. Baty and Nedeau once again were selected to the WMC All-Conference team. Baty would finish with 1042 career points, the first NM player to reach the 1000-point mark while Nedeau led the Norse and the entire WMC in assists with 102.

N Muskegon 92 Mason Co 72 Bruce Baty 25, Brad Billinghurst 12, John Nedeau 10

N Muskegon 45 Montague 50 Baty 15

N Muskegon 72 Kent City 60 Nedeau 31, Baty 16

N Muskegon 73 Hart 58 Baty 31, Nedeau 15

N Muskegon 75 Ravenna 54 Nedeau 22, Brad Billinghurst 18, Baty 4

N Muskegon 54 Pentwater 42 Baty 22

N Muskegon 56 Hesperia 50 Baty 17, Brad Coon 14

N Muskegon 65 WMC 77 Nedeau 19, Coon and Bruce Jones 12

N Muskegon 86 Oakridge 62 Nedeau 18, Baty 14, Coon 11, Tom Wright 10

N Muskegon 77 Shelby 48 Baty 18, Coon 16, Nedeau 10, Cooke 8

N Muskegon 69 Mason Co 65 Coon 23, Baty 15, Billinghurst 11, Jones 10

N Muskegon 62 Orchard View 54 Baty 19, Coon 14

N Muskegon 77 Montague 58 Baty 26, Coon & Billinghurst 10, Win 400

N Muskegon 63 Newaygo 51 Baty 17, Jones 13& Cooke 13, Coon 11

N Muskegon 61 Hart 70 Baty & Coon 15, Cooke 12

N Muskegon 54 Ravenna 52 Nedeau & Billinghurst 15, Cooke & Coon 9

N Muskegon 65 Whitehall 68 Cooke 27 points, Coon 18, Nedeau 8

N Muskegon 57 Reeths Puffer 73 Nedeau 14, Baty 12, Jeff Cooke injured

N Muskegon 85 Oakridge 63 Baty & Nedeau 14, Scott Cooper 12, Coon 11

N Muskegon 88 Shelby 64 Baty 23, Cooper 14, Wright 11

N Muskegon\*82 Hart 64 Baty 21, Nedeau 14, Boukamp & Pickle 12

N Muskegon\* 53 Montague 56 Baty 18, Nedeau 16, Bob Pickle 10

**1979-80 (Coach John Wolfe, 13-8 overall, Montague-Ravenna co- WMC Champs)**

The good news for third year head coach John Wolfe was that he returns six lettermen from his WMC Conference champs from last season. The bad news – none of the returning lettermen were starters. One of those starters would have been a junior this season but Jeff Cooke will have to sit out his entire junior season with a serious knee injury. Lettermen returning fighting for a starting sport are Bruce Jones, Scott Cooper, Mark Boukamp, Bill Banner, Tom Wright, and Bob Pickel. Gone via graduation included All-Conference performers Bruce Baty and John Nedeau, honorable mention all-WMC Brad Coon and Brad Billinghurst.

None of the above led the Norsemen in scoring in their first game. Instead, it was 5’6 guard Brad Pflaum who tallied 12 points in the Norse opener with Orchard View. Those 12 points weren’t enough as the Cardinals, behind the game leading 18 points and seven steals from future CMU and NFL star Curtis Adams, handed NM a 48-45 loss. Tom Wright added 10 points and 13 rebounds in the low scoring contest as the rebuilt Norse five started the season 0-1.

The Montague Wildcats would be a thorn in the side of NM throughout the season, beginning with their first of three wins over the Norsemen, a 50-48 win over the Norse in overtime. The Norse took the game into OT despite shooting an abysmal 0-18 from the field in the second quarter. Trailing by seven entering the final quarter the Norse applied full court pressure and a Brad Pflaum layup in the closing seconds of regulation sent the game into overtime. Montague’s Dave Tchozewski took charge in the 3-minute overtime session and scored four of Montague six points as the Wildcats nipped the Norse. Pflaum’s 12 points led the Norsemen as NM struggled to put points on the board for the second straight game.

Oakridge was a welcome opponent for the Norse as the Norse got out of their scoring slump at the expense of an Oakridge team still looking for its first win in two years. NM scored 77 points in their 77-55 win over the Eagles playing under first year coach Barry Peets, a former Shelby star. Mark Boukamp had 18 for the balanced Norse, with Brad Pflaum adding 15, Dave Billinghurst 12 and Tom Wright 11 as NM wins their first game of the season. For Oakridge it was their 27th loss in a row.

Mark Boukamp scored 10 of his game high 16 points in the fourth quarter as NM defeated Kent City 66-52. The Norse outscored the host Eagles 16-6 in the fourth quarter to ice the game and even their season’s record at 2-2. Tom Wright had 12 points for the Norse while Brad Pflaum and John Dykema were also in double figures with 10.

In a game played as part of a doubleheader at the LC Walker Arena, Reeths Puffer nipped the Norsemen 67-64 in a game that was tight for the entire final eight minutes. Twice NM closed to within one point of the Rockets in the game’s closing minutes but great free throw shooting in the late stages of the game led to a Rocket victory. Brad Pflaum with 17 and Mark Boukamp with 16 led the Norse.

Trailing by as many as nine points in the second half, NM rallied to earn a 61-53 non-conference win over Fruitport. NM outscored the host Trojans 17-6 in the fourth quarter to even their season’s record at 3-3 heading into the decade of the 80s. Tom Wright had 15 to lead the Norse while Brad Pflaum and Bill Banner added nine.

NM then captured by far their biggest and most surprising win of the year when they shocked West Michigan Christian 73-65 in overtime. WMC, under their first-year head coach Jim Goorman, was a heavy favorite, 5-0 on the season with one of their wins a one-sided victory at the LC Walker Arena over the 2-time state Class B Champs Muskegon Heights. WMC would advance all the way to the Class D state championship game at UM’s Chrisler Arena in March. The difference in the game was NM holding the visiting Warriors scoreless in the third period as NM outscored Christian 15-0 before a packed house in NM. It appeared the Warriors would have the momentum going into the overtime period after Brad Hoffman made a 25-footer with no time on the clock to force OT. NM outscored WMC 13-5 in OT with Mark Boukamp making six of seven frees throws. Brad Pflaum had a terrific game for NM with 20 points, six steals and five assists. Boukamp added 19 points for the Norse and Dave Billinghurst 11.

NM took that momentous win over WMC and carried it up to Hart as the Norsemen overwhelmed the Pirates 87-58. NM out pointed the host Pirates 44-17 in the second half as coach John Wolfe switched defenses in the second half to shut down Hart. Tom Wright had 19, John Dykema 16, Mark Boukamp 13, and Brad Pflaum 12 as NM improved to 5-3 on the season and 2-1 in the WMC.

NM had to go all out in post a narrow 58-55 victory over Ravenna. The Norse saw a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter whittled down to put two points before they cashed in their fourth quarter free throws to come out on top. Tom Wright had 19 points for the winners while Mark Boukamp added 14.

Newaygo made two free throws with nine seconds left to defeat NM 48-47. Bruce Jones had temporarily given NM the lead moments earlier when he made two free throws only to see the Lion’s Mike Wright connect on a couple of game winners. John Dykema’s 15 led NM scorers in the low scoring contest.

In a place not always conducive for a Norsemen victory, the Norse did come out on top as NM defeated Mason County Central 74-65. Brad Pflaum led NM to a rare victory in Scottville with 17 points, eight of his points coming in the pivotal final quarter. Dave Billinghurst connected for a season high 17 points while John Dykema netted 15 as NM stayed in the WMC title chase with a 4-1 conference record.

North Muskegon raced into a tie for first place with Shelby after a late basket by 5’5 guard Brad Pflaum gave NM a 54-52 victory over the Tigers. Shelby mounted a late comeback to stay within range of the Norse after trailing by as many as 14 points. Pflaum had 8 points and six assists to move NM into a tie with the Tigers in the WMC with a 5-1 record. John Dykema was also in double figures for the victors with 12 points. Rounding out all the scoring for the Norse were Bruce Jones, Dave Billinghurst and Mark Boukamp, each scoring eight points.

An improved Oakridge team made the Norse work hard for their 78-66 victory over the Eagles. John Dykema had a season high 21 points and 10 rebounds to lead the Norsemen. Bruce Jones also had a season high with 20 points and 13 rebounds as NM stayed even with Shelby in the WMC. Brad Pflaum had 10 points and four assists for the Norse.

Montague once again foiled NM with yet another tight victory, winning this time 51-48 to knock NM out of first place in the WMC. A poor shooting third quarter doomed the Norse as they were only able to notch 6 points in the eight-minute period. John Dykema with 12 and Mark Boukamp’s 10 points led NM in the low scoring matchup.

Bob Pickel only had six points, but he made four of those points when it counted most, as he scored the final four points on clutch free throws as NM survived 58-56 over Hart. Mark Boukamp and Dave Billinghurst each scored 14 points for the host Norsemen, who earlier in the season defeated Hart by 29 points. Brad Pflaum had 10 for the Norse as they kept their hopes alive for another WMC title.

NM’s chances for their second straight title suffered a big jolt as Ravenna turned back the Norse 68-62. The Bulldogs led throughout the contest although the visiting Norsemen sliced into Ravenna’s lead, pulling to within one point several times during the last eight minutes. Ravenna won this game at the free throw line in the final quarter my swishing nine of their last ten free throws. Mark Boukamp had 18 points to lead the Norse with Tom Wright adding 13.

Since 1970 the winner of the North Muskegon-Whitehall rivalry was the host school as North Muskegon defeated Whitehall on the northside court 72-54. North Muskegon outscored Whitehall in all but the opening quarter to improve their record to 11-6 overall. Brad Pflaum had 16 points for the Norsemen while Tom Wright notched 12.

In a home game that was dedicated to the memory of the late Wes Kaule, a long-time maintenance man at NMHS, the Norse made amends for an earlier loss in the season to Newaygo with a 74-65 victory over the visiting Lions. NM received outstanding balance in the win led by Dave Billinghurst’s 21 points. John Dykema had 13, Mark Boukamp 11 and Bruce Jones had a big game with 11 points to go along with his haul of 16 rebounds.

On the same night that USA hockey fans will remember the “Do you believe in Miracles?” win over the USSR, NM made sure there was no miracle for visiting Mason County Central as NM won easily 86-63. The win moved NM into a three-way tie for first place in the WMC with Ravenna and Shelby. NM moved in front 23-9 after the first quarter and were in control the rest of the way. All 12 Norsemen suited up for the game scored in the contest as coach John Wolfe was able to substitute often in the romp over the Spartans. Mark Boukamp with 18 and Dave Billinghurst with 12 were the only two of the dozen Norse who scored that placed in double figures.

NM’s chance to repeat as WMC went up in smoke as Shelby defeated the Norse in Shelby 71-61. Brad Pflaum scored 25 points, the highest total by a Norsemen player in the entire season but most of his teammates had an off night in the shooting department.

NM’s season ended as Montague swept the season series against the Norse with a 65-57 win at the Class C district in Whitehall. NM scored four more field goals than the Wildcats, but Montague shot 23 free throws, making most of those charity tosses while NM went to the free throw line but three times in the second half. NM played without Mark Boukamp who injured a knee in practice. Dave Billinghurst and John Dykema each had 13 points for NM with Tom Wright chipping in with 11.

Despite starting the 1979-80 with five new starters NM finished a very respectable, and to be honest, a surprisingly good record of 13-8. NM fans can only speculate what the record could have been if they had a healthy Jeff Cooke, who had to sit out the entire year with a serious knee injury. Only in the final game with Shelby when the Norse lost by ten, was there a game NM lost that they were not in contention in the final minute, a testament to the outstand job done by NM coach John Wolfe. The good news for Wolfe and the Norse faithful, bad leg and all, Jeff Cooke would be back in a NM uniform for the 1980-81 season.

N Muskegon 45 Orchard View 48 Brad Pflaum 12, Tom Wright 10

N Muskegon 48 Montague (ot) 50 Pflaum 12

N Muskegon 77 Oakridge 55 Mark Boukamp 18, Pflaum 15

N Muskegon 66 Kent City 52 Boukamp 16, Wright 12

N Muskegon 64 Reeths Puffer 67 Pflaum 17. Boukamp 16

N Muskegon 61 Fruitport 53 Wright 15, Pflaum & Bill Banner 9

N Muskegon 73 WMC (ot) 65 Pflaum 20, Boukamp 19, Billinghurst 11

N Muskegon 87 Hart 58 Wright 19, Dykema 16, Boukamp 13

N Muskegon 58 Ravenna 55 Wright 19, Boukamp 14, Dykema 10

N Muskegon 47 Newaygo 48 Dykema 15, Wright 8, Pflaum 7

N Muskegon 74 Mason Co 65 Pflaum & Billinghurts 17, Dykema 15

N Muskegon 54 Shelby 52 Pflaum 18, Dykema 12

N Muskegon 78 Oakridge 66 Dykema 21, Jones 20, Pflaum 10

N Muskegon 48 Montague 51 Dykema 12, Boukamp 10

N Muskegon 58 Hart 56 Boukamp & Billinghurst 14, Pflaum 10

N Muskegon 62 Ravenna 68 Boukamp 19, Wright 13, Billinghurst 11

N Muskegon 72 Whitehall 54 Pflaum 16, Wright 12

N Muskegon 74 Newaygo 65 Billinghurst 21, Dykema 13, Jones 16 rebounds

N Muskegon 84 Mason Co 63 Boukamp 18, Billinghurst 12

N Muskegon 61 Shelby 71 Pflaum 25, Dykema 12

N Muskegon\*57 Montague 65 Billinghurst & Dykema 13, Wright 11

**1980-81 (Coach John Wolfe, 14-8 overall, NM WMC Champs)**

Expectations for the Norsemen were high, as well as tall as a few of the returning starters in the front-line range between 6’4 and 6’5. John Dykema, who averaged 11 points per game last season returns to the starting lineup. The big news is the return of 6’4 senior Jeff Cooke who in his freshman year led the entire WMC in rebounding. Cooke played a few games his sophomore year before reinjuring his tender knee in a game at Reeths Puffer. The injury was so severe that Cooke had to sit out for all the games last season. 6’4 Steve Fretty, a callup from the junior varsity team will also give NM a boost in size. All-league pick Brad Pflaum returns as the point guard where he averaged nearly 12 points per game and over five assists. Dave Billinghurst, a returning starter at a forward last season will round out the starting five as a guard.

It was not the start that North Muskegon wanted, or expected, as they began the season losing 57-55 at Newaygo. NM played catchup all game long and nearly came all the way back as they outscored Newaygo 23-12 in the final quarter. NM played the game without the services of Jeff Cooke; the only game Cooke would miss the entire season.

Oakridge then stunned the Norse by winning for the first time in their last six meetings 72-63. NM welcomed back Jeff Cooke and the 6’4 senior responded with 18 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Norsemen. Steve Fretty added 17 and 5’6 guard Gene Esteban tallied 12 points as NM drops their second straight to open the season.

NM then lost their third game in a row, and their second loss by two points as Orchard View nipped NM 60-58. A shot by Greg Cooke was deemed to be attempted after the final horn had sounded as the Cardinals for the second year in a row won a tight contest with the Norsemen. NM can look no further than the turnover department to come up a major reason for the defeat. NM turned the ball over 25 times to but 14 for the victorious Cardinals. Dave Billinghurst had 16, and Jeff Cooke and Steve Fretty each had 14 points for the Norse. OV would then go on to win the Seaway Conference title for their coach Mike Henry.

North Muskegon and Muskegon Heights met up for the first time in history at the LC Walker Arena and the Norse were no match for the undefeated and talented Tigers who romped over the Norse 81-49. NM was outscored in every quarter and could now look forward to a much easier schedule as they fell to 0-4 on the season. No Norsemen scored in double figures for NM with Jeff Cooke, Steve Esteban and Steve Fretty each scoring eight points.

NM took to the hardwoods just one day after Christmas with a game against Reeths Puffer as part of a Holiday tournament at Fremont. In what would prove to be the last game ever played between the two neighboring schools, NM defeated the Rockets 65-53 to even the series played from 1960 to 1980 at 10 wins for each team. Jeff Cooke had his best game since the return from his injury to lead the Norse with 22 points and 16 rebounds. Gene Esteban totaled 13 points while dishing off for seven assists. Brad Pflaum was a big help to his team with nine assists. The victory, the first of the season for NM put them into the finals the following day against Fremont, who defeated West Michigan Christian in the other game in the tournament.

In the first meeting between two old time rivals in 15 years, NM won the Fremont Classic with a 70-68 victory over the host Packers. Brad Pflaum was the man of the hour for NM as the 5’6 guard scored three baskets in the closing minutes to give NM a come from behind victory over Fremont. Pflaum’s final two points came with six seconds to go to break a tie at 68-all. Pflaum finished with 16 points, five assists and three steals. Steve Fretty notched 16 points while Jeff Cooke had 13 points and 11 rebounds. John Dykema was the fourth Norsemen to score in double figures with 10 points.

In a game moved from NM to Fruitport as the Norse school had no heat due to boiler problems, NM didn’t mind the move at all as they scored a season high 93 points in a rout of Fruitport. John Dykema had 22 points, Greg Cooke 14, Gene Esteban 13, Steve Fretty 12, while Brad Pflaum and Jeff Cooke each scored ten points. It was the second time in NM’s long history where six NM players scored in double figures. If not for one more basket, Ron Matthews would have made it seven as he ended up with eight points.

It was now back to the grind of playing your West Michigan Conference opponents after the Norse played six non-conference opponents in the month of December. First up in January of 1981 was Montague and as usual, it was another close game with NM coming out on top 57-54. After beginning the season at 0-4, the Norse had now evened their record at 4-4. John Dykema had his second straight 20-point game to lead the Norse while Jeff Cooke had 15 points and 12 rebounds for the Norsemen.

NM used a full-court zone press in the third quarter to come from behind to defeat the Hart Pirates 73-66 to earn their fifth straight win. Leading the pressure defense were guard Gene Esteban and Greg Cooke who forced several Hart turnovers to turn the game around for NM. Jeff Cooke led NM in scoring with 19 points while his brother Greg had 11. Also in double figures for the Norse were guards Gene Esteban and Brad Pflaum who netted 13 and 11 points respectively.

NM saw an eight-point lead entering the final quarter vanish as Ravenna outscored the Norsemen 18-8 in the final eight minutes to nip the Norse 59-57. Marty Grenell hit a 10-footer with three seconds showing on the clock for the game winner for the Bulldogs. Jeff Cooke was a tower of strength on the boards with 21 rebounds to go along with his 13 points. Brad Pflaum led Norse scorers with 15 points as the five-game winning streak ended.

It appeared NM chances for winning the conference title were doomed after dropping a 61-55 contest at Shelby. The loss dropped NM to 2-3 in the conference making all games in the WMC ‘must’ wins for the Norse. Stay tuned. Once again it was a bad fourth quarter that hurt the Norse as they led by five points heading into the final eight minutes only to be outscored 21-10. Jeff Cooke had 13 points and 13 rebounds for the Norse while his brother Greg was the other NM player in double figures with 10.

NM had little time to rest as they entertained current league leader Mason County Central the next night. NM got a career high 29 points from Dave Billinghurst who came off the bench to score 10 points in the second quarter to give NM a 34-32 lead. Billinghurst was near perfect on the night as he made 13 of his 15 field goal attempts. Jeff Cooke had a double-double with 15 points and 10 rebounds as NM, even with a 3-3 conference record, pulled to within one game of the lead in the conference standings.

The top of the leaderboard in the West Michigan Conference was now in chaos following NM’s 57-50 victory over Oakridge. Shelby remained at the top of the standings with two losses but there was a logjam at second place with four teams, including the Norsemen who following the win over the Eagles are tied in second place with a 4-3 record. With still five games remaining in the WMC still to be played, the Norse were now back in the hunt. Jeff Cooke had a monster game for the Norsemen with 22 points and 21 rebounds.

Close games have been the norm of late when NM and Montague meet on the court and that was the case once again as the Norsemen, trailing by as many as nine points early in the game, bounced back to defeat Montague by three points once again 54-51. Dave Billinghurst pumped in 20 of his 24 points in the second and third quarters to lead the Norse comeback. The win kept the Norse tied in second place with a 5-3 WMC record. Brad Pflaum finished with 12 points for NM.

NM posted their second victory in less than a week over an Oceana County foe as winless Hart fell to the Norsemen 72-52 in a game played on the Pirates home court. Brad Pflaum had a season high 18 to lead NM’s victory and Dave Billinghurst netted 16 as NM stayed in the WMC race with the win. Jeff Cooke had 10 rebounds for NM with some big games looming in the WMC.

NM rebounded from a two-point loss earlier in the season to Ravenna to bounce back in their second meeting with a 72-54 win over the Bulldogs. Dave Billinghurst continued his torrid scoring with 18 points to lead the Norse with Brad Pflaum close behind with 13. The Cooke brothers, Jeff and Greg each had 10 points as did John Dykema for the well-balanced NM offense.

Due to record snowfall during the month of February in 1981, NM and Whitehall had to wait a day to reschedule a game from Tuesday to a Wednesday date. The Norsemen were still looking for their first win at Whitehall since 1962 after losing once again on the Vikings home court 58-55. NM had four players reach double figures, but the highest points achieved was John Dykema’s 12 markers. Brad Pflaum added 11 while Jeff Cooke and David Billinghurst both tallied 10 as NM’s winning streak, all earned against WMC conference foes, ended at five.

Two conference games remained on NM’s schedule. If the Norse could come out on top in both games, then the WMC title would be theirs. Mission accomplished in game number one.

NM blitzed Mason County Central with 47 second half points to push their overall record at 8-3 while the Spartans fell to 8-4. The Norse were now tied for the lead with Shelby and those two would meet in a winner take all format on Tuesday February 24. NM had five players in double figures in the win over Mason County with Jeff Cooke’s 16 leading the list. Gene Esteban had 14, John Dykema 13, and Brad Pflaum and Dave Billinghurst each tallied 10.

NM trailed Shelby 16-9 at the end of the first quarter and trailed by two at the half in front of a sold-out crowd in the Northside gym. A third quarter uprising by the Norse turned the game in their favor as they outscored the Tiger 16-8. NM kept their momentum during the final eight minutes to end the game with a 62-54 victory and a WMC championship. Jeff Cooke was huge for NM with 26 points and 10 rebounds. John Dykema also had a big game for NM with 18 points and 12 rebounds. Coach John Wolfe following the game lauded the play of a player who only had two points in the game. Greg Cooke worked tirelessly in a box and one defense on Shelby’s star performer Dave Beckman. Beckman had 32 but Coach Wolfe had high praise of Cooke. “If Greg hadn’t shadowed Beckman, he might have scored 40 or 50 points. He’s that good,” said a jubilant Wolfe.

NM ended the season just the opposite in how they started – with a win over a Newaygo team that handed the Norse their opening loss. Behind the play of Jeff Cooke, the Norse led all the way to win 69-55. The 6’4 senior had 19 points and grabbed 15 rebounds. Dave Billinghurst also had a strong game with 16 points.

The Norse opened the Class C district tournament at Hart with a 65-50 victory over Hesperia with four Norsemen in double figures. It was the fifth win in as many meetings against Hesperia in a brief rivalry that began back in 1937. Once again it was a well-balanced NM attack with four Norsemen reaching double figures: Jeff Cooke with 14, Dave Billinghurst 13, John Dykema 12 and Brad Pflaum 10. The win moves NM into the district semifinals where they would face Whitehall.

NM found themselves trailing Whitehall 47-35 in the third quarter before NM went into a full court man-to-man pressure defense that almost paid off in a Norse victory, only to have their season come to an end with a 62-60 loss to Whitehall. Jeff Cooke finished his season – but certainly not his career at North Muskegon with 19 points. Dave Billinghurst and John Dykema each finished with 13 as North Muskegon finished their season at a very respectable 14-8.

Brad Pflaum repeated as a first team All-WMC performer with his playmaking skills while averaging 10 points per game. An easy choice for the All-conference team was 6’4 senior Jeff Cooke. Although he led the WMC conference in rebounding as a freshman it was a glaring oversite not to include Jeff on the 1978 team. No mistake was made in 1981 as Cooke, who was injured midway through his sophomore season and sat out his entire junior season, again led the WMC in rebounds while tossing in 15 points per game. Cooke was a driving force as to why North Muskegon won the conference championship in 1981. NM would not win another basketball conference championship until ---- Cooke would coach the Norse to a title years later.

N Muskegon 55 Newaygo 57 Dave Billinghurst 16, Brad Pflaum 13

N Muskegon 63 Oakridge 72 Jeff Cooke 18, Steve Fretty 17

N Muskegon 58 Orchard View 60 Billinghurst 15, Cooke & Fretty 14

N Muskegon 49 Musk Hts 81 Gene Esteban, J. Cooke, Fretty 8, Pflaum 7

N Muskegon 65 Reeths Puffer 53 J. Cooke 22, Esteban 13, John Dykema 10

N Muskegon 70 Fremont 68 Pflaum 16, Fretty 13, J. Cooke 11

N Muskegon 93 Fruitport 50 Six Norse in double figures, Dykema 22

N Muskegon 57 Montague 54 Dykema 20, J. Cooke 15

N Muskegon 73 Hart 66 J. Cooke 22, Esteban 13, G. Cooke 11

N Muskegon 57 Ravenna 59 Pflaum 15, J. Cooke 13 points & 21 reb.

N Muskegon 55 Shelby 61 J. Cooke 13, G. Cooke 10

N Muskegon 72 Mason Co 60 Billinghurst 29, J. Cooke 15

N Muskegon 57 Oakridge 50 J. Cooke 22 points & 21 rebounds

N Muskegon 54 Montague 51 Billinghurst 24, Pflaum 12

N Muskegon 72 Hart 52 Pflaum 18, Billinghurst 16, J Cooke 9

N Muskegon 72 Ravenna 54 Billinghurst 18, Pflaum 13

N Muskegon 55 Whitehall 58 Dykema 12, Pflaum 11

N Muskegon 78 Mason Co 58 J. Cooke 13, Esteban 14, Dykema 13

N Muskegon 62 Shelby 54 J Cooke 26, Dykema 18, Pflaum 10

N Muskegon 69 Newaygo 55 J Cooke 19 & 15 rebounds. Billinghurst 16

N Muskegon\*65 Hesperia 50 J Cooke 14, Billinghurst 13, Dykema 12

N Muskegon\* 60 Whitehall 62 J Cooke 19, Billinghurst & Dykema 13

**1981-82 (Coach John Wolfe, 7-15 overall, MCC- Montague tie in WMC)**

The 1981-82 season would show the Norsemen winning only seven games. With a few breaks that record could have easily been reversed as the Norsemen lost all three games that went into overtime as well as a few other contests that went down to the wire with NM on the losing end. Two starters returned from the WMC championship team of 1981, Steve Fretty and Gene Esteban. Greg Cooke, who made the all-state team in football also saw extensive action in the previous season.

Less than a week after the NM football team played in the Class C state championship game, the Norse basketball team was hurried into action to face the Orchard View Cardinals, the defending Seaway Conference champs. OV thumped NM 67-57 with Mark Jalovek burning the Norsemen with 27 points. Returning starter Steve Fretty tallied a career high 21 points to lead NM with Gene Esteban adding 11.

The Norse got off to a good start in their quest to repeat as WMC conference champs with a 58-51 win over Shelby. Gene Esteban led NM with 16 points with 3-sport standout Greg Cooke netting 12. 6’4 Steve Fretty controlled the boards during the game with 14 rebounds to go along with his eight points.

NM made it 2-0 in WMC action following their 79-72 win over Oakridge. After trailing much of the game, the host Eagles pulled to within one point of the Norsemen with three minutes left in the game. Greg Cooke scored eight of his 15 points in the final quarter as NM pulled away in the closing minutes to secure the victory. Steve Fretty led Norse scorers with 19 points as NM showed exceptional balance. Gene Esteban added 14 points with Sam Nedeau and Dave Weller chipping in with a dozen points each. Weller pulled down 15 rebounds to lead all players in that department.

NM would then begin a five-game skid starting with a 65-54 loss to Montague in a game played on the Norsemen’s home court. The Wildcats were in control from the opening tip to improve their record to 3-2 while the Norsemen fell to 2-1 in the WMC. Greg Cooke, playing on an injured ankle was the only Norse player in double figures with 14. Sam Weller and Steve Fretty were close with nine points each.

Overtime games did not treat NM kindly during the 1981-82 season as they had three games go into the extra session and the Norse lost all three. Their first overtime loss came against West Michigan Christian in a Holiday Tournament played at Reeths Puffer. WMC edged NM 62-61 by outpointing the Norse 6-5 in the three-minute overtime. After WMC made a pair of free throws to take the lead at 62-61 the Norse failed to connect on their final shot. NM received great balance but their high point man, Steve Fretty scored but 14 points. Also in double figures for NM were Greg Cooke with 13 while Sam Weller, Gene Esteban and Sam Nedeau all had 10 markers.

With the loss to WMC the Norse then played a consolation game with Fremont. There was no overtime needed in this game as Fremont won handedly over the Norsemen 65-46. Gene Esteban carried most of the scoring load for NM with 18 points.

After being blown out by the Norsemen by 43 points in 1981, Fruitport flipped the script and handed NM their fourth straight defeat 69-55. A big third quarter when the host Trojans scored 25 points was the catalyst in Fruitport’s victory. It was only the third victory in 18 games for Fruitport over the years in the series with NM. Steve Fretty had 18 in a losing cause for the Norse while Gene Esteban was also in double figures with 10.

Hart’s Bob Cutter hit a 10-foot jumper as time ran out to lift the Hart Pirates to a hard-fought 56-55 win over the Norsemen. The winning basket came just seven seconds after NM had taken their own one-point lead before Cutter’s bucket. Dave Weller had 15 and Gene Esteban 13 and Sam Nedeau 12 points as NM dropped their fifth straight game.

Greg Cooke sparked the Norse with 17 points and numerous steals as NM snapped their five-game losing streak with a 63-53 win over Ravenna. Steve Fretty followed Cooke in scoring with 14 points with Sam Nedeau chipping in with 11.

In a non-league game Muskegon Height controlled the backboards in a convincing 73-46 win over the Norsemen on the Tiger’s home court. NM played the Tigers tough in the first quarter, trailing by only three points, but the Tigers pulled away and never looked back with a 24-13 advantage in the second quarter. Sam Nedeau had 13 to pace the Norse with Greg Cooke adding 11. The two teams would not meet again for another 30 years. The loss would unfortunately for the Norse faithful, begin another long losing streak for the Norse.

The journey on a Tuesday night to Scottville made for a long trip home as Mason County Central bombarded NM with 91 points in a 91-69 whipping of the Norsemen. The 91 points was by far the most points allowed by the NM defense all season with 34 of the Spartans points coming in the second quarter to put the game out of reach. Dave Weller’s 20 points was high for the Norse with Sam Nedeau’s 13, and Greg Cooke’s 11 points also making it into double figures.

On a night when many games were cancelled due to freezing rain, the Norsemen team bus made it to Shelby only to see NM drop their third straight game to the host Tigers 61-50. NM’s offense was as slippery as the highways around West Michigan as they committed 23 turnovers. NM led at the half, but Shelby outscored the Norsemen 20-8 in the third quarter and followed that up with a 20-13 advantage in the final eight minutes. Dave Weller had his second consecutive 20-point game and grabbed 12 rebounds to lead the Norse.

As if it wasn’t bad enough to lose three games that went into overtime during the season, but to lose a game that went two overtimes had to be gut-wrenching for the Norsemen. Rick Larabee’s jumper from the baseline with seconds left to go in the second overtime period spelled defeat for NM as Oakridge edged NM 65-63. Despite the loss, NM head coach John Wolfe was pleased with his team’s effort: “We had our best team play that we’ve had. I was pleased with the hustle of our players.” Said Wolfe. Dave Weller continued his fine play of late with 16 points and 10 rebounds while Greg Cooke added 15 points and nine boards while Sam Nedeau tossed in 14.

Whitehall pulled away in the fourth quarter to defeat the Norse 66-52 in a non-league game between the two long-time rivals. The Vikings, leading by five points entering the final quarter outscored NM 20-11 to hand the Norsemen their 5th straight defeat. Steve Fretty led NM with 16 points followed by Greg Cooke with 13. In December of 1982 Whitehall applied to rejoin the WMC, an application gladly accepted by the WMC, and the Vikings would become a member beginning with the 1984-85 season.

First place Montague stayed on top of the standings in the WMC by topping NM 68-57 as NM fell to 3-11 on the season and 2-6 in the WMC. Sam Nedeau led NM with 13 points followed by Steve Fretty with 11 points plus 11 rebounds.

NM snapped their six-game losing streak with a 63-43 breather over Hart as NM got a spark from Jeff Cordo who scored al 10 of his points in the second half. Sam Nedeau led the Norsemen in scoring with 16 points while Steve Fretty controlled the backboards with 13 rebounds. In addition to Cordo, Bob Banner also had his best game to date for NM with nine points.

The Norsemen took 40 foul shots and made 26 to defeat Ravenna 56-48, their second win on the season against the Bulldogs. Steve Fretty dominated the game according to Bulldog head coach Bob Sarachman with 12 points and 17 rebounds. Greg Cooke also had 12 markers for the Norsemen with Dave Weller adding 14 as NM improved to 5-12 on the season.

NM suffered yet another close defeat as Newaygo’s Dean duChemin’s jump shot with 16 seconds left was the game winner. NM missed a couple of shots to send the game into overtime to drop NM to a 5-13 overall record. Steve Fretty netted 14 for NM while Bob Banner reached double figures for the first time on the season with 10.

Mason County improved to 15-3 on the season and moved into first place in the WMC with an 8-1 record, one half game in front of Montague with one week to go in the race. The Spartans won despite playing without their leading player Frank Tuka who was out with a concussion. NM played MCC close until the Spartans broke it open with a 21-13 advantage in the fourth quarter. Steve Fretty led the offensive effort for the Norse with 17 points and seven rebounds. Greg Cooke and Sam Nedeau both reached double figures with 10.

Greg Cooke and Dave Weller each had career highs in NM’s 86-78 victory over Kent City in the final game of the regular season. Cooke poured in 27 points and Weller 24 to give NM some badly needed momentum heading into next week’s MHSAA playoffs. Weller also grabbed 15 rebounds while Steve Fretty had 14 points and 15 rebounds as NM controlled the backboards. Kent City finished the regular season as conference champs of the NCAA league and a 15-5 record.

In a basketball oddity, Hart nipped North Muskegon 56-55 earlier in the season. When the final horn had sounded in the first game played in the Class C district held at Shelby, the score was the exact same, but this time it was NM on the front end of a 56-55 score. It was a game that NM easily could have lost. Hart seemingly had the game wrapped up holding a one-point lead, but a Hart player inexplicably took a shot with six seconds showing on the clock. The shot missed and was rebounded by the Norse. After a couple of time outs and one-second left on the clock, Sam Nedeau lobbed an inbounds pass to Steve Fretty, Fretty missed the shot but was fouled. Fretty than calmly hit both free throws with no time on the clock to give NM a 56-55 victory. Nedeau finished as high point man for the winners with 16 points, Dave Weller 13 and Fretty 12, including the two game-winning free throws.

For the second time in a row when the two teams met, Oakridge and North Muskegon would again play an overtime game. This time Oakridge needed just one overtime period to end the Norsemen’s season with a 65-61 victory. At one point late in regulation NM took a three-point lead only to see the Eagles claw back to force overtime. Greg Cooke and Steve Fretty each scored 13 points in their last game in a Norse uniform while Dave Weller, a junior, led NM with 21 points.

John Wolfe would retire from coaching NM basketball following the 1981-82 season but would remain at NM as the Athletic Director. Wolfe in five years won 63 games while losing 45 with two WMC championships and a second-place finish. NM would have to wait 20 years before they would win another WMC basketball championship.

N Muskegon 57 Orchard View 67 Steve Fretty 21, Gene Esteban 11

N Muskegon 58 Shelby 51 Esteban 16, Greg Cooke 12, Fretty 14 reb.

N Muskegon 79 Oakridge 72 Fretty 19, Cooke 15, Esteban 14

N Muskegon 54 Montague 65 Cooke 14, Fretty & Weller 9

N Muskegon 61 WMC (ot) 62 Fretty 14, Cooke 13, three with 10 points

N Muskegon 46 Fremont 65 Essteban 18

N Muskegon 55 Fruitport 69 Fretty 18, Esteban 10

N Muskegon 55 Hart 56 Weller, 15, Esteban 13, Sam Nedeau 12

N Muskegon 63 Ravenna 53 Cooke 17, Fretty 14, Nedeau 11

N Muskegon 46 Musk Hts 73 Nedeau 13, Cooke 11

N Muskegon 69 Mason Co 91 Weller 20, Nedeau 13, Cooke 11

N Muskegon 50 Shelby 61 Weller 20 points and 12 rebounds

N Muskegon 63 Oakridge (2ot) 65 Weller 16, Cooke 15, Nedeau 14

N Muskegon 52 Whitehall 66 Fretty 16, Cooke 13

N Muskegon 57 Montague 68 Nedeau 13, Fretty 11

N Muskegon 63 Hart 43 Nedeau 16, Jeff Cordo 10, Bob Banner 9

N Muskegon 56 Ravenna 48 Weller 14, Fretty & Cooke 12

N Muskegon 48 Newaygo 50 Fretty 14, Banner 10

N Muskegon 51 Mason Co 62 Fretty 17, Cooke & Nedeau 10

N Muskegon 86 Kent City 78 Cooke 27, Weller 24, Fretty 14

N Muskegon\*56 Hart 55 Nedeau 16, Weller 13, Fretty 12

N Muskegon\* 61 Oakridge (ot) 65 Weller 21, Cooke and Fretty 13

**1982-83 (Coach Dave Cooke 7-15 overall, Mason County wins WMC)**

A very familiar face would replace John Wolfe to begin the 1982-83 season. A man who would wear many hats over the years ---Dave Cooke. Cooke was the NM basketball coach from 1968 thru 1973, before taking over at Reeths Puffer as their football coach from 1972 – 1977. Showing his versatility and his love of working with today’s youths Cooke returned to NM, not only as a guidance counselor and science teacher but took over as the North Muskegon girls’ basketball coach where he won a couple of districts and a WMC championship with the gals. When John Wolfe resigned NM needed a new boys’ basketball coach. Already burdened down with the immense responsibilities as NM’s head football coach, where he would stay for decades, Cooke would now perform double duty as both NM’s football and basketball coach, a common feat in the 1930s and 40s but a rarity in the 1980s and beyond. Cooke would serve three years coaching both sports before Walt Gawkowski came to his rescue to free Cooke to concentrate on his football duties, a coaching job slowly but surely becoming work for 365 days a year.

NM returned a pair of starters from last year’s team, Dave Weller, an all-conference selectee and Sam Nedeau, but the rest of the starting five would have to come from reserves and members of last year’s junior varsity team. Brad Kinning had shown much improvement during the offseason and could crack the starting lineup while sophomore Mike Sekulich could also be a big factor for the upcoming season.

The Norsemen made Dave Cooke’s return as their basketball coach a successful one with a narrow 59-57 win over Orchard View. Free throw shooting was the difference in the opener as the Norse scored 21 from the free throw line while the Cardinals only had seven. Sam Nedeau scored 14 points to lead NM scorers. Brad Kinning added 11, sophomore Mike Sekulich and Jim Sheehan eight.

Newaygo had too much height for the Norse in a Saturday night contest as the Lions defeated NM 60-46. Dave Weller led NM with 11 while Mike Sekulich added nine.

NM bounced back to defeat Shelby 67-62. The game was tied at halftime when NM then outscored Shelby 18-12 in the third quarter to win their opening game in the WMC. Sam Nedeau had 18 points and six assists to lead NM. John Bowen added 13, Dave Weller 11 and Mike Sekulich 10 in the balanced NM offense.

It was a tale of two halves in NM’s next game with Oakridge with the Eagles winning the half that counted the most, the second half. NM led 26-17 at halftime only to be outplayed badly by Oakridge in the second half as the Eagles would go on to win 61-53. Brad Kinning came off the bench to score 18 points while Mike Sekulich added 12 for NM.

A cold spell in the fourth quarter meant big trouble for the Norse as they went five minutes without scoring giving West Michigan Christian a path to victory. The Warriors took advantage of the dry spell to edge NM 50-49 in a Holiday tournament held at Muskegon Community College. Mike Sekulich scored 17 points, 15 in the first half to lead the Norse with Jim Sheehan adding 10. The loss sent NM into the consolation game of the tournament to face Fremont.

Sam Nedeau had the game of his life as he poured in 28 points to lead the Norsemen to a 65-55 victory over Fremont in the consolation game of the MCC tournament on the Jayhawk campus. Nedeau had his points on nine field goals and a 10-16 showing at the free throw stripe. Mike Sekulich added 10, Brad Kinning 9, and Dave Weller 8 to round out the Norse scoring.

The Norse trailed Fruitport 40-27 at halftime but came roaring back behind the play of sophomore Mike Sekulich to trip Fruitport 66-63. With the score tied at 63-all Sekulich converted on a three-point play as the Norse came all the way back to defeat Fruitport 66-63. Sekulich scored 21 points and had 11 rebounds in the Norse non-league victory while Dave Weller and Sam Nedeau each contributed 14 points in the win.

Only a big fourth quarter when NM outscored Montague 24-12 did the Norse make the final score of 81-73 look respectable. Montague dominated in the first half as they outscored the Norse 50-32. Sam Nedeau was the high point man for NM with 19 points, followed by Mike Sekulich with 13 and John Bowen with 10.

Hart broke a five-game losing streak to NM 61-56 and they did most of their damage at the free throw line. The Pirates made 23 of 27 free throws including a stretch in the final quarter when they hit 12 straight. NM was hurt when sophomore Mike Sekulich twisted an ankle while driving the baseline and didn’t return until the final quarter. NM had closed to within two points at 51-49 with 3:40 left but the Pirates cashed in their free throws after being fouled by desperate NM players to pull ahead. Brad Kinning led a balanced NM attack with 13 points as points were spread almost equally among nine NM players. Jim Sheehan scored 10 with John Bowen and Sam Nedeau scoring nine.

The original report of Mike Sekulich leaving the game against Hart with a twisted ankle turned out to be more serious. X Rays taken had shown that Sekulich had suffered a fracture of his ankle and would be lost for the rest of the season. With one of their leading scorers on crutches Ravenna won their first game of the season with a 58-55 victory over NM. Sam Nedeau attempted to take up some of the scoring slack with the absence of Sekulich and poured in 21 points. Brad Kinning netted 11 and Dave Weller 10 as NM dropped to 4-6 on the season.

After NM took a 20-18 lead over Mason County Central after one quarter was played, the Spartans then went on a rampage beginning with a 26-12 advantage in the second quarter as they swamped NM 85-60. Only Sam Nedeau with 20 points was able to find the range consistently for NM as the Norse lost their fourth game in a row, all against WMC competitors.

Norse shooters were as cold as the January weather as NM lost their fifth straight WMC contest 58-45 to Shelby. Three NM players fouled out of the contest as Shelby put this game away early by racing out to a 15-6 lead at the end of the first quarter. Only Brad Kinning was in double figures for NM with 11 points.

A confident Oakridge team started four newcomers against NM and still came out on top with a 68-56 victory over the slumping Norsemen. Dave Weller had his best scoring game since his junior season with 17 points to lead the Norse with Sam Nedeau reaching double figures with 10. At this point in time NM had to have concerns that they may not win another game.

Those concerns would be put to rest as NM surprised Montague with an upset 70-60 win over the Wildcats. The defeat knocked Montague out of a first-place tie with Mason County Central and stopped NM’s season long losing streak at six. Sam Nedeau led NM with 21 points and was lauded by Coach Cooke for his defensive play as well. Dave Weller added 15 points and Brad Kinning 14 as the Norse won but their fifth game of the season and the second in the WMC.

Dave Weller had a career high 27 points, but it wasn’t enough as Hart held off the Norse to earn a 70-63 victory. Sam Nedeau had 13 but Norse fans had to be happy to know that the earlier report that Mike Sekulich was out for the season was erroneous as Sekulich returned to score eight points giving Norse fans hope that a couple more wins might be on the horizon.

A ten-day layoff didn’t help the Norse shooters as they made but four of their 25 shot attempts in the first half as they lost a tight contest to Ravenna 67-63. Mike Sekulich and Sam Nedeau each had 13 points for the Norsemen while Dave Weller added 11.

In the first of two meetings between the Norse and the West Shore Academy School, it was West Shore who won the first of the two contests 79-66. The

fledgling West Shore team had accrued many talented players from the area and with the win moved to an impressive 15-2 record. Sam Nedeau had 18 while Brad Kinning had 14 points for NM. Mike Sekulich did not see action.

To nobody’s surprise who have followed the Whitehall-North Muskegon rivalry over the years, the Vikings used the packed house on hand at Whitehall to send the visiting Norsemen back to the northside with a 78-66 loss. Whitehall shot a blazing 71% from the field in the first quarter and kept up their hot shooting to take a 44-33 over NM at halftime. Sam Nedeau had a near career high of 27 points while John Bowen with 11, was the only other NM player to score more than six points.

Mike Sekulich, with his injured ankle getting better every day, sparked the Norsemen to a 57-55 victory over Kent City. Sekulich scored all 18 of his points in the second half as NM mounted a big comeback victory after trailing by as many as 16 points in the first half. Sekulich also led in rebounding with 13 while Jim Sheehan and Dave Weller each added 11 points for the Norsemen.

Mason County insured themselves of the outright championship in the West Michigan Conference with an 89-70 win over NM in the final game of the regular season. MCC finished 17-3 overall and 10-2 in the WMC. Mike Sekulich led NM with 20 points while Dave Weller added 11.

The Norsemen couldn’t have been all that excited to have the 1983 Class C district tournament in a Whitehall gymnasium where NM hasn’t experienced a victory since 1962. Fortunately, they were not playing Whitehall, but Shelby in the opening round. NM came out the victors 66-62 over Shelby but it did not come easy. NM had to rally from 11 points behind to pull off the thriller in overtime. Brad Kinning only had two field goals for the entire game, but they were big ones. Kinning’s layup with 13 seconds left brought NM all the way back and forced overtime. Moments later Kinning gave the Norse a four-point lead in overtime that iced the game. Mike Sekulich again led the Norse offense with 17 points and 10 rebounds. John Weller had 14 points and 12 rebounds while John Bowen had his best scoring output of the season with 15 points. Now for the bad news --- less than 24 hours later NM would have to play the home team from Whitehall on their home court.

A tired Norsemen team than had their season end with yet another defeat at the hands of Whitehall on the Vikings home court. “I’m extremely proud of this group,” said Cooke whose team bows out at 7-15. “They made up for their deficiencies with plenty of hustle. We have some good young kids coming back to the program next season.” One of those kids coming back would be sophomore Mike Sekulich, who will also serve in the fall as quarterback of Cooke’s NM football team. Sekulich tallied 13 points in the loss while hauling in eight rebounds. Sam Nedeau led NM scoring with 17 while Dave Weller added 10 points.

N Muskegon 59 Orchard View 57 Sam Nedeau 14, Brad Kinning 11

N Muskegon 46 Newaygo 60 Dave Weller 11, Mike Sekulich 9

N Muskegon 67 Shelby 62 Nedeau 18, John Bowen 13, Weller 11

N Muskegon 53 Oakridge 61 Kinning 18, Sekulich 12

N Muskegon 49 WMC 50 Sekulich 17, Jim Sheehan 10

N Muskegon 65 Fremont 55 Nedeau 28, Sekulich 10

N Muskegon 66 Fruitport 63 Sekulich 21, Weller & Nedeau 14

N Muskegon 73 Montague 81 Nedeau 19, Sekulich 13, Bowen 10

N Muskegon 56 Hart 61 Kinning 13, Sheehan 10, Nedeau & Bowen 9

N Muskegon 55 Ravenna 58 Nedeaau 21, Kinning 11, Weller 10

N Muskegon 60 Mason Co 85 Nedeau 20

N Muskegon 45 Shelby 58 Kinning 11

N Muskegon 56 Oakridge 68 Weller 17, Nedeau 10

N Muskegon 70 Montague 60 Nedeau 21, Weller 15, Kinning 14

N Muskegon 63 Hart 70 Weller 27, Nedeau 13, Sekulich 8

N Muskegon 63 Ravenna 67 Sekulich and Nedeau 13, Weller 11

N Muskegon 66 W. Shore Ch. 79 Nedeau 18, Kinning 14

N Muskegon 66 Whitehall 78 Nedeau 27, Bowen 11

N Muskegon 57 Kent City 55 Sekulich 18, Sheehan & Weller 11

N Muskegon 70 Mason Co 89 Sekulich 20, Weller 11

N Muskegon\* 66 Shelby (ot) 62 Sekulich 17, Bowen 15, Weller 14

N Muskegon\*58 Whitehall 74 Nedeau 17, Sekulcih 13, Weller 10

**1983-84 (Coach Dave Cooke 6-15 overall, Oakridge wins WMC)**

NM head coach Dave Cooke was hopeful that his current basketball team could match the outstanding record posted by his football team that just completed its season with a 9-1 record. Several players would make the quick transition from football to basketball, including his star quarterback and running back. However, the record will show that most of those players were far better in football than roundball. Only two starters returned from the previous season’s basketball team, 6’2 junior Mike Sekulich and 6’0 guard Jim Sheehan. The rest of the returnees saw little action from the previous season and the Norsemen would struggle as they would come out victorious in but 6 of their 21 games.

NM went on the road to play a talented and big Newaygo team and fell 62-45 to the Lions. Future Muskegon Community College standout 6’6 Dan Davis scored 23 points as Newaygo, who would go on to win their conference, outscored NM in every quarter to post an easy victory. Mike Sekulich led NM with 16 points while the other returning starter from the previous season, Jim Sheehan, netted eight markers.

NM would then entertain Shelby on the Northside court with coach Jim Tate’s Shelby’s Tigers rated as the team to beat in the WMC. It looked like Shelby was going to coast to an easy win over the Norse as NM missed their first 13 shots and fell behind at one point in the opening quarter 15-4. Somehow, the Norse regrouped and pulled off a shocking 50-47 win over Shelby. As bad as NM started off shooting, they quickly found their touch and proceeded to make 10 of their next 14 shot attempts to claw back into the game. Nursing a three-point lead with four minutes to go, Shelby went into a stall that backfired. After NM committed a foul, a Tiger player missed the front end of the one-and-one and NM’s Todd Demint cashed in a bucket to close the gap to a single point. Shelby continued their stall and with 1:50 remaining the Norse came up with a steal. The Norse worked the clock down to a half-minute remaining and took the lead for the first time in the game on a Bill Reek bucket. Mike Sekulich, who would lead the Norse in scoring with 16 points, came up with a steal, was fouled, and calmly hit both free throws to make the final score 50-47. Sekulich was also the game’s leading rebounder with 16, while Jim Sheehan and Sean Deur scored in double figures with 10 points each.

Whitehall wrapped up the next game early, and they didn’t need their friendly home court gym as they outscored NM 40-20 in the first half enroute to a 62-45 victory. Jim Sheehan had a career high 18 points for NM while Mike Sekulich had nine. Mark Cooke, the youngest of head coach Dave Cooke’s three boys, led all rebounders with 14.

Scoring points would be a huge problem for the Norsemen this season and the low scoring continued in a 68-41 loss to Oakridge. For the second straight game the Norse were only able to net 20 points in the first half, while the Eagle’s meshed 36. Jim Sheehan had 12 and Sean Deur 10 as NM dropped to 1-3 early in the season. Meanwhile, Oakridge was off to a great start on the season with a perfect 5-0 record.

The shooting woes continued as the Norse were overwhelmed by Fremont 22-4 in the third quarter in a 72-47 loss in the four-team holiday tournament played at Muskegon Community College. The Norse trio of Jim Sheehan (16), Sean Deur (12) and Mike Sekulich (11) accumulated all but eight of NM’s 47 points. The game was the 64th game between the onetime former rivals. The series could not have been any closer as each team won 32 games over the years. It would be nearly another 40 years before Fremont and North Muskegon would meet again in basketball.

Hall of fame coach Jim Goorman has had many outstanding teams during his legendary career as West Michigan Christian’s head coach. However, the 1983-84 WMC team was not one of those outstanding teams. After NM posted a rare win (53-44) over the Warriors, the WMC record stood at a woeful 0-6. It was a tight game with NM clinging to a one-point lead with five minutes to go before Mike Sekulich hit a couple of two pointers to give NM some breathing room.

The Norse finally found their shooting eye and topped the 50-point mark for the first time all season in defeating Fruitport 68-55. Jim Sheehan became the first Norsemen to score 20 points in a game during the season while Mike Sekulich came close with 18.

NM got off to a quick 6-2 start in their next game with Montague, but it quickly went downhill for the Norse as the Wildcats went on a 14-0 spurt and never looked back in a 67-52 win over the Norsemen. Mike Sekulich had a yeoman like effort in the loss with 16 points and 15 rebounds. Sean Deur was the only other Norse in double figures with 13.

NM then posted 81 points, by far their leading offensive total for the season. Unfortunately, they allowed 88 points as Hart defeated NM 88-81. NM received a big lift from Jeff Jordan who scored 17 points, easily his best offensive showing up to date. Shawn Deur and Mike Sekulich each netted 18. Deur was hot early and scored all 18 of his points before leaving the contest in the third quarter with an injury.

With the game tied at 36-all, the Norse scored 30 points in the second half, 16 of those points coming at the free throw line as NM defeated Ravenna 66-52. “It was tied going into the last quarter and we grabbed a six-point lead,” said NM coach Dave Cooke.” Ravenna was not patient and kept fouling us, and we were fortunate to make the free throws,” said Cooke following the game. Mike Sekulich poured in 26 points and grabbed 16 rebounds to lead the Norse to victory. Jim Sheehan added 11 and Bill Reek nine as NM won their second game in the WMC.

The Norse led by as many as nine points before dropping a 64-62 contest to West Shore Christian in the second and final game played between the two schools. Poor free throw shooting in the fourth quarter when NM three times missed the front end of one-and-one free throws cost the Norse. Mike Sekulich had 17 game leading points for NM while Mark Cooke had 12 points and 12 rebounds.

NM might find it hard to believe that Mason County Central had just loss four games in a row after being soundly whipped by the Spartans 75-41. “They shot well, and we didn’t.” said NM coach Dave Cooke. NM never scored more than 11 points in any quarter in being held to 41 points. Mike Sekulich was the only Norsemen in double figures with 13 points.

After losing very early in the season to NM by three points, Shelby completely flipped the script and downed NM by 24 in a 76-52 romp over the Norse. Shelby more than doubled the score (44-20) at halftime as they cruised to the victory on the Shelby court. Jim Sheehan (12), Sean Deur (11) and Mike Sekulich (10) led the NM offense.

North Muskegon gave a heavily favored Oakridge team a battle before losing 56-51 to an Eagle team who boasted of a 10-1 record after their win over the Norse. The Eagles would finish the regular season as WMC champs with a 19-1 record. NM trailed by only one point with just under a minute to play as Oakridge cashed in clutch free throws at the end to hold off the Norsemen.

NM gave second place Montague a test but fell eight points short in a 63-55 loss to the Wildcats. In a sloppily played game with each team committing 23 turnovers, Montague took over the game when they went up by 13 over NM in the third quarter. Mike Sekulich scored 14 points and grabbed 12 rebounds for NM. Jim Sheehan had 13 and Sean Deur and Craig Stevens added nine for the losing Norsemen.

NM shot a woeful 17 of 74 for the game and fell behind 24-7 as Hart cruised to an easy 66-45 win over NM. Jim Sheehan popped in 16 points for NM and Mike Sekulich added 12. The win kept Hart in the hunt in the WMC title chase while improving their overall record to 12-3. Meanwhile NM was 2-8 in conference play and 4-12 overall.

In a battle of the bottom feeders in the WMC, NM had just enough scoring power to defeat Ravenna 70-66. The win raised NM’s record in the WMC to a modest 3-8 while the Bulldogs fell to 1-9. Mike Sekulich was a driving force in NM’s win with 23 points with Jim Sheehan adding 12 and Sean Deur 11. Ravenna kept themselves in the game with some nifty shooting from the charity strip where they knocked down 18 of 22. After that kind of shooting, one finds it hard to believe that two weeks earlier in a loss to Montague the Bulldogs shot an unfathomable 2-19 at the free throw line.

North Muskegon won their sixth and final game of the season, three more wins than Orchard View was winning at the time, 70-57 over the Cardinals. Jim Sheehan netted 19 points, Mike Sekulich 14, and Sean Deur 12 as NM would take a 6-12 record into the final week of the regular season.

Kent City finished the regular season with an excellent record of 15-5 after their 74-61 victory over the Norse. The Eagles made 22 of their 25 free throws while the Norse made only nine of 20. NM got some offensive production from several players with four players in double figures: Mike Sekulich and Jim Sheehan with 12, Mark Cooke and James Bridgeford with 10.

NM ended their regular season with a 59-50 loss to Mason County, but it was a far cry from the 75-41 pounding the Norse received from the Spartans earlier in the season. NM trailed by only one point at halftime before Mason County gradually pulled away in the second half. Mike Sekulich was the only Norsemen in double figures with 16 points.

NM would go down in enrollment and would play as a Class D school in the 1984 MHSAA tournament. That would not prove to be a plus for the Norse as they would draw an excellent team with an 18-4 record. Pentwater broke open a close game in the second half and would go on to win 77-57. NM got a surprising boost from James Bridgeford who came off the bench to score a game high 16 points for the Norsemen. Bridgeford also grabbed eight rebounds. Mike Sekulich finished his fine junior year with 10 points and 13 rebounds.

The Norse would end their season with a 6-15 overall record but with several players returning for the following season, the Norse would get back to their winning ways.

N Muskegon 45 Newaygo 62 Mike Sekulich 16, Jim Sheehan 8

N Muskegon 50 Shelby 47 Sekulich 16, Sheehan and Sean Deur 10

N Muskegon 45 Whitehall 62 Sheehan 18, Sekulich 9, M. Cooke 14 reb.

N Muskegon 41 Oakridge 68 Sheehan 12, Deur 10

N Muskegon 47 Fremont 72 Sheehan 16, Deur 12, Sekulich 11

N Muskegon 53 WMC 44 Deur 15, Sekulich 14

N Muskegon 68 Fruitport 55 Sheehan 20, Sekulich 18, Deur 10

N Muskegon 52 Montague 67 Sekulich 16 & 15 reb. Deur 13

N Muskegon 81 Hart 88 Sekulich & Deur 18, Jeff Jordan 17

N Muskegon 66 Ravenna 52 Sekulich 26, Sheehan 11, Bill Reek 9

N Muskegon 62 W. Shore Ch. 64 Sekulich 17, Sheehan 15, Cooke 12

N Muskegon 41 Mason Co 75 Sekulich 13

N Muskegon 52 Shelby 76 Sheehan 12, Deur 11, Sekulich 10

N Muskegon 51 Oakridge 56 Sheehan 17, Sekulich 10

N Muskegon 55 Montague 63 Sekulich 14, Sheehan 13

N Muskegon 45 Hart 66 Sheehan 16, Sekulich 12

N Muskegon 70 Ravenna 66 Sekulich 23, Sheehan 12, Deur 11

N Muskegon 70 Orchard View 57 Sheehan 19, Sekulich 14, Deau 12

N Muskegon 61 Kent City 74 Sheehan & Sekulich 12

N Muskegon 50 Mason Co 59 Sekulich 16

N Muskegon\* 57 Pentwater 77 James Bridgeford 16, Sekulich 10

**1985-85 (Coach Dave Cooke 12-10 overall, Mason Co Central wins WMC)**

A very busy Dave Cooke who doubles as both the football and basketball coach at North Muskegon, was more optimistic about this year’s NM team than in the recent past. The Norse return all three of their front-line starters from the previous season, 6’3 Mark Cooke, 6’2 Sean Deur, and All-WMC returnee Mike Sekulich, who would begin his 3rd year in the starting lineup for NM. Cooke’s early concerns would be who would step up in the backcourt?

Whitehall would play their first game in the West Michigan Conference since 1960 and their first opponent would be North Muskegon, a team that hadn’t beaten Whitehall on the Vikings home court since 1962. That streak came to a merciful end as NM defeated the Vikings, surprisingly easy, 67-52. Mike Sekulich, a starting quarterback on the football team showed that he hadn’t lost his touch as he burned Whitehall for 25 points. Sean Deur added 13 points while a newcomer to the lineup, Jeff Diller chipped with 11 as the Norse got off to a rousing start to begin the season.

NM made in two in a row to begin the season, both wins coming against WMC opponents with a 58-56 squeaker over Montague. Only in the fourth quarter were the Norsemen outscored by the Wildcats. Montague tallied 17 to NM’s 13 but not enough to catch the Norse. Mike Sekulich led the balanced NM offense with 14, with Jeff Diller and Sean Diller both scoring 12 while football star Dante Hutcherson added nine.

The defending WMC Champs from Oakridge quickly turned a close game into a rout when they outscored the Norsemen 17-2 in the final minutes of the second quarter. The Eagles would make the final score 90-64 in a game played as part of the Muskegon Community College Holiday basketball tournament but would also count as a West Michigan Conference contest. Foul trouble plagued the Norse as Mike Sekulich was the only starter who didn’t foul out. Sekulich meshed 25 points for NM while Jeff Diller added 18.

The Norse duo of Sean Deur and Mike Sekulich combined to score 42 of NM’s 61 points to win the consolation game of the MCC tournament 61-51 against West Michigan Christian. Deur had a career high 22 while Sekulich also netted 22. NM would have to cherish this win for a long time as the next NM victory over a WMC team would be in the next century when they featured a big red head named Drew Naymick.

Big Tim Perry scored 36 points to lead Shelby to a 67-49 victory over NM on the Tiger’s court. Mike Sekulich again led the Norse with 17 points and nine rebounds. Sean Deur had 11 and Mark Cooke nine points as NM slipped back to 2-2 in the WMC.

NM improved to 4-2 with a non-league 54-46 win over Fruitport. Mike Sekulich again had a big scoring game with 24 with Sean Deur adding 10 and Jeff Diller eight. Mark Cooke did a good on the boards with nine rebounds. The two teams would have to wait another 30 years before they would meet again.

In a game where neither team was shooting the lights out at the charity stripe, NM managed to win a nail-biter over Hart 46-45. Hart converted on 11 of 23 attempts while NM was even worse, making but 8 out of their 24 free tosses. NM trailed by five with a minute and a half left and received some great play by football star Tom Dana. Inserted for his defensive quickness by coach Dave Cooke, Dana banked in a field goal shortly after a Mike Sekulich field goal to cut the lead to one. NM forced a turnover followed by another Sekulich field goal to give NM a 46-45 lead and the final score. Sean Deur had 16 points and six rebounds while Sekulich had eight rebounds in addition to 12 points.

NM rallied from a 13-point deficit in the third quarter to go on a second half roll to outscore the host Pentwater Falcons by 25 points to earn a 70-58 road win. Mike Sekulich paced the Norse once again with 21 points and 12 rebounds while Jeff Diller netted 17 as the Norse improved to 6-2.

NM built up a 25-point lead and then coasted to a 78-56 victory over Ravenna to improve their record to 7-2 on the season. The seven wins already was one more than the Norse won all last season. Sean Deur had a big day with 24 points, while Mike Sekulich and Tom Dana each had 10 for the streaking Norsemen.

That streak came to a sudden end when Whitehall, who lost at home earlier in a rare loss over the years to NM, repaid the favor and won on the Norsemen’s home court 60-58. Many games in the area were cancelled due to the horrendous weather but NM and Whitehall chose to play. NM had their poorest shooting night from the floor, and it led to their four-game winning streak coming to a halt. NM trailed by 10 with four minutes remaining but a late comeback left them two points short. Mike Sekulich paced the Norse with 17 while Mark Cooke had his best scoring night on the season with 15.

Cold shooting from the floor for the Norse contrasted with hot shooting from the free throw line by Orchard View led to a 76-67 Cardinal victory in a non-league game. One Norse player who wasn’t plagued by poor shooting was Sean Deur. The 6’2 senior connected on 12 of his 18 field goal attempts and made five of his eight free throws for a career high 29 points. Orchard View potted 34 of their 42 free throws in a foul filled contest. Scoring 17 points for the winning Cardinals was John Jancek, currently the defensive coordinator for the LSU football Tigers after coaching at many major D1 schools, including stints at Tennessee and Georgia.

The Norse made a 12-point lead at halftime hold up as NM won their eighth game of the season and second over Montague with a 63-54 victory. The one-two punch of Sean Deur (17) and Mike Sekulich (15) led the Norse offensive attack with help from Mark Cooke who added nine.

NM ran into an Oakridge team that seems to play its best against the Norse. Although they didn’t singe the hoops for 90 points as they did in their earlier game with the Norse, they had enough firepower to tally 74 points to earn a 74-62 win; a final score that really wasn’t that close. The Eagles led by nearly 20 points before NM made a late run in the final quarter. Mike Sekulich had 16, Sean Deur 13, and Dante Hutcherson 10 for the Norse who dropped to 8-5 overall.

In their first game with Shelby when NM scored only 49 points, the Norse gave up 67 points and lost by 18. The Norse again scored 49 points in their rematch with the Tigers but in this game, they only allowed 45 points and came away with a victory. The game was tight most of the way and it took a couple of pressure free throws from Trevor Leutscher in the game’s final seconds to put the game on ice. Leutscher, an outstanding running back on the football team, had his highest point production of the season in the low scoring contest with 8 points. His running mate in the NM backfield, Dante Hutcherson, also had eight points and had six assists. Sean Deur led the scoring with a modest total of 12 while Mike Sekulich had a season low of four points.

The math is this game was simple. Hart hit for 58 percent from the floor while NM shot 32 percent as the Norse lost to the Pirates 70-61. NM received 16 points from Darren Smith and 15 from Mike Sekulich to drop to 6-5 in league games. With the win Hart kept their slim hopes alive with a share of the league crown, tied with Oakridge at 8-3 but trailing Mason County Central with only one league loss.

North Muskegon and Holton resumed their rivalry after a seven-year gap, and the Norse breezed to a 72-45 win over the Red Devils. Holton had an 8-8 record entering the game, but NM’s much tougher regular season schedule was a big help. Mike Sekulich had 16, while Mark Cooke had to make his father happy as he scored 15 points while pulling down 13 rebounds. Darren Smith has been a recent surprise for NM as he scored in double figures for the second straight game with 13 points.

The game was tied at halftime between Mason County Central and NMHS, but the league leading Spartans outscored NM by six points in each of the final two quarters to earn a 62-50 win. The win all but clinches the WMC title for the Spartans who are 10-1 in the WMC and an impressive 16-1 overall. Balanced scoring was the theme for the Norsemen as Mike Sekulich had 12, Darren Smith 10, Sean Deur 9 and Trevor Leutscher 7.

NM let a game get away from them as Kent City used the home court crowd to help rally the Eagles from a 10-point deficit in the final quarter to outscore NM 20-8 in the game’s final eight minutes in nipping the Norse 65-63. NM needed to look no further than the stat sheet to come up for a big clue for the loss to the Eagles. NM made only 13 of 29 free throws, many on the front end of a one-and one. NM did receive outstanding balance as Mark Cooke and Darren Smith had season highs of 16 points, with Mike Sekulich adding 15 and Sean Deur 10.

It took a couple of postponements due to inclement weather but on a Wednesday night Mason County Central was finally able to make the journey from Scottville to NMHS. The final score of 62-51 was nearly identical to their game from a few days back of 62 to 50. It was almost identical in the summary as MCC outscored NM by 10 points in the second half following a tight first half that saw the visitors leading by just one point. Darren Smith continued his fine play in the second half of the season with 17 points to lead the Norse followed by Mike Sekulich with 12 and Sean Deur 10. With the win Mason County wins the WMC title.

NM closed out the regular season with a convincing 69-50 victory over Ravenna. After missing a bundle of free throws that contributed to their defeat against Kent City, NM converted 13 of 16 free throws against Ravenna, many of those made free ones coming in the final quarter. Mark Cooke continued to get better as the season moved along and had his best scoring output of the season with 17 points while latching on to 14 rebounds. Mike Sekulich was also a force in the victory as he also netted 17 points while grabbing 15 rebounds.

Games in March during the MHSAA tournament often provide much different results than games played during the regular season. Case in point. NM scored 70 points in January in a 70-58 win over Pentwater. In the Class D district played at Holton between these same two teams, it was a much different game. Scoring was low and NM had to rally from a 3-point deficit with 2:14 left in the game to earn a first-round victory. Mike Sekulich scored 14 and Sean Deur added 10 in the low scoring game.

For the second time in the last few games, poor free throw shooting cost NM. Making only 12 of 30 free throws hurt even more this time as it cost the Norse a chance to win a district tournament as they lost by only four points, 72-68 to Baldwin in the Class D district final played at Holton. Baldwin hit 20 of 28 from the charity stripe to earn the right to advance to the regional. Reggie Fox, future Muskegon Community College star who took his talents to the University of Wyoming led Baldwin to their victory with 28 points. Sean Deur ended his career at NMHS with 23 points with Mike Sekulich also playing his last game in a NM uniform tallied 14.

N Muskegon 67 Whitehall 52 Mike Sekulich 25, Sean Dear, Jeff Diller 11

N Muskegon 58 Montague 56 Sekulich 14, Diller & Deur 12

N Muskegon 64 Oakridge 90 Sekulich 25, Diller 18

N Muskegon 61 WMC 51 Deau 22, Sekulich 22

N Muskegon 49 Shelby 67 Sekulich 17, Duer 11, Mark Cooke 9

N Muskegon 54 Fruitport 46 Sekulich 24, Deur 10, Diller 8

N Muskegon 46 Hart 45 Deur 16, Sekulich 12, Diller 11

N Muskegon 70 Pentwater 58 Sekulich 21, Diller 17, Cooke 10

N Muskegon 78 Ravenna 56 Deur 24, Sekulich 10, Tom Dana 10

N Muskegon 58 Whitehall 60 Sekulich 17, Cooke 15, Deur 9

N Muskegon 67 Orchard View 76 Deur 29, Sekulich 10, Dante Hutcherson 8

N Muskegon 63 Montague 54 Deur 17, Sekulich 15, Cooke 8

N Muskegon 62 Oakridge 74 Sekulich 16, Deur 13, Hutcherson 10

N Muskegon 49 Shelby 45 Deur 12, Trevor Leitscher 8, Hutcherson 8

N Muskegon 61 Hart 70 Smith 16, Sekulich 15, Cooke 8,

N Muskegon 72 Holton 45 Sekulich 16, Cooke 15, Smith 13,

N Muskegon 50 Mason Co 62 Sekulich 12, Smith 10, Duer 9

N Muskegon 63 Kent City 65 Smith & Cooke 16, Sekulich 15, Deur 10

N Muskegon 51 Mason Co 62 Smith 17, Sekulich 12, Duer 10

N Muskegon 69 Ravenna 50 Cooke & Sekulich 17, Hutcherson 8

N Muskegon 48 Pentwater 47 Sekulich 14, Deur 10

N Muskegon 68 Baldwin 72 Deur 23, Sekulich 14, Leutscher 11

Dave Cooke stepped aside as the NM basketball coach to concentrate more on his yeoman duties as NM’s football coach. Replacing Cooke would be Walt Gawkowski, coming over from Muskegon Catholic where he was the head basketball coach for the Crusaders. Gawkowski would serve three years as the basketball coach but would serve many years as the head baseball coach for NMHS where he was recognized as one of the best baseball mentors in the state of Michigan.

The cupboard was nearly bare of returnees that greeted Gawkowski for his first practice. Only football star Dante Hutcherson and Jeff Diller saw extensive action from last year’s NM’s fine season. NM would struggle mightily as they would only come out on top in three games, two of those coming at the expense of a normally dominant Shelby fivesome.

NM began the season with a conference clash with Ravenna, and it was clear that NM was going to have difficulty putting points on the board. A young Ravenna team broke open a close game in the fourth quarter by outscoring the Norse 22-6. Dante Hutcherson, who never reached double figures in a game last season, led the Norse with 17 points with Mark Flynn chipping in with 11.

Whitehall then handed the Norse their second defeat on the season 50-39. NM’s one-point lead after the opening period of play went away quickly as Whitehall’s quickness proved too much for NM to handle. Dante Hutcherson had 13 points and Mark Flynn 12 as the Norse could only muster 39 points in the contest.

The fans in Newaygo were still basking in the glory of celebrating the second consecutive state championship won by the Newaygo girls’ team over the weekend. That enthusiasm spilled over to the boys’ team as they defeated NM 65-53. Newaygo spotted the visiting Norsemen a seven-point lead after the first quarter, but the Norse were only able to score four points during the entire second period while Newaygo tallied 15. Dante Hutcherson led NM with 18 points followed by Jeff Diller with 13.

NM had by far their highest scoring night thus far in the 1985-86 season with 69 points against Montague. However, NM gave up 95, the most points a NM opponent would score all season. NM got good production from Jeff Diller and Dante Hutcherson as each surpassed the 20-point barrier. Mark Maynard had 11 as Montague scored 20 or more in each quarter to breeze past the Norse.

Oakridge riddled NM’s defense for 74 points to dampen the coming out party for NM freshman Matt Kolbe who scored 20 of NM’s 45 points in a 74-45 loss to the Eagles. Closest to Kolbe in scoring for NM was Wes Phillips who netted seven points as NM was still looking for their first victory of the season.

The Norse wouldn’t have to wait long for their first win, just four days, as the Norse surprised Shelby 65-50. A big 22-9 advantage in the second quarter helped NM to acquire their first win. Dante Hutcherson was the catalyst for the spurt in the second quarter with four steals that he converted into buckets. For the second time in three games Jeff Diller had 21 and Hutcherson 20 in a game while Mark Kolbe netted 11. NM would have to savor the win over Shelby as it would be another nine games before NM would come out on the winning side of a score.

Free throw woes hurt NM badly in the previous season and was a factor in NM’s 59-48 loss to Hart, the sixth win in a row for the streaking Pirates. Hart netted 13 points at the charity stripe to the Norsemen’s two. The Pirates built a 31-25 lead at halftime and gradually pulled away from the Norse in the second half. Jeff Diller led NM with 17 points followed by Dante Hutcherson with 12.

A slow first quarter where NM was outscored 16-7 led to NM dropping a non-league game to Pentwater 67-60. NM shot a woeful 3 for 19 in that pivotal opening quarter. NM made a run in the fourth quarter to close the Pentwater advatage to four points before NM’s Dante Hutcherson, who scored 23 points, fouled out of the contest. Jeff Diller added 14 and Wes Phillips nine for the 1-7 Norsemen.

The Norsemen were completely overwhelmed by Mason County, losing 80-32, the second largest loss to the Spartans in the long rivalry over the years. The host Spartans held NM to 32 points, NM’s lowest scoring output of the season. Only in the fourth quarter when MCC had reserves playing in the game did NM manage to score more than 10 points in a quarter. No Norse player was even able to score in double figures in the lopsided loss.

The second meeting with Ravenna was a much closer game than the first contest between the two teams. After being blown out by nearly 20 points in a game that opened the season, the Norse lost by only 6 points. The six points difference was a 24-18 fourth quarter for Ravenna. Leading the Bulldogs was Donnie Tyndall who scored 16 points. Tyndall would become a major college coach reaching as high as the head coach of Tennessee. Tyndall currently coaches at Chipola junior college in Florida where one of his assistants is Mark Jacobs, who scored 11 points in the Bulldogs 65-59 win over NM. Donte Hutcherson tallied 22 points for the Norsemen before fouling out late in the game.

NM had a golden opportunity to pull off a rare road victory at Whitehall only to see the Vikings outscore the Norse 28-17 in the fourth quarter to edge NM 62-60. The Vikings connected on 11 of their 12 free throws in the final eight minutes to stun the Norse and send NM to their 10th loss in 11 games. NM had four players in double figures: Mark Kolbe and Jeff Diller 13, Dante Hutcherson 11, and David Rodgers 10.

NM couldn’t keep a taller Hesperia team off the boards as the Panthers had numerous second chance opportunities to hand NM a non-league 62-46 loss. It was a tale of two bad quarters that led to the Norse defeat. Hesperia outscored NM 17-6 in the first quarter and 22-14 in the third. Dante Hutcherson was the lone Norsemen in double figures with 12 points.

Although their record wouldn’t show it, the Norse did show much improvement during the season. After being blown out by Montague 95-69 in their first encounter, NM took the Wildcats to overtime before losing 61-55. Sophomore Wes Phillips had a season high 19 points for the Norsemen with Dante Hutcherson close behind with 17.

The improvement wasn’t quite as noticeable in NM’s next loss to Oakridge. After losing their opener to Oakridge 74-45, the Eagles scored the same number of points while NM improved just gradually by notching 48 points, a miniscule three more than they netted in their first contest with the Eagles. Oakridge was never threatened by the Norse as they outpointed NM in every quarters. Mark Kolbe and Wes Phillips shared high point earners for NM with each scoring 12 points.

NM took to the road in their second of two non-league games with Hesperia and came away with a much-needed one point 51-50 victory over the Panthers. Dante Hutcherson with 17 and Mark Kolbe with 16 led the Norse scorers but head coach Walk Gawkowski had special praise for Dave Rodgers. “Although Rodgers only scored two points, the job he did on defense was really great,’ said the Norse head coach.

NM then escaped with their second one-point victory in the week with a 53-52 win over a Shelby team coached by Rick Zoulek, who nearly 40 years later is still at the helm for the Tigers. Rick Zoulek has coached many great teams at Shelby in his four decades as the head coach. 1986 would not be one of those great teams as his Shelby Tigers finished the season winless at 0-21. At one point in the first half the Norse trailed by as many as 11 points before NM mounted their comeback. For once NM won the battle at the free throw line as NM was nine of 11 while Shelby was but two of six. Jeff Diller led NM with 16 points closely followed by Matt Kolbe with 14 and Dante Hutcherson with 12.

A quick 18-6 start propelled Holton to a 61-53 non-league win over the Norse. A late fourth quarter rally by NM came too late to overtake the Red Devils. Dante Hutcherson led NM with 16 with Jeff Diller with 12 and Wes Phillips with 10 also in double figures.

Hart outscored NM 18-8 in the second quarter, the difference in the game in Hart’s 57-47 win over the Norse. Jeff Diller had 17 points and 14 rebounds to lead the Norse, but NM was unable to overcome their 23 turnovers committed in the contest.

Kent City made quick work of NM as they jumped out to a 19-8 first quarter lead and continued to roll in a 72-44 pounding of the Norsemen in the final week of the regular season.

There was no 50-point blowout in the second meeting of the season between NM and Mason County Central, but it was still a MCC win as the regular season came to an end with NM losing to the Spartans 73-56. The Spartans would finish the regular season with another great record of 18 wins against but two defeats to earn a tie in the WMC with Oakridge. Dante Hutcherson and Jeff Diller were the one-two punch for NM with 19 and 16 points respectively.

North Muskegon would host their first district tournament since 1959 with the Class D district contested on the Northside court. And, just like 1959 when the Norse lost the first game of the Class B district to Coopersville in sudden death, the 1986 Norsemen went down to a 56-53 opening round loss to Pentwater. NM led for three and a half quarters before Pentwater rallied to eliminate the Norse. Dante Hutcherson ended his successful season with 19 points with Wes Phillips close behind with 14.

N Muskegon 43 Ravenna 62 Dante Hutcherson 17, Mark Flynn 11

N Muskegon 39 Whitehall 50 Hutcherson 13, Flynn 12, Jeff Diller 8

N Muskegon 53 Newaygo 65 Hutcherson 18, Diller 11

N Muskegon 69 Montague 95 Diller 21, Hutcherson 20, Mark Maynard 11

N Muskegon 45 Oakridge 74 Mark Kolbe 20, Wes Phillips 7

N Muskegon 65 Shelby 50 Diller 21, Hutcherson 20, Kolbe 11

N Muskegon 46 Hart 59 Diller 17, Hutcherson 12, Flynn 8

N Muskegon 60 Pentwater 67 Hutcherson 23, Diller 14, Phillips 9

N Muskegon 32 Mason Co 80 Kolbe & Diller 8, Hutcherson 7

N Muskegon 59 Ravenna 65 Hutcherson 22, Diller 13

N Muskegon 60 Whitehall 62 Kolbe & Diller 13, Hutcherson 11, Rodgers 10

N Muskegon 46 Hesperia 62 Hutcherson 12, Kolbe and Phillips 8

N Muskegon 56 Montague (ot) 61 Phillips 19, Hutcherson 17

N Muskegon 48 Oakridge 74 Kolbe & Phillips 12, Diller 9

N Muskegon 52 Hesperia 51 Hutcherson 17, Kolbe 16, Diller 9

N Muskegon 53 Shelby 52 Diller 16, Kolbe 14, Hutcherson 12

N Muskegon 53 Holton 61 Hutcherson 16, Diller 12, Phillips 10

N Muskegon 57 Hart 67 Diller 17, Hutcherson 10

N Muskegon 44 Kent City 72 Hutcherson 11, Diller 9, Kolbe 8

N Muskegon 56 Mason Co 73 Hutcherson 19, Diller 16

N Muskegon\* 53 Pentwater 56 Hutcherson 19, Phillips 14, Flynn 10

**1986-87 (Coach Walt Gawkowski 7-14, Mason County champs WMC)**

2nd year coach Walt Gawkowski will welcome four regulars returning for the 1986-87 season: Dante Hutcherson, Mark Kolbe, Wes Phillips and David Rodgers. Also joining the Norsemen five would include Jerry Brichan, Bob Kersting, Matt Steketee and Jimmy Johnson. The Norsemen would only win seven games during the season but would prove to be very competitive. The season would end in a record setting scenario that was not kind to this team, losing a pair of games that would require six overtimes. The 1986-87 season would begin a huge change in basketball as it would mark the beginning of the three-point shot.

The Norsemen began the season by snapping a four-game losing streak to Newaygo with a 60-47 victory in a game that wasn’t nearly as close as the final score. The Norse enjoyed a commanding 51-30 lead entering the final quarter. Dante Hutcherson, an all-state running back in football, began his third year as a basketball starter and took up where he left off from his junior season by scoring 20 points to lead NM. Sophomore Mark Kolbe also was in double figures for the winning Norse with 13 markers. Second year coach Walk Gawkowski also had special praise for his role players who helped in the NM win, including Dave Rodgers, Bob Kersting and Jim Johnson.

The annual long road trip to Scottville saw NM get off to a rocky start and it never got much better as NM lost to Scottville 61-41. It was 33-14 at halftime with the hometown Spartans in control. Only a 14-8 fourth quarter run did NM outscore MCC in a period. No Norsemen were in double figures as their high point man Bob Kersting only had nine points.

NM got back in the winning column with a 53-43 home victory over Ravenna thanks to a big second quarter when NM outscored the Bulldogs 20-9. NM trailed 17-10 after the first quarter was completed and finally took the lead in the second quarter on a field goal by Jim Johnson. Wes Phillips had his best scoring output to begin the season with eighteen points while NM received a nice all-around game from Dante Hutcherson with 15 points, six steals and a pair of assists.

NM played a newcomer on their schedule, Fruitport Faith Christian, and the Norse came away with a 67-49 victory. The game was tight at halftime with NM leading by three points. NM pulled away in the second half as NM Coach Gawkowski attributed some of the second half spark to Jim Johnson, who came off the bench to score 10 points. Mark Kolbe had a game high 20 points while Donte Hutcherson filled up the stat sheet with 17 points, six rebounds, six steals and four assists. Wes Phillips chipped in with 14 points as NM had four players in double figures.

NM jumped out to an early 14-6 lead at Whitehall, but the host Vikings doubled the score over NM 16-8 in the second quarter to send both teams to their lockers rooms tied at 22-all. Whitehall outlasted NM in the second half to earn a low-scoring 47-44 win over NM. Matt Kolbe led NM in scoring as Donte Hutcherson, who had become a complete player, had 10 points along with seven steals and six assists.

Following a long holiday layoff NM final got back on the court but they didn’t bring with them from 1986 their shooting eye. The Norse were only able to score 42 points in a 65-42 loss at Montague. NM only had 18 points at halftime as Montague cruised to the victory. Mark Kolbe was the only Norseman in double figures with 14 points with Dante Hutcherson close with nine.

It took a pair of overtime periods before NM was able to put away a scrappy Pentwater team 72-70, partially making amends for the Falcons ending NM’s last season in the opening game of the layoffs. NM’s pesky defense created 27 turnovers with 11 of those coming on steals from Dante Hutcherson that was probably the top mark in steals in NM history. Dante also fired in 25 points with scoring help coming from Matt Kolbe (18) Wes Phillips (11) and Scott Brichan (10).

The Norsemen broke open a tight game by holding Oakridge to but six fourth quarter points while the Norse scored 14 to defeat the Eagles 60-49. Mark Kolbe pumped in 20 points for the victorious Norsemen with Wes Phillips (12) and Dante Hutcherson (10) also in double figures.

In a game moved due to inclement weather from a Friday to the following Wednesday North Muskegon traveled to Shelby and defeated the host Tigers 63-61. NM overcame a dreadful opening quarter when they scored but four points to rally for the win. Wes Phillips led NM with 16, Matt Kolbe netted 15, while NM’s ‘super sixth’ man Jim Johnson scored 13. Donte Hutcherson played his usual all around floor game and became the fourth Norsemen in double figures with 11. The win gave NM a solid 6-3 record. However, this would mark the highwater mark on the season for NM as they would only win one more game in the entire season, against these same Shelby Tigers.

After an even first half Hart came out sizzling in the third quarter to record a 32-18 edge over NM to break the game open as Hart would go on to win 88-68. Scott Brichan had a career high for NM with 18 points while Mark Kolbe and Wes Phillips each added 13 in what would prove to be the first of eight straight losses for the Norsemen.

NM’s next task was an attempt to break up Mason County Central’s 8-0 perfect record in the WMC. Early into the third period after three consecutive steals by Dante Hutcherson, the Norse cut MCC’s margin to 31-28. The visiting Spartans then went on an 18-5 run and were well on their way to compile a perfect 9-0 record in conference play. Scott Brichan continued his recent fine play for NM with 14 points and 10 rebounds. Jim Johnson finished with 10 points and five assists while the quick hands of Dante Hutcherson produced seven steals and six assists.

The Ravenna Bulldogs, losers to NM early in the season by 10 points, more than reversed that ending by thumping the Norse by 25 points, 65-40. Only Wes Phillips was in double figures for the cold shooting Norsemen with his modest 12-point effort.

NM then dropped a mid-week game to a Hesperia team who came into the game with a modest 3-10 record. The host Panthers edged the Norsemen 54-51. Mark Kolbe was the only Norsemen to reach double figures with 18 points with Jim Johnson close with nine.

Playing at home on a Thursday President’s Day weekend, poor shooting led to another Norse defeat in a 51-46 loss to Whitehall. NM shot a poor 31 per cent while the victorious Vikings shot 51% to send NM to their 5th straight defeat.

NM lost the rebounding battle in an 81-76 loss at Holton. The Red Devils more than doubled the number of rebounds (50-24) over the Norsemen that resulted in many easy put backs. NM, trailing 59-46 entering the final quarter, put up 30 points in the game’s final eight minutes but still fell five points short. The Norse had five players reach double figures led by Dante Hutcherson with 17 points, several steals and nine assists. Matt Kolbe 16, Wes Phillips 13, and Bob Kersting and Jim Johnson with 10 all scored in double figures but fell short of overtaking the Red Devils.

A poor first quarter whereby the Norse were down 16-4 after eight minutes of play led to NM losing once more to Montague 62-50. NM lost despite a possible record effort from the quick hands of Dante Hutcherson who was credited with a probable school record 12 steals. The all-state football player also led NM in points with 18 and assists with six. Matt Kolbe with 13 and Scott Brichan with 11 also were in double figures as NM fell to 6-10 on the season after a promising 6-3 start.

For the second straight game NM dug themselves into a first quarter hole in a 61-47 loss to Oakridge. NM trailed 17-8 heading into the second quarter and never threatened the Eagles. Oakridge held NM’s Dante Hutcherson to but four points as only Matt Kolbe (14) and Jerry Brichan (12) were able to score in double figures.

Finally, a good first quarter and more importantly, a win! NM scored 90 points, nearly 20 more than their previous best during the season as NM snapped their losing streak at eight with a 90-65 win over Shelby. The Norse had outstanding balance scoring with four players in double figures and two other NM players close with eight. Matt Kolbe (18), Scott Brichan (15, Dante Hutcherson and Wes Phillips (14) were all in double figures with Jim Johnson and Bob Kersting adding eight points as NM finally secures their long sought-after seventh victory on the season.

Kent City improved their record to 17-2 in an easy 75-53 victory over the Norse that began the final week of the regular season. The Eagles shut down NM’s Dante Hutcherson who got into early foul trouble and would score a season low two points. Kent City outscored NM 21-9 in the third period to erase any thoughts of a Norse comeback. Bob Kersting led NM with 14 points and nine rebounds while Matt Kolbe and Wes Phillips each scored 11 for the Norsemen.

NM finished their 1986-87 in the cruelest of fashions, losing their final two games that were both decided in overtime. Not just one over time session – but six! In the longest game ever played by a NM team the Norse lost their final game of the regular season to Hart that took four overtimes to decide a winner. The host Pirates outpointed NM by four points in the final three-minute period to earn a 66-62 victory.

Too add more salt to the wounds for the 1987 Norsemen they would have their season come to a bitter end with another overtime loss 74-70 to West Michigan Christian. WMC would have the advantage of playing on their home floor in the first district tournament ever hosted by the Warriors. Sophomore Mark Kolbe led NM with 20 points while junior center Scott Brichan had 19. NM showed great balance in the loss as Dante Hutcherson (16) and Wes Phillips (10) were also in double figures for NM. The Norsemen and the Warriors would meet often in the ensuing years in the playoffs as all their next 11 games would take place in the playoffs and all 11 games were won by WMC.

Coach Walt Gawkowski’s Norsemen won only seven games during the season but were in contention in many of their games, including those two final heart-breaking games that went into overtime.

N Muskegon 60 Newaygo 47 Dante Hutcherson 20, Mark Kolbe 13

N Muskegon 41 Mason Co 61 Bob Kersting 9, 4 players with 6

N Muskegon 53 Ravenna 43 Wes Phillips 18, Hutcherson 15, Kolbe 8

N Muskegon 67 Fport Christ. 49 Kolbe 20, Hutcherson 17, Phillips 14

N Muskegon 44 Whitehall 47 Kolbe 12, Hutcherson 10

N Muskegon 42 Montague 64 Kolbe 14, Hutcherson 9

N Muskegon 72 Pentwater (2ot) 70 Hutcherson 25, Kolbe 18, Scott Brichan 10

N Muskegon 60 Oakridge 49 Kolbe 20, Phillips 12, Hutcherson 10

N Muskegon 63 Shelby 51 Phillips 16, Kolbe 15, Jim Johnson 13

N Muskegon 68 Hart 88 Brichan 18, Phillips & Kolbe 13

N Muskegon 46 Mason Co 70 Brichan 14, Johnson 10

N Muskegon 40 Ravenna 65 Phillips 12

N Muskegon 51 Hesperia 54 Kolbe 18, Johnson 9

N Muskegon 46 Whitehall 51 Kolbe 14, Phillips 10, Brichan 9

N Muskegon 76 Holton 81 Hutcherson 17, Kolbe 16, Phillips 12,

N Muskegon 50 Montague 62 Hutcherson 18, Kolbe 13, Brichan 11

N Muskegon 47 Oakridge 61 Kolbe 14, Brichan 12

N Muskegon 90 Shelby 65 Kolbe 18, Brichan 15, Hutcherson & Phillips 14

N Muskegon 53 Kent City 75 Kersting 14, Kolbe & Phillips 11

N Muskegon 62 Hart (4ot) 66 Kolbe and Brichan 17, Kersting & Phillips 10

N Muskegon\* 70 WMC (2ot) 74 Kolbe 20, Brichan 19, Hutcherson 16

**1987-88 (Coach Walt Gawkowski 4-17, Montague champs WMC)**

NM would return five players, including four starters for the 1987-88 season. One starter not returning however was the leader of the previous season’s team: Dante Hutcherson. Mark Kolbe, still only a junior, would return as a third-year starter, while other regular returning included Wes Phillips, Bob Kersting and Jim Johnson. Again, despite the less than stellar record NM would be competitive in most of their regular season games. The 1987-88 high school season would begin the second season for the three-point shooters.

For the second straight season the Norse opened their schedule with Newaygo but a 35-point performance by Lion head coach Mike Pumford’s son Brian led to an opening loss for the Norsemen 81-70. NM received balanced scoring from their returning veterans as Mark Kolbe netted 21, Bob Kersting and Wes Phillps 15, with Scott Brichan and Jim Johnson contributing eight and seven points respectively. NM would have to wait several games to earn their first victory.

The Norse had to feel good about their chances in their second game with Mason County Central when they went into the locker room at halftime trailing by only one point to the two-time defending WMC champs. However, the visiting Spartans came out on fire in the third quarter by outscoring the Norse 26-7 enroute to an 80-70 victory. Matt Kolbe led NM with 19 points followed by Wes Phillips with 18 as each of the NM leaders connected on three 3-pointers. Haley Potts and Scott Brichan each added eight to the Norse cause. Jim Johnson had six points with an equal number of assists as NM drops to 0-2.

Ravenna used a 22-9 impetus in the first quarter as the Norse fell victim in their third straight start losing 71-63 to the Bulldogs. Matt Kolbe again led NM scorers with 17 while Jerry Brichan added 14. Jim Johnson made 10 points and five assists while Wes Phillips had 10 rebounds for the visiting Norsemen.

The Norse probably will look back at their 92-54 loss to Whitehall as the low point of their season. The visiting Vikings scored 20 or more in every quarter during the rout of the winless Norsemen. Matt Kolbe’s 15 points led the Norse with Scott Brichan adding 10.

The New Year didn’t treat NM any better than the old as following a long layoff over the holidays, NM fell to Montague 80-62. The Wildcats led from the opening tipoff to the final horn. Matt Kolbe again was the leading scorer for the Norse with 18 points, followed by Wes Phillips with 14 and Bob Kersting with 10.

NM took the road to Pentwater with high hopes of attaining their first win against a fellow Class D school. That did not happen as Pentwater out tallied the Norsemen 32-9 in the final quarter to win by 23 points. Both teams were deadlocked at 38-all before the host Falcons went on their huge run. For the first-time all-season Matt Kolbe, held to six points, did not lead NM in scoring. Scott Brichan topped NM with 14 points with Bob Kersting adding 10. Three frustrated NM players fouled out in the deciding fourth quarter.

The Norse would finally get their first victory with a 62-44 win over Oakridge. One may find this hard to believe but it would be the last victory by NM over Oakridge in 22 games. NM would not get on the plus side of the scoring column with Oakridge until the Drew Naymick era at NMHS. So dominant was Oakridge over the Norse during the 1980s and 90s that Oakridge would compile a surreal 33-2 record during that span. Scoring was evenly distributed for the Norsemen. Matt Kolbe and Wes Phillips each tallied 14, Haley Potts netted 12 and Scott Brichan added 10 points with nine rebounds.

NM then made it two straight wins as they defeated Shelby for the sixth straight time in the long series that stood at 52-45 following this game in 1988. The Norse were down seven with 4:30 left in the contest when they ramped out their defense and rallied for the victory. Matt Steketee came off the bench to spark the Norse with 14 points, equaling teammate’s Scott Brichan’s 14 markers.

North Muskegon, who rarely plays a school with an enrollment less than the Norse, made Fruitport Faith Christian, a fledging school with only 53 students, their third straight victim with a tight 73-67 victory. NM needed to have a 30-21 fourth quarter run to secure the victory. The Conquerors were paced by last season’s leading scorer in the area Scott Bathrick who bucketed 29 points. Scott Brichan had 18 points for NM while Wes Phillips had a big game with 17 points and 20 rebounds.

The three-game winning streak ended abruptly and would be the start of another long losing skein for the Norse as they lost a decision to Hart 67-60. The loss spoiled a career high outing from junior Mark Kolbe who scored 27 points. Scott Brichan notched 16 for the Blue & Gold as their record now stood at 3-7. It would not get any better.

The script for game two with Mason County Central was very similar to their first meeting in early December. NM and MCC were tied at halftime when the host Spartans again used a big third quarter to pull in front of the Norse enroute to a 72-64 defeat of NM. Matt Kolbe led NM with 14 points while Scott Brichan chipped in with 12 points and eight rebounds. Wes Phillips netted 11 and Mike DeLong came off the bench to also tally 11 points. Tom Meyers, yet another reserve had a season high 10 while NM playmaker and defensive stopper Jim Johnson had six assists.

The first quarter appeared to be the Achilles Heel for NM in 1987-88. Ravenna busted out of the gates to lead NM 22-10 after the first eight minutes were complete, the difference in the game as Ravenna would win by nine, 66-57. Wes Phillips notched a season high 20 points for NM with Matt Kolbe the only other Norsemen in double figures with 12.

Hesperia than edged NM 55-50 in front of the home folks at the northside gymnasium. The Panthers were consistent as they outscored the Norse by the tiniest of incremental scores in each quarter. Mark Kolbe and Scott Brichan had 11 and Wes Phillips 10 for NM. The Norse were hurt when both Jim Johnson and Kolbe fouled out of the contest.

The doldrums continued for NM as they were trounced 67-42 by a much-improved Whitehall team. Again, NM got pummeled in the first quarter as Whitehall roared to a 20-6 first quarter lead. Wes Phillips scored 16 points for the losing Norsemen while Scott Brichan had 10 points and grabbed six rebounds.

NM then was handed their largest defeat by Holton in the two schools series history, 86-55. A sparse crowd at the NM gym saw Holton break away early with a 20-11 first quarter lead. Only in a 14-14 second quarter did NM present a challenge for the visiting Red Devils. Mark Kolbe was the only Norsemen in double figures with 12 points while Haley Potts (9) and Jim Johnson (8) were close.

After coaching and having great success for several years at Shelby, Jim Tate moved south a few miles to become the head coach at Montague. Tate quickly began working his magic at Montague. Tate has the Wildcats on top of the WMC, and they stayed there as all 12 players on Montague’s roster scored in a massive 105-67 whipping of the Norsemen. Scott Brichan (15), Wes Phillips (14) and Jim Johnson (10) managed to hit double figures for NM as NM’s losing streak had now reached nine.

In a clash between the bottom feeders of the WMC, Oakridge emerged the winner with a tight 67-63 win over the Norsemen. Oakridge’s victory sends NM to a 3-14 overall record and 2-10 in the conference. NM received good offensive production from Scott Brichan (20) Matt Kolbe (19) and Haley Potts (16).

Shelby held the Norse at bay to make amends for an earlier loss to NM as they posted a 65-63 victory in the game played at Shelby. The Tigers had made a vast improvement in two years under the tutelage of Rick Zoulek. Just two years earlier the Tigers failed to win a game but the win over NM pushed the Tigers to a winning record at 10-9. Haley Potts earned high scoring honors for NM with a modest 12 points, with Scott Buchan and Matt Kolbe trailing with 11 each.

Once leading by as many as 11 points, NM squandered the lead to spoil a herculean effort by the Norsemen’s Jim Johnson. An outstanding baseball player for coach Gawkowski’s baseball team in the spring, Johnson scored a career high 18 points in a moment that will long be remembered by the Johnson clan. Unfortunately for Norse followers, Johnson’s Norsemen lost a heartbreaker to Kent City 66-64 as the losing streak reached 10.

At long last North Muskegon would win a game after a long 10 game dry spell. NM held off Hart to win the final game of the regular season 68-64. Scott Brichan had 17 points while Wes Phillips and Mark Kolbe netted ten as NM would finish the regular season at 4-16, with three of those wins coming against West Michigan Conference opponents.

NM’s season would come to a merciful close when West Michigan Christian downed NM 75-48 in the first round of conference play. NM would have to get used to meeting the Warriors in the ensuing years, as they would face WMC 12 times from 1987 thru 2000 in the district playoffs, and --- they would lose them all.

After a close first half with the Warriors holding a slim 23-19 lead, WMC came alive in the second half to outscore NM 52-30 in winning 75-48.

Walt Gawkowski, who was a busy man at NMHS, would step down as the boys’ basketball coach but would continue for many years as the NM baseball coach. Widely known for his baseball knowledge as one of the top coaches in Michigan, Gawkowski also served as the athletic director and full-time teacher at North Muskegon.

N Muskegon 70 Newaygo 81 Mark Kolbe 21, Bob Kersting, Wes Phillips 15

N Muskegon 70 Mason Co 80 Kolbe 19, Phillips 18

N Muskegon 63 Ravenna 71 Kolbe 17, Brichan 14, Jim Johnson 10

N Muskegon 54 Whitehall 92 Kolbe 16, Brichan 10

N Muskegon 62 Montague 80 Kolbe 18, Phillips 14, Kersting 10

N Muskegon 47 Pentwater 70 Brichan 14, Kersting

N Muskegon 62 Oakridge 44 Kolbe 14 & Phillips 14, Haley Potts 12,

N Muskegon 52 Shelby 45 Brichan 14, Matt Steketee 14, Kolbe 8

N Muskegon 73 Fport Christ. 67 Brichan 18, Phillips 17, Potts 12, Kolbe 11

N Muskegon 60 Hart 67 Kolbe 27, Brichan 16

N Muskegon 64 Mason Co 72 Kolbe 14, Brichan 12, Mike Delong 11

N Muskegon 57 Ravenna 66 Phillips 20, Kolbe 12

N Muskegon 50 Hesperia 55 Kolbe & Brichan 11, Phillips 10

N Muskegon 42 Whitehall 67 Phillips 16, Brichan 10

N Muskegon 55 Holton 86 Kolbe 12, Potts 9, Johnson 8

N Muskegon 67 Montague 105 Brichan 15, Phillips 14, Johnson 10

N Muskegon 63 Oakridge 67 Brichan 20, Kolbe 19, Potts 16

N Muskegon 53 Shelby 65 Potts 12, Brichan & Kolbe 11,

N Muskegon 64 Kent City 66 Johnson 18, Brichan 18, Kolbe 9

N Muskegon 68 Hart 64 Brichan 17, Phillips and Kolbe 15

N Muskegon\* 48 WMC 75 Phillips 15, Johnson 9

**1988-89 (Coach Greg Wieman 10-10, Montague champs WMC)**

Greg Wieman replaced Walt Gawkowski as the basketball coach at NMHS with Walt now free to concentrate on his favorite sport of baseball. Mark Kolbe returns as a four-year starter, and he’ll be joined by another regular from the previous season in Haley Potts. A big addition to the basketball program was Rondell Hutcherson, a transfer from Mona Shores and the younger brother of former NM star Dante Hutcherson.

The Norse kicked off the season with a 79-74 win over Newaygo as Haley Potts was on fire. Potts scored a career high 33 points with Rondell Hutcherson coming off the bench to score 23. Veteran Mark Kolbe continued his great play in his fourth year in a NM varsity uniform with 13 points. Hutcherson with four 3-pointers, and Potts with a trio of long bombs, were instrumental in NM winning their first game under their new coach Greg Wieman.

It was a brief winning streak for the Norsemen as they dropped their next game at Hart 64-54. Mark Kolbe had 17 and Rondell Hutcherson 13 as Hart overcame a 46-44 deficit going into the fourth quarter by outscoring NM 20-8 in the game’s final eight minutes. After scoring 33 points in the season opener, Haley Potts was a marked man by the Pirates and was held to nine points.

A rare win was earned by the Norsemen when they defeated Mason County Central in their next game. How rare? From 1981 until 2000-01 the two teams would play 39 games. NM’s 68-56 win in December of 1988 would be the only win for the Norse over MCC during the next two decades. The 24 consecutive wins covering that span would constitute as the most losses to one team in NM history. To add further intrigue, the win came on the road in Scottville, a venue that did not treat the Norse kindly over the years. Balance scoring was the key for NM, including 13 points from a newcomer to the roster, Scott Smith. Rondell Hutcherson fired in 20 points, Haley Potts 16 and Mark Kolbe 13. Charlie Sheridan played a big role for the winners with a game high 10 rebounds.

North Muskegon then made the journey to Walkerville for the first ever contest between the two schools. Fortunately for the Norsemen they were playing the boys team and not the girls. The little hamlet of Walkerville was still in a celebratory mood after their girls’ team four days earlier had just won their second straight Class D state championship. As it was, NM struggled against the Walkerville boys’ team but won thanks to the hot shooting of Haley Potts. With the score tied at 60-all inside the bandbox Walkerville gymnasium, Potts scored 12 of his game high 26 points in the fourth quarter as NM escaped with a 70-65 victory.

NM then fought off a late fourth quarter run by Ravenna to squeak out a 72-69 win over the Bulldogs. Haley Potts continued his torrid scoring with 28 points. Rondell Hutcherson added 18 points and Charlie Sheridan 12 as NM began the season with a winning 4-1 record. The Bulldogs star players had little time to practice before the basketball season arrived, and for a good reason. Ravenna made it all the way to the state championship game in football before losing to Detroit DePorres. Bulldog quarterback Mark Jacobs was not too shabby in basketball as he led Ravenna with 21 points and 13 rebounds. Jacob’s favorite receiver in football, Rod Place was close behind with 18 points.

It was probably a good thing that the Norsemen’s next game would be the final contest in the brief three game series with Fruitport Faith Christian. The Norse had little trouble in defeating the Fruitport private school as they jumped out to an early 19-4 lead and never took their foot off the gas in a 79-30 rout. Haley Potts in limited minutes scored 20, Tom Meyers 11 and Rondell Hutcherson 11. Matt Kolbe played an unselfish game by coming up with five rebounds four assists and three steals as 10 Norsemen scored in the game. The 6-1 record was NM’s best start since 1978-79. However, that would change quickly.

Whitehall used their home floor advantage to jump out to a 22-6 first quarter lead and NM never could catch the Vikings the rest of the way, losing their second game of the season 81-63. Haley Potts (20), Rondell Hutcherson (17) and Mark Kolbe 12) scored all but 16 of NM’s points.

It looks like defending WMC champion Montague will be a tough out during the season as they had no trouble in downing NM 66-44. Playing without Haley Potts and Rondell Hutcherson NM was no match for the Wildcats. Matt Kolbe was the only Norsemen in double figures with 16 points.

The Norsemen got back on the winning track with an easy 84-68 high scoring win over Pentwater. Rondell Hutcherson joined the 30-point club with an even 30 points to highlight the victory. Mark Kolbe netted 21 points in the rout while Karl Nicles, an all-state kicker on the football team, had a double-double with 10 points and 10 rebounds.

It had become clear as the season reached the midway point that the Norsemen were basically dependent on the trio of Rondell Hutcherson, Haley Potts and Mark Kolbe. The threesome accounted for all but 13 points in a 67-64 victory over Shelby led by Potts who hit three triples and 25 points. Hutcherson followed with 15 and Kolbe 10 as NM improved to 8-4 and 3-2 in the conference.

Holton came out sizzling hot in the opening quarter by opening a 14-point lead after the first quarter was in the books enroute to a 76-67 win over NM. Only a 24-10 NM third quarter kept the game within reach, but the Red Devils kept their composure and pulled away in the fourth quarter. Haley Potts kept NM within range of Holton by scoring 19 of his 29 points in the second half. Mark Kolbe filled up the stat sheet with 11 points, nine rebounds and four assists.

NM made amends for an earlier loss to Hart by earning an 82-72 victory when they returned to the NMHS court for their second contest of the season. With the Norse leading by only a point at halftime, NM outpointed Hart 23-10 in the third quarter, the difference in the final score. Rondell Hutcherson had a big night with 21 points, seven rebounds and six assists. Haley Potts scored 16 plus five assists while Mark Kolbe, who stands less than six feet tall, had 15 rebounds to go along with his 14 points.

After procuring a rare win at Scottville, NM stumbled at home in their second meeting and fell to Mason County by a slim one point 63-62 in a game decided in overtime. Rondell Hutcherson was a one-man wrecking crew for the Norse with 28 points, eight rebounds and seven steals. The key to victory for the visiting Spartans was stopping Haley Potts from making a single field goal. All of Potts five points came at the free throw line.

The NM trio scored 52 of NM’s 69 points but it wasn’t enough as Ravenna attained a split of the season series with a home court 74-69 win over the Norse. Haley Potts (21). Rondell Hutcherson (20) and Mark Kolbe (11) were all in double figures for the visitors. First quarter woes hurt NM as they trailed 18-7 after the first stop and could never catch the Bulldogs.

It was now the Norsemen’s turn to earn a season’s split as they atoned for an earlier loss at Whitehall to earn a 53-48 home win over the Vikings. NM got a huge boost from Scott Smith who gave the Norsemen’s vaunted trio much-needed scoring help with his 13 points. The threesome of Haley Potts (14), Mark Kolbe (12) and Rondell Hutcherson (10) joined Smith to give NM four players to reach double figures. For once, having an opponent bust out to an early first quarter lead didn’t kill NM chances for a win. Whitehall jumped out to a 16-4 lead after the game’s first eight minutes before NM steadily chipped back at the Viking’s lead.

NM then pulled off a stunner with a 67-65 win over eventual WMC champion Montague. Montague owned an impressive 16-1 record before running into the Norsemen. NM trailed by five points heading into the final quarter but got big plays from Rondell Hutcherson and Scott Smith down the stretch to pull off the upset. Hutcherson would finish with 20 points while Smith would hit the winning free throw and chip in with nine rebounds to give NM their 10th, and final win of the season.

The momentum of their upset victory over Montague did not carry over to NM’s final three games of the season, as they lost all three. NM seems to bring out the best in Oakridge during the 1980s and 90s. Oakridge dominated NM on the boards 48-28 as Oakridge throttled the Norse 77-52 to give the Eagles their first of many season series sweeps over the next decade with NMHS. Haley Potts was the only Norsemen to find the range consistently with a game high 26 points. NM fell below .500 in the WMC with a 6-7 conference record and 10-8 overall.

There was indeed a lot of parity in the West Michigan Conference for the 1988-89 season. NM split all their WMC games apart from the Oakridge sweep. Shelby earned a split with the Norse in the final game of the WMC season with a 74-57 win. Matt Kolbe finished with 18 points in his final game after four years playing in a Norsemen uniform to lead NM scorers. Haley Potts added 13 and Rondell Hutcherson was held to eight. Shelby trailed by seven at halftime but came back for the win helped by three NM players who fouled out in the second half.

For the second straight year, in what would look like an annual ritual, NM and West Michigan Christian would meet in the MHSAA playoffs. NM gave the Warriors a tussle but fell five points short as WMC would earn a 69-64 victory. The NM trio of Haley Potts (18), Matt Kolbe (16) and Rondell Hutcherson (15) again led the Norse bid to advance as NM ended the season at 10-10. NM would finish at .500 on the season and they would have to wait a full ten years before they would again post a winning record.

N Muskegon 79 Newaygo 74 Haley Potts 33, Rondell Hutcherson 23

N Muskegon 54 Hart 64 Mark Kolbe 17, Hutcherson 13

N Muskegon 68 Mason Co 56 Hutcherson 20, Potts 16 S. Smith & Kolbe 13

N Muskegon 70 Walkersville 65 Potts 26, Kolbe 11, Hutcherson 10

N Muskegon 72 Ravenna 69 Potts 28, Hutcherson 18, Charlie Sheridan 12

N Muskegon 74 Fport Christ. 30 Potts 20, Tom Meyers 11, Hutcherson 11

N Muskegon 63 Whitehall 81 Potts 20, Hutcherson 17, Kolbe 12

N Muskegon 44 Montague 66 Kolbe 16

N Muskegon 84 Pentwater 58 Hutcherson 30, Kolbe 21 Karl Nicles 10

N Muskegon 63 Oakridge 88 Hutcherson 22, Kolbe 14, Potts 13

N Muskegon 67 Shelby 64 Potts 25, Hutcherson 15, Kolbe 10

N Muskegon 67 Holton 76 Potts 29, Kolbe 11, Hutcherson 9

N Muskegon 82 Hart 72 Hutcherson 21, Potts 16, Kolbe 14

N Muskegon 62 Mason Co) ot) 63 Hutcherson 28, Kolbe 11, Sheridan 8

N Muskegon 69 Ravenna 74 Potts 21, Hutcherson 20, Kolbe 11

N Muskegon 53 Whitehall 48 Potts 14, Smith 13, Kolbe 12, Hutcherson 10

N Muskegon 67 Montague 65 Hutcherson 20, Potts 15, Sheridan 12

N Muskegon 52 Oakridge 77 Potts 26, Kolbe and Hutcherson 8

N Muskegon 57 Shelby 74 Kolbe 18, Potts 13, Hutcherson 8

N Muskegon\* 64 WMC 69 Potts 18, Kolbe 16, Hutchersson 15

**1989-90 (Coach Greg Wieman 2-19, Montague -Whitehall co-champs WMC)**

The decade of the 1990s would not treat the Norsemen kindly. Not until the 1998-99 season, with NM under the command of Jeff Cooke, would the Norse post a winning record. The poorest season record during the decade would be the first as NM in the second year under head coach Greg Wieman would win but two games, both wins coming against a pair of very small Class D schools. NM lost a pair of nail-biters by two points and were competitive in a few more – but 2-19 – is 2-19. Only Rondell Hutcherson returned from the previous season as a starter where he averaged a lofty 17 points per game. Hutcherson would have a good season for NM averaging more than 20 points per game. The 5’11 senior missed four games early in the season but still finished with 343 points. Scott Smith saw plenty of playing time in the previous season and he gave NM some much needed experience. Coach Wieman would have a freshman starting to begin the season in Cam Balash while sophomore Dan Delong would be called upon as a starter. Both Balash and DeLong would have a good season even if the 2-19 record wouldn’t portray a lot of success.

Rondell Hutcherson scored 24 points, half of NM’s total in a 51-48 opening game loss to Hart. Hart led 35-19 at the halftime, a lead good enough to hold off a late NM rally when they outscored Hart 19-4 in the fourth quarter. Scott Smith had 10 points while sophomore Nate Gates, who failed to score, did grab 8 rebounds for NM.

Mason County Central’s Craig Shriver, the son of Spartan head coach Jack Shriver broke a 64-all deadlock in the game’s final 10 seconds to defeat the Norse 66-64 and put a damper on a sensational night by NM’s Rondell Hutcherson. The 40 points scored by Hutcherson was second at the time only to Gordy Odell’s 53 points scored back in 1955. Hutcherson gunned in a trio of 3-pointers and grabbed 11 rebounds, but it was a woeful night at the free throw line that caused NM the game. After making 10 of 12 free throws three days earlier against Hart, the Norse only made 6 of 17 against MCC.

NM was leading at the end of three quarters 51-50 only to see Newaygo explode for 34 points in the fourth quarter to NM’s 19 to send NM to their third straight defeat. Rondell Hutcherson poured in 23 points to pace the Norse with Scott Smith netting 16 points and Dan DeLong 12. Rondell Hutcherson scored 18 of his 29 points in the fourth quarter to draw NM to within four points at game’s end. Freshman Cam Balash had 17 points for the Norse while Scott Smith grabbed a game high 13 rebounds.

In the first of a ten-game series, NM defeated Calvary Baptist 75-55. NM played without their ace scorer Rondell Hutcherson, but NM’s Dan DeLong took up the scoring slack with 25 points with Scott Smith (16) and Jeff Smith chipping with 15 points.

Freshman Cam Balash scored 23 points and sophomore Dan DeLong added 17 but it wasn’t enough as the young Norsemen fell to Whitehall 73-57.

NM had a seemingly comfortable 50-40 lead heading into the fourth quarter, but the Pentwater Falcons then went on a scoring rampage in the game’s final eight minutes, outscoring the Norsemen 28-6 to hand NM their 6th loss of the season 78-66. At one point in the third quarter the Norse lead was 14 points before NM fell apart in the final stanza. Dan DeLong led NM with 20 points and six steals, followed by Jeff Smith with 16 points and eight rebounds.

Oakridge used a big third quarter to turn a close game into a runaway as NM fell to Oakridge 89-56. Eagle football star David Nelson, who would become a well-respective police officer in North Muskegon, came off the bench to spark Oakridge with 18 points. Dan Delong played hard for NM scoring 12 points, while dishing off for 12 assists and six rebounds in a losing effort.

NM had the ball trailing by one point with 12 seconds left but never got a shot off and Shelby withstood an upset bid by the Norsemen to win 66-65. Scott Smith had 16 points and eight rebounds and Cam Balash 15 points. Shelby moved to 8-3 on the season while the Norsemen, still looking for a win in the WMC, were now 1-8. It would get worse. Although he scored only four points, NM fans had to be excited to see that Rondell Hutcherson was back in the lineup.

NM had a healthy Rondell Hutcherson and had a rare victory in their grasp but couldn’t hold off a fourth quarter Holton rally and lost 65-62 to the Red Devils in a non-league contest. Hutcherson finished with 19 points and five steals followed by Scott Smith with 12 and Cam Balash with 11.

The Norse took a 33-29 lead at halftime in a game at Hart, but the host Pirates came out smoking hot in the second half and doubled the score vs. NM 46-23 to win easily 75-56.

NM was not a match for a Montague team that improved to 10-1 on the season following a 72-56 win over the Norsemen. Montague enjoyed a 27-3 advantage at the free throw line as NM fell to 1-11 and 0-8 in the WMC. Rondell Hutcherson scored 18 for NM while Dan DeLong had 11 points, seven rebounds and five assists.

The young Norsemen gave Mason County Central a battle for the first half of the game, trailing by one at halftime, but the host Spartans pulled away from NM in the second half to post a 72-58 loss on the Norse. Rondell Hutcherson and Dan DeLong shared scoring honors for NM with 18 points.

It appeared NM was headed to a much-needed second victory of the season, but those hopes evaporated when Hesperia’s Bobby Rumsey drilled a baseline jumper with just one second remaining to defeat the luckless Norsemen 58-57. The Panthers did an outstanding job in holding NM’s high scoring Rondell Hutcherson to but seven points, far below his 20-point average.

The struggles continued for the Norse as Ravenna downed NM 65-46 in a game where the Bulldogs out rebounded the Norse 50-25. Only Rondell Hutcherson was in double figures with 16 points with the next highest scorer for NM, Cam Balash, limited to seven points.

NM final snapped their long losing streak at the expense of Class D Walkerville with a 90-63 rout. Rondell Hutcherson with 26 and Cam Balash with 21 led NM in scoring. Ty Zednik took full advantage in his first game in the starting lineup with 14 points and nine rebounds. Dan DeLong put his name in the NM record book with 15 assists.

The Norse were not embarrassed as they gave a good account of themselves in losing to the co-leaders of the WMC Whitehall Vikings 80-71. The one-two combo of senior Rondell Hutcherson (21) and freshman Cam Balash (19) accounted for 40 of NM’s 71 points in the loss.

NM then played a Montague team that needed a win to preserve their hold at the top of the WMC. The Cats did win over the very young Norsemen 79-64 despite 29 points by NM’s scoring machine Rondell Hutcherson.

NM found themselves trailing 42-25 at halftime and posed little threat to Oakridge who continued their mastery over the Norsemen with an easy 89-68 victory. Dan DeLong had a season high 28 points for NM as Oakridge concentrated on stopping Rondell Hutcherson who was held to 10 points.

Rondell Hutcherson had another huge game for the Norse, but NM just didn’t have enough help as Shelby handed NM their 14th defeat in the WMC without a win, 81-67. Hutcherson finished the regular season with 27 points, seven rebounds, six assists and eight steals. “He’s such a great athlete, it’s hard to shut him down, “Shelby coach Rick Zoulek said of Hutcherson. “We just wanted to keep him in the gym somewhere and keep him under 30 (points).”

For the fourth straight year West Michigan Christian ended NM’s season with a 53-38 victory in the MHSAA playoffs. One oddity in the game was that neither team was able to make a three-pointer in the entire game. NM shot a dismal 22 per cent from the field. Rondell Hutcherson was held to 10 points, far below his average as NM’s season ended with a woeful 2-19 record. Even the advantage of NM hosting the tournament on their home floor didn’t help the Norsemen. The Warriors would advance to the state semi-finals before losing to Detroit East Catholic.

N Muskegon 48 Hart 51 Rondell Hutcherson 24, Scott Smith 10,

N Muskegon 64 Mason Co 66 Hutcherson 40, Cam Balash 7

N Muskegon 69 Newaygo 85 Hutcherson 23, S Smith 16, Dan DeLong 12

N Muskegon 61 Ravenna 65 Hutcherson 29, Balash 17

N Muskegon 75 Calvary Baptist 55 Delong 25, S Smith 16, Jeff Smith 15

N Muskegon 57 Whitehall 73 Balash 23, DeLong 17

N Muskegon 66 Pentwater 78 DeLong 20, J Smith 16, Balash 10

N Muskegon 56 Oakridge 89 DeLong & S Smith 12, Ty Zednik 9

N Muskegon 65 Shelby 66 S Smith 16, Balash 15, DeLong 10

N Muskegon 62 Holton 65 Hutcherson 19, S Smith 12, Balash 11

N Muskegon 56 Hart 75 Hutcherson 21, DeLong & Balash 8

N Muskegon 56 Montague 72 Hutcherson 18, DeLong 11, Zack Bauer 9

N Muskegon 58 Mason Co 72 Hutcherson & DeLong 18

N Muskegon 57 Hesperia 58 S Smith 12, Nate Gates 11, Zednick 10,

N Muskegon 46 Ravenna 65 Hutcherson 16, Balash 7

N Muskegon 90 Walkerville 63 Hutcherson 26, Balash 21, Zednik

N Muskegon 71 Whitehall 80 Hutcherson 22, Balash 19, S Smith 9

N Muskegon 64 Montague 79 Hutcherson 29. Bauer 7, Balash 6

N Muskegon 68 Oakridge 89 DeLong 28, Hutcherson 10, Balash 8

N Muskegon 67 Shelby 81 Hutcherson 27, DeLong 11, Balash 8

N Muskegon\* 38 WMC 53 Hutcherson 10

**1990-91 (Coach Greg Wieman 4-19, Montague champs WMC)**

Although the 1990-91 Norsemen would miss graduating senior Rondell Hutcherson, much more was expected for the 1990-91 Norsemen than a woeful 4-19 records. For the second consecutive year the Norse posted a winless record in the WMC and only in their final game in the regular season with Oakridge, did they come close to a victory. Four starters returned plus a promising sophomore from the junior varsity team that should have forbode a better record but that didn’t materialize. Unfortunately, one of the returnees, Dan DeLong severely cut his arm/wrist late in the football season and would sit out the entire year. Sophomore Cam Balash returns for his second season and brings with him a 10 point per game average while Jeff and Scott Smith (no relation) were also a part of last year’s rotation. Nate Gates, a star lineman on NM’s football team returns to give the Norse some muscle on the front line while that promising sophomore was Joel Johnson, still growing at 5’4 who would work his way into a starting point guard position. Zac Bauer, yet another football star, also gives NM some experience as a returnee for the Norsemen. NM boasted of several two- & three-star athletes, but that didn’t transcend into a successful basketball season.

NM got off to a less than stellar start to begin the season and the game. Newaygo jumped out to an early 10-0 lead, perhaps a foreboding sign of things to come as that was the point differential in the game with Newaygo on top 68-58. Jeff Smith with 14 and Nate Gates with 13 led the Norse.

In their second WMC game of the season NM was only able to put 41 points on the board as NM lost to Hart 50-41. The Norse had a short-lived lead of one-point with six minutes remaining in the contest before Hart pulled away. Zach Bauer with 13 and Jeff Smith with 12 were the only Norsemen in double figures.

The point production didn’t get much better in NM’s next game, a long road trip to Scottville to face Mason Country Central. For the first time in five years NM didn’t have one player in double figures. The Spartan roared out to a 42-23 lead at halftime and coasted to a 78-45 win over NM. Football lineman Matt Stegelman muscled his way to score nine points, NM’s high point total for the contest.

NM did manage to have three players in double figures in their next game, but NM was held to but 50 points in a 75-50 loss to Ravenna. Cam Balash had 13, Jeff Smith 11, and Zach Bauer 10 as NM falls to 0-5 to begin the season.

It’s probably a good thing that the Norsemen had Calvary Baptist on their schedule. After NM had defeated Calvary Baptist 61-49, the win would only be NM’s third win in two years, with two of those victories coming against Calvary Baptist. NM won by 12 points, with all 12 of those points coming in the overtime session with NM shutting out Calvary Baptist 12-0 in the extra session. Ten of those points in OT came on free throws. Zac Bauer scored 16 points and grabbed 14 rebounds for the Norse, while Joel Johnson and Nate Gates added 15 and 14 points respectively.

Whitehall used a 18-7 third quarter burst to pull away in the second half in beating the Norsemen 62-40. Joel Johnson was the only Norse player in double figures with 11.

Cam Balash, who averaged more than 10 points a game as a freshman, got off to a slow start in his sophomore season. Norse fans were looking for a breakout. That came in NM’s game with Ravenna shortly after the start of the New Year in 1991 when he scored 27 of NM’s 57 points in their 69-57 overtime loss to Pentwater. After both teams were tied at the end of regulation Pentwater outscored the Norse 16-4 in the three-minute overtime with 10 of those points coming on free throws.

It was back to the drawing board for the Norse as scoring points once again became a big problem. Scoring was not a problem for Montague as they scored 75 while NM was held to 48. For the second time during the season no Norsemen players were able to score in double figures. Cam Balash with nine, was close.

The Norsemen only hit on 3of 15 field goals in the first quarter and that set the tone as Oakridge handed NM their ninth defeat of the season 63-51. Cam Balash was the only Norse player in double figures with 15.

Only in the third quarter did Holton have a big advantage over the Norse. The Red Devils tallied 21 points to NM’s 15 in the eight-minute quarter following halftime in defeating NM 63-55. Four Norsemen managed to score in double figures for NM; Matt Benedict (14), Cam Balash (12), Nate Gates and Zac Bauer (10).

Shelby served notice early that they were not going to be denied on their home court as they bolted out to an unsurmountable 20-point lead 27-7 over NM in the first quarter. Shelby would then blow out the Norse 80-43 as NM would leave Shelby with a 1-11 record. Matt Benedict’s 11 points was the best a Norse player could do as Shelby sweeps the season series.

The Norse came a split second away from posting their first victory in WMC competition in three years only to be denied by a made basket following a rebound by Hart’s Aaron Rooney as the buzzer sounded in the background. The buzzer-beater gave Hart a 71-70 victory over NM and moved the Norse to 0-9 in the WMC. Matt Steigelman had a season high 16 for the Norsemen, with Jeff Smith (15) and Joel Johnson (10) also in double figures.

NM suffered their second straight heartbreaker when Walkerville’s Jason Bond scored with five seconds on the clock to spoil a great game from NM’s point guard Joel Johnson. Connecting on four three-pointer among his game high 24 points, Johnson scored 15 of his 24 points in NMs final quarter as NM mounted a furious comeback after trailing 70-54 entering the final eight minutes. The win for Walkerville would be the only victory earned by the Wildcats in the 12 meetings with the Norse over the years. Nate Gates with 18 and Cam Balash with 16 also scored well for NM as their 87 points was by far their leading offensive output of the season.

The Norse did not have to worry about a buzzer beater sending the Norse to a crushing defeat in their next game against Mason County Central. The visiting Spartans more than doubled the score on the Norsemen in a 91-45 thrashing. Cam Balash was the only Norsemen in double figures with 14.

Finally --- at long last --- a win! And they did it with conviction as NM defeated Hesperia 73-54 to snap a 10-game losing streak. After a 15-all first quarter the Norse outscored Hesperia in the next three quarters as four Norsemen scored in double digit numbers. Cam Balash (22), Joel Johnson (17), Nate Gates (16) and Scott Smith (11) led the Norse to victory to send their suffering fans home happy.

The momentum of the Hesperia victory did not carry over into NM’s next game with Whitehall as the Norse were given a pasting by Whitehall 79-38. It would be more of the same in their next four games.

In back-to-back games NM would have their lowest scoring games of the season. All the incentive was with Montague as a win over NM would clinch the West Michigan Conference championship. Montague not only had the incentive, but they had the talent as they destroyed the Norsemen 70-33. So decisive was the victory that Montague led 39-13 at halftime. Cam Balash led NM with 14 of NM’s 33 points as no other Norse player scored more than four points.

The Norsemen then played a makeup game with Ravenna that was postponed due to weather to February 27. Ravenna was never threatened as NM fell to the Bulldogs 81-48. Cam Balash with 17, was the only Norsemen to score more than six points.

NM then ended their regular season with their fifth straight defeat by 30 or more points in a 74-42 loss to Oakridge. For the second consecutive season NM posted a 0-14 record in WMC play. Nate Gates led NM with 15 points.

After playing predominantly a schedule against Class C schools, it was a welcome relief for NM to open the playoffs against Class D opponents. NM’s first opponent would be Saugatuck in the first game played in history between the two schools. Finally, fate was on the side of the Norsemen as Saugatuck missed the front end of a one-and-one and came up blank on a couple of other shots in the closing seconds that would have met defeat for NM. Instead, the Norsemen win the first game of the playoffs 55-54. Much of the credit for the victory went to NM center Scott Smith. Smith had 11 points and 12 rebounds, but it was his defense on Saugatuck’s high scoring center Jerry Prys that was the difference in the game. “Prys is a prize. He’s a nice player but Scott Smith did a great job on him.” said NM coach Greg Wieman. Prys had scored 30 points in their last game.

NM would then play Calvary Baptist on the Northside court; one of the two teams NM had defeated during the regular season. Held to a season low of two points in their first matchup, Cam Balash scored a game high 17 in the playoff game to lead the Norse to a 52-45 victory and a berth in the district finals with Allendale.

NM would go into the finals as distinct underdogs to an Allendale team that was ranked number four in the state, boasting a 21-1 record and eliminated perennial power West Michigan Christian in an earlier game. To no one’s surprise Allendale advanced with a 77-50 victory. Allendale would advance all the way to the state finals before losing to Ann Arbor Gabriel Richard. The district final clash was the last time the two teams would meet in basketball. NM was led by junior guard Joel Johnson with 13 points as the season would come in an end with an overall record of 4-19. With most of the players returning, 1991-92 surely looked more promising.

N Muskegon 58 Newaygo 68 Jeff Smith 14, Nate Gates 13, Cam Balash 10

N Muskegon 54 Shelby 71 J Smith 15, Balash 12, Scott Smith 9

N Muskegon 41 Hart 50 Zach Bauer 13, J Smith 12

N Muskegon 45 Mason Co 78 Matt Steigelman 9, Balash 8

N Muskegon 50 Ravenna 75 Balash 13, J Smith 11, Bauer 10

N Muskegon 61 Calvary Bap. 49 Bauer 16, Joel Johnson 15, Gates 14

N Muskegon 40 Whitehall 62 Johnson 11, Bauer & J Smith 7

N Muskegon 57 Pentwater (ot) 69 Balash 27. Matt Benedict 11

N Muskegon 48 Montague 75 Balash 9

N Muskegon 51 Oakridge 63 Balash 15, J Smith 9, Johnson 8

N Muskegon 55 Holton 63 Benedict 14, Balash 12, Gates & Bauer 10

N Muskegon 43 Shelby 80 Benedict 11, Gates 9, S Smith 8

N Muskegon 70 Hart 71 Steigelman 16, J Smith 15, Johnson 10,

N Muskegon 87 Walkerville 89 Johnson 24, Gates 18, Balash 16

N Muskegon 45 Mason Co 91 Balash 14

N Muskegon 73 Hesperia 54 Balash 22, Johnson 17, Gates 16

N Muskegon 38 Whitehall 79 S Smith 8, Johnson and J Smith 7

N Muskegon 33 Montague 70 Balash 14,

N Muskegon 48 Ravenna 81 Balash 17

N Muskegon 42 Oakridge 74 Gates 15, Balash 9

N Muskegon\*55 Saugatuck 54 Balash 17, S Smith 11, Johnson 7

N Muskegon\*52 Calvary Baptist 45 Balash 17, Bauer 11

N Muskegon\*50 Allendale 77 Johnson 13, Balash & S Smith 6

**1991-92 (Coach Greg Wieman 10-12, Shelby champs WMC)**

Greg Wieman would begin his third and final season as the Norsemen head coach. Wieman would welcome back nearly his entire team from the 1990-91 season plus one player who sat out the previous season with an injury. Three-sport standout Dan DeLong, one of the leading performers on the NM team during his sophomore year would be a most welcome addition to the current team. Others returning to the team would include point guard Joel Johnson, who would put up big numbers during the upcoming season. Cam Balash, who was a starter as a freshman, and the leading scorer from last year’s team, would begin his junior season. Others, who if not starters, but who were part of last year’s rotation, included Zach Bauer and Matt Steigelman. My longtime broadcasting partner, Gene Young and I made it a point to include a few NM games on our schedule, not only because the Norse had an excitable team, but they had a pep band called ‘Out of Bounds’ who made a Norsemen basketball game a welcome experience.

After winning but two regular season games from the previous season it took only the first game for the Norsemen to reverse that trend by earning a hard fought 53-50 victory over Newaygo in a game that went into overtime. In the extra three-minute session NM scored all nine of their points on free throws. Dan DeLong and Cam Balash each had 10 points for NM with point guard Joel Johnson adding eight. High School basketball got off to a late start with no Michigan teams schedule to play a game until December 10.

Shelby seemingly couldn’t miss as they raced out to a 48-28 lead at halftime to hand the Norse their 17th, and final consecutive defeat in WMC competition 82-67. The Tigers shot better than 60 percent in the first half to hold off any thoughts of a NM comeback. Cam Balash led NM in scoring with 18 with Joel Johnson close behind with 17.

One would have to go back to late February of 1989 to see North Muskegon win a basketball game in the West Michigan Conference. The 17-game losing streak came to an end and in a big way as NM overwhelmed Hart 72-45 on the NM court, much to the delight of the NM pep band ‘Out of Bounds’, who entertained the fans throughout the contest. NM outscored Hart in every quarter to improve to 1-1 and escape the WMC cellar for the first time in three years. Cam Balash scored 18 and Zach Bauer 10 for the winners.

After playing but three games in the month of December, the Norsemen had a long three-week break between games. NM showed their rust following the holiday layoff by dropping a contest to Pentwater 54-50. The Norsemen scored but 16 points in the entire first half as they lost for a third consecutive season to Pentwater. NM mounted a second half comeback that had them take a brief lead in the second half only to see Pentwater close out the contest on a 12-2 run. Cam Balash led NM with 15 with Joel Johnson adding 12 points and six steals. Dan DeLong was held to two points before fouling out in the final quarter.

NM quickly shook off their rust in their next game as they scored 89 points in a win over Ravenna to improve their season record to 3-2. NM applied the pressure early on the Bulldogs and created 25 turnovers. Joel Johnson and Cam Balash each scored 20 points for the visiting Norsemen while Pat Kitchka added 17.

NM then continued their winning ways with a commanding 83-54 win over their favorite whipping boys over the years. The victory over Calvary Baptist would be one of the ten wins in the series without NM tasting defeat, their only opponent over the years in a 10 or more-game series where they never lost to an opponent. Joel Johnson led the Norsemen with 15 points with Matt Steigelman netting 13 and Nate Gates 10.

Whitehall broke open a one-point game at halftime by going on a 19-7 run in the third quarter to edge NM 59-53. Cam Balsh led NM with 14 points while Matt Steilgelman took control of the rebounds with 16. Joel Johnson, Zack Bauer and Dan DeLong all had nine points for the Norsemen who were now even in the WMC at 2-2 while Whitehall now shares first place with Shelby at 4-1.

NM won a 60-58 thriller over Montague, one of only three wins for NM over Montague during the 1990s. The game was tight all the way as NM got a huge game from little Joel Johnson who pumped in 21 points with 12 of his markers coming on three-point shots. His running mate at guard Cam Balash, a model of consistency over the years, backed up Johnson with 15 points.

After a couple of very lean years, it was a rarity when the Norsemen could enjoy a blow-out victory over an opponent. Such was the case when NM throttled Holton 80-50. Joel Johnson and Dan DeLong each netted 17 for NM with Cam Balash scoring an even 10 as NM improved to 6-3 on the season. Eleven Norsemen scored in the contest.

It was back to earth for NM as their nemesis of the 1990s, Oakridge, lowered the boom on the Norse in their next outing with a 79-58 thumping of NM. It wasn’t that Oakridge was beating up on their other foes as the Eagles had a worse record than NM. Dirk Herzog came off the bench for NM and scored a season high12 points for the visiting Norsemen, equaling Cam Balash for game high honors.

The score was 36-17 at halftime as NM coasted to a commanding 76-40 win over an outmanned Walkerville team. After losing to Walkerville the previous season, NM would play the Wildcats nine more times in the 1990s, and they would win them all. Ten Norsemen entered the scoring column with Cam Balash leading the way with 14 while Joel Johnson and Dirk Hezog each had 12 points.

NM hung around for a while but a big third quarter by Shelby when they went 20 points up on the Norse was more than a NM comeback could handle as the 1992 WMC champs won for the second time on the season over NM 74-61. Joel Johnson led NM with 15 points to keep NM in the game. Cam Balash netted 10 and Zack Bauer followed with 9.

NM broke open a close game against Hesperia with a 20-8 run in the fourth quarter to win going away 65-55. Cam Balash led NM with 15, while Matt Steigelman, who terrorized Hesperia running backs in late November in the Fall, added 11 points and Joel Johnson 10.

North Muskegon’s 79-73 victory at Hart would be the highwater mark for Norsemen basketball for the 1991-92 season. The win gave NM a 9-5 record but unfortunately, there would be only one more win for NM, none in the final six games of the regular season. NM had great balanced scoring in their second win on the season over Hart. Cam Balash had 18 with Joel Johnson and Matt Steigelman close behind with 17.

NM was amid losing 24 games in a row to Mason County, but they nearly stopped that streak early in the run as they lost by a single point 54-53 in a February game played in Scottville. NM went down to defeat in a cruel way. The Norse led by seven points entering the final quarter only to see the Spartan’s Dave Cronk sink two free throws with two seconds left to play to send the Norseman back to NM with a tough defeat. Joel Johnson continued his sparkling play for NM with 16 points, the only Norse player in double figures.

The Norsemen went stone cold in the final quarter, making only two field goals in the final quarter as NM only made 22 per cent of their shots in the second half to fall to Ravenna 69-50. Earlier in the season NM defeated Ravenna on the Bulldogs home court by 22 points. Cam Balash was the only NM player in double digits with 18 points as NM completed their second of a six-game slide.

The Norsemen only had one bad quarter in their 70-62 loss at Whitehall. It came in the opening quarter when the Vikings led by eight points at the end of the first quarter, the margin of victory in the game.

It was payback time for Montague. The Cats, evidently still steaming about their one-point loss to NM earlier in the season, caught fire in the second half to defeat the Norse 86-61. One player that wasn’t stopped by the Wildcats was NM’s scrappy point guard Joel Johnson. The 5’8 Johnson, who tallied 21 points against the ‘Cats’ in the first game scored 19 in the second. However, Montague’s second half run of 45-27 easily handed NM their fourth straight loss, all against WMC opponents. Nate Gates followed Johnson in scoring with 13 while Cam Balash netted 10 markers.

Four Norsemen reached double figures, but NM dropped their second game to Mason County Central 73-62. NM barely lost to the Spartans a couple of weeks earlier in Scottville so NM was disappointed that they might attain a split of the season series with a win on their home court. Leading the balanced NM offensive attack was junior Cam Balash with 16. Close behind Balash were a trio of seniors; Zach Bauer (15), Joel Johnson (13) and Nate Gates (10).

NM carried a six-point lead heading into the final quarter of their final game of the regular season with Oakridge but couldn’t withstand a fourth quarter Eagle resurrection and dropped a tight game 70-68. The loss spoiled a great game from NM’s Joel Johnson who set a school record with seven made three-pointers. Johnson’s 27 points were the most scored in a single game by a Norsemen for the season. NM finished the WMC season with a 4-10 record while Oakridge was an even 7-7. There will be a lot of pressure from Oakridge fans on the Eagle head coach next season as Oakridge JVs finished a perfect 20-0.

Class D district play was hosted by West Michigan Christian and both WMC and NM were heavily favored to win their opening games and that held true. NM easily defeated Calvary Baptist for the second time in the season 94-62 while the Warriors easily downed Saugatuck setting up a district final between the two longtime rivals. Cam Balash had 24 against Calvary Baptist as NM was able to play all their reserves.

In the district finals the Norsemen had the misfortune to play one of the best teams in West Michigan Christian history. NM lost to WMC 80-62 who would breeze to the Class D state championship at MSU two weeks later. Cam Balash scored 20 for the Norse while Joel Johnson ended his fine senior season and career with 13 points.

Joel Johnson and Cam Balash ended the season with the exact number of points: 313 for an average of 14.2 per game. The West Michigan Conference announced its all-league basketball team, and Joe Johnson was the only Norsemen selected to the first team. Coach Wieman would step down as the Norse head coach and would be replaced by Mark DeLap.

N Muskegon 53 Newaygo (ot) 50 Dan DeLong 10, Cam Balash 10

N Muskegon 67 Shelby 82 Balash 18, Joel Johnson 17, DeLong 11

N Muskegon 71 Hart 45 Balash 18, Zak Bauer 10, Nates Gates 9

N Muskegon 50 Pentwater 54 Balash 15, Johnson 12

N Muskegon 89 Ravenna 67 Johnson 20, Balash 20, Pat Kitchka 17

N Muskegon 83 Calvary Baptist 54 Johnson 15, Matt Steigelman 13, Gates 10

N Muskegon 53 Whitehall 59 Balash 14, Johnson, Bauer & DeLong 9

N Muskegon 60 Montague 58 Johnson 21, Balash 15

N Muskegon 80 Holton 50 Johnson and DeLong 17, Balash 10, WIN 500

N Muskegon 58 Oakridge 79 Dirk Herzog 12, Balash 12, Johnson 10

N Muskegon 76 Walkerville 40 Balash 14, Johnson & Herzog 12

N Muskegon 61 Shelby 74 Johnson 15, Balash 10, Bauer 9

N Muskegon 65 Hesperia 55 Balash 15, Steigelman 11, Johnson 10

N Muskegon 79 Hart 73 Balash 18, Johnson & Steigelman 17

N Muskegon 53 Mason Co 54 Johnson 16, Balash 9

N Muskegon 50 Ravenna 69 Balash 18, Johnson 8, Matt Ertzinger 8

N Muskegon 62 Whitehall 70 Johnson 18, Gates 13, Balash 12

N Muskegon 61 Montague 86 Johnson 19, Gates 13, Balash 10

N Muskegon 62 Mason Co 73 Balash 16, Bauer 15, Johnson 13

N Muskegon 68 Oakridge 70 Johnson 27, Gates 9, Balash 8

N Muskegon\*94 Calvary Baptist 62 Balash 24, Bauer 17, Johnson 8

N Muskegon\*62 WMC 80 Balash 20, Johnson 13 Ertzinger 10

**1992-93 (Coach Mark DeLap 10-12, Whitehall WMC champs)**

Mark DeLap, a basketball ‘junkie,’ if there is such a person, would describe NM’s new head coach. DeLaps’ resume for a basketball coach would have him coaching teams, players, and camps from California to New York. A Wisconsin native, DeLap came to NM after a two-year stint at tiny Bellevue, Michigan High School, one of his many stops during a long coaching career in basketball. DeLap also was an author and his book, *A Warriors Heart*, would, of course, be about basketball. There would be no need for a shot clock during the DeLap era at NMHS as NM for the most part would be a ‘run-and-gun’ team. The Norse team, however, was a model of inconsistency. Often during the 1992-93 season and beyond in the DeLap regime, NM would put up huge numbers in one game and small numbers in the next contest, one of the reasons for NM’s 10-12 record. The Norsemen would put up some big numbers on many of their lesser and smaller opponents but would struggle against their rivals in the WMC.

The 1992-93 season will feature the young and the old. The old would-be four-year starter Cam Balash and the young would-be sophomore Leigh Kakaty who would quickly make his presence known in NM’s opening game 69-62 victory over Newaygo. Kakaty hit a 3-pointer with 1:30 remaining to break a 60-60 tie and sealed the deal by hitting four free throws in the final 20 seconds. The veteran Balash led NM in scoring with 17 points, followed by Kakaty with 15, and Bobby Walters with 11.

Game number two would begin a roller coaster sort of ride for the Norse as they would get thumped by Oakridge 81-48. The Norse, after leading the Eagles 20-15 would then get scorched by Oakridge in the next two quarters by a margin of 46-13 to make the final score show a commanding 81-48 Oakridge win. Cam Balash was easily the leading scorer for NM with 19 with Bobby Walters next in line with eight.

In a report posted in NM’s 58-34 victory over an outmanned Calvary Baptist team, the story said NM amassed 43 steals on the night. If true (and most likely a typo) that just might have been a world record. Chris Benedict led the host Norsemen with 17 points and nine rebounds and seven steals. Steals given to NM players included nine by David Cleveland, and eight by Jason Peterman and Nick Bolema. Your author has always been skeptical of some of the statistics credited to NM players during the DeLap era, but it would be hard to dismiss the scoring totals. Joe Grimm scored 16 points as coach DeLap showed mercy with Calvary Baptist as he played neither of his two big guns Cam Balash or Leigh Kakaty in the game.

During much of the Mark DeLap era NM was a run and gun team with a high tempo offense. However, NM slowed the tempo down to a crawl in their game with Shelby and it paid off in a 44-31 win over the Tigers. It was a victory that NM would have to savor as it was the only win from 1989 to 2000 over the Tigers during a stretch of 21 games. Cam Balash had 14 points to lead the Norse followed by Bobby Walters with nine.

The Norse only scored 41 points, but it was enough to defeat Pentwater 41-37 in the first game back from the Holidays. The Norse survived a poor third quarter when they were outscored 13-3 by the host Falcons. Cam Balash had 14 points to pace the Norse offense with Bobby Walters adding 11.

The Norse then had their lowest scoring output of the season as they resumed competition in the WMC. NM tallied a low total of 39 in losing to Hart 52-39. NM trailed by only two at halftime but had a miserable third quarter when they scored but two points. Pat Kitchka had a season high 15 for the Norse.

There are four high schools in Oceana County and NM played all four in succession, winning against the Class D schools (Pentwater & Walkerville) and losing to the Class C teams (Shelby & Hart). NM abandoned their slow tempo offense against lowly Walkerville as they outscored the Wildcats in a high scoring contest 86-80. Two Norsemen joined the 30-point club in the same game with Walkerville as Leigh Kakaty finished with 35 points and Matt Ertzinger, whose previous career high was 10 points, had a night to remember with 31.

In a season of high and lows, it was low for NM in their next outing as they were ambushed by Mason County Central by 52 points in a 98-46 beating in Scottville. This game was over quickly as the 7-1 Spartans raced to a 25-4 first quarter lead and never looked back. Cam Balash tallied 12 points for the losing Norsemen.

It was then back to the high in this topsy-turvy season. NM scored 103 points, their highest point total in 22 years in a 103-73 rout of Ravenna. It was Cam Balash’s turn to join the 30-point club except he settled for a much higher level as he scored 44 points, a NM total second only to Gordy Odell’s school record of 53 points 38 years earlier. Three other Norsemen were in double figures for the Norse against the winless Bulldogs: Leigh Kakaty with 16, Pat Kitchka 14 and sophomore Mike Boyle with 11.

NM would then continue their struggle against teams with a winning record as they scored less than half their total points against a weak Ravenna team in a 58-46 loss to Whitehall. Cam Balash totaled 24 points in a losing cause with Mike Boyle chipping in 12 for NM.

Mike Boyle had a nice all-around game for NM in a 70-51 loss to Montague. The 3-sport standout tallied 15 points, four assists and four steals but it was not enough to derail the Wildcats. After a close first quarter, Montague blew the game open with a 22-6 run over NM in the second quarter. Boyle’s 15 points led the Norse followed by Cam Balash with 10.

The Norse had one bad quarter, and it was a dandy as Oakridge overcame a second quarter deficit of 15 points by piling up 28 points to NM’s eight in the third quarter to earn a 59-53 win over NM. Cam Balash led NM with 12 points followed by 10 points by Bob Walters.

NM’s struggles against competition in the WMC continued as Shelby defeated NM 58-46 to complete a season sweep over the Norsemen. The Tigers outscored NM by 11 points in the third period to pull away. With the win Shelby atoned for an earlier loss to NM when they were held to 31 points in a 44-31 loss to the Norse.

The Norsemen had two players score more than 20 points, but it wasn’t enough as Hart defeated NM 65-61. Sophomore Leigh Kakaty tallied 24 points and senior Cam Balash scored 20 but NM still fell to Hart 65-61. Matt Ertzinger grabbed 16 rebounds in the loss as NM fell to 2-8 in the WMC. It would prove to be a good year for Hart as they would go on to win their first district championship in 20 years.

The highlight in NM’s loss at home to Mason County Central was a milestone moment for Cam Balash. The four-year starter for NM scored 11 points to become the second Norsemen in school history to join the 1000-point club. On the negative side the Norsemen lost the game to the visiting Spartans 66-45 to lose their 7th game in a row, all against WMC opponents.

NM broke their losing streak with a non-league victory over Hesperia 65-60. The one-two combo of Cam Balash (25) & Leigh Kakaty (18) provided the firepower in the Norse victory, their 7th of the season.

NM needed a 17-9 edge in the fourth quarter to avert losing to a Ravenna team that was still seeking its first win of the season. NM prevailed 47-45 to earn their 3rd and final win of the season in the WMC while Ravenna fell to 0-15 and 0-11 in the conference. The game was quite a contrast to their first meeting when NM scored more than 100 points, more than double of their winning total in the second game of the series. Leigh Kakaty scored 16 points for the winning Norsemen.

The Norsemen had a favorable schedule in 1992-93 as for the second straight week they would be playing a team still seeking their first win of the season. NM had no trouble in disposing of Holton (0-15) with an 80-51 romp over the Red Devils. Leigh Kakaty and Cam Balash had 14 points and Pat Kitchka netted 11 for the Norsemen.

The Norse made Whitehall work hard for their 51-39 victory over the Norsemen as the regular season neared its end. NM led 24-22 at halftime and trailed by only two at 32-30 heading into the final quarter. Whitehall wins the game by hitting on eight straight free throws in the closing seconds to close out the win. Leigh Kakaty and Cam Balash shared scoring honors for the Norse, each with a dozen points.

Montague never took the lead over NM until 2:30 remained in the game as NM played Montague to the final buzzer before losing to the ‘Cats’ 65-61. Both Cam Balash and Bobby Walters scored 15 for NM as the regular season came to an end with NM standing with a 9-11 record with only three of those wins in the WMC.

In the only meeting ever between the two schools NM advanced to the Class D district final following a dominating 85-32 victory over White Lake Christian. The score at halftime saw NM in command at 45-15 as coach DeLap was able to use his entire bench in the second half. Leigh Kakaty had 20, Pat Kitchka 17 and Cam Balash 12 as NM was headed to the district finals to play the defending state champs of West Michigan Christian.

The Class D district was held in Saugatuck in 1993 with the Norsemen surprising the defending state champs by leading at halftime 27-24. NM slowed the tempo down in the first half as veteran Hall of Fame coach Jim Goorman slapped on a full court defensive pressure defense to begin the second half on NM that not only speeded up the tempo but moved the game in the Warriors favor. WMC pulled ahead of the Norse in the third period and went on to a final 71-55 victory. WMC would advance all the way to the state championship held at the Palace in Auburn Hills before losing. Bobby Walters would lead the Norse in scoring with 17 as WMC held NM’s top scoring duo of Cam Balash (12) and Leigh Kakaty (7) well below their average.

Cam Balash would be the second Norsemen to surpass 1000 points for his career with 1101 points. Balash tallied 309 points for the season followed by Leigh Kakata with 240. Kakaty would shortly join Baty and Balash in the exclusive club.

N Muskegon 69 Newaygo 62 Cam Balash 17, Leigh Kakaty,

N Muskegon 48 Oakridge 81 Balash 19, Bobby Walter 8,

N Muskegon 58 Calvary Baptist 34 Chris Benedict 17, Joe Grimm 16

N Muskegon 44 Shelby 31 Balash 14, Walters 9, Kakaty 8

N Muskegon 41 Pentwater 37 Balash 14, Walters 11, Kakaty 8

N Muskegon 39 Hart 52 Pat Kitchka 15, Walterss 9

N Muskegon 86 Walkerville 80 Kakaty 35, Matt Erzinger 31

N Muskegon 46 Mason Co 98 Balash 12. Walters 10

N Muskegon 103 Ravenna 73 Balash 44, Kakaty 16, Kitchka 14

N Muskegon 46 Whitehall 58 Balash 24, Mike Boyle 12, Kakaty 6

N Muskegon 51 Montague 70 Mike Boyle 15, Balash 10

N Muskegon 53 Oakridge 59 Balash 12, Walter 10

N Muskegon 46 Shelby 58 Balash 11, Kirchka 10

N Muskegon 61 Hart 65 Kakaty 24, Balash 20

N Muskegon 45 Mason Co 66 Balash 11, Kakaty & Kitchka 10

N Muskegon 65 Hesperia 60 Balash 25, Kakaty 18

N Muskegon 47 Ravenna 45 Kakaty 16, Nick Bolema 9, Balash 4

N Muskegon 80 Holton 51 Balash 14, Kakaty 14, Kitchka 11

N Muskegon 39 Whitehall 51 Balash & Kakaty 12

N Muskegon 61 Montague 65 Balash & Walters 15

N Muskegon\*85 White Lake C. 32 Kakaty 20, Kitchka 17, Balash 12

N Muskegon\*55 WMC 71 Walters 17, Balash 12

**1993-94 (Coach Mark DeLap 10-12, Oakridge WMC champs)**

The Norsemen would compile for the third straight season a 10-12 record with six of their wins coming against non-conference opponents. Leigh Kakaty would be the only starter returning from the previous season although Mike Boyle did see a lot of action.

Both Newaygo and North Muskegon only returned one starter from the previous year in the opening game of the season. Newaygo returned sophomore Mike Burde, a future Muskegon Area Hall of Fame top athlete award winner, and the Norsemen returned junior Leigh Kakaty. The opening game could not have gone better for the host Lions, nor could it have gone worse for the Norse has they experienced their most lop-sided defeat of the entire season with Newaygo blowing out NM 93-35. Burde scored 20 points for Newaygo while Kakaty led NM with 11 points.

Oakridge won their 12th straight game over the Norse as scoring points continued to be a big problem for NM. The Eagles outscored the Norse in every quarter in posting an easy 59-40 win. First year starter Isaac Wendt led NM with 11 points and 11 rebounds. Leigh Kakaty finished with 10 points, his lowest scoring total in a single game all season.

NM recorded their first win with a 57-30 victory over Calvary Baptist. Leigh Kakaty led the rout with 19 points with Mike Boyle tossing in nine to lead NM. The victory would be the seventh of 10 straight wins in the series with Calvary Baptist without NM tasting a defeat. So futile was Calvary’s offense that they had only scored 16 points heading into the final quarter.

Leigh Kakaty was a one-man gang for NM in their 60-42 loss to Shelby. The 5’10 junior guard scored 31 of NM’s 43 points as only three other Norse players were able to score. The Norsemen were able to only score 13 points in the first half.

NM scored their second victory of the season following the Holiday break, with both wins coming at the expense of Class D Opponents with the first victory a 66-45 win over Pentwater. Kakaty had 26 points followed by Mike Boyle with 11 as eight Norsemen scored in the game, four more than scored in their last outing with Shelby. The Norsemen put away Pentwater early by taking a commanding 39-16 lead at halftime.

Hart overcame a two-point deficit going into the fourth quarter as they rallied to defeat NM 52-46 on the Northside court. Leigh Kakaty with 26 scored more than half of NM’s points as NM fell to 0-2 in the WMC.

Leigh Kakaty again had a big scoring night in their win over Walkerville. In the 71-63-win Kakaty got some scoring help from his teammates. Kakaty poured in 35 points and was helped in the scoring department from Isaac Wendt with 17 and Mike Boyle added 13 points as NM accrued their third victory of the season, all against Class D opponents. The Norse trio tallied all but six of NM’s 71 points.

Veteran head coach Tim Genson of Mason County Central was coaching in his first year for the Spartans and his team came away with a 72-61 road victory over the Norse. The game featured a shootout between MCC’s all state forward Jeremy Holmes and NM’s Leigh Kakaty. Holmes scored 35 points in leading the Spartans back from a one-point halftime deficit to a victory while Kakaty scored 24 for the Norsemen. Mike Boyle trailed Kakaty in scoring with 13 points while Kirk Jensen had his season high of nine points.

It was 57-18 in favor of Whitehall before NM scored 22 points in the final quarter to make the score look a little more representable in a 77-50 loss at home to Whitehall. Leigh Kakaty (25) and Mike Boyle (10) scored all but 15 points for NM as the Norsemen were still searching for their first West Michigan Conference victory.

The Norse kept it close in their loss to Montague in losing 71-63 at home to Montague. The difference in the game was at the free throw stripe as Montague netted 17 free throws to NM’s 10. Leigh Kakaty continued his torrid shooting with 25 points with Nick Bolema and Mike Boyle netting 8. Isaac Wendt was productive for the Norse with 12 rebounds.

North Muskegon led at halftime and was all knotted up with Shelby at 40-all heading into the final quarter only to see Shelby run away in the fourth quarter by out pointing NM 24-9 to win going away 64-49. For only the second time all season Leigh Kakaty wasn’t the leading scorer for the Norse as Isaac Wendt took high points honors with 15 points to Kakaty’s 13. Wendt also was a tower of strength on the boards with 14 rebounds.

NM won their first game in the West Michigan Conference as they defeated Hart 56-51. NM pulled off the victory despite Leigh Kakaty being held to well below his average of points scored in a game. It was Kakaty’s backcourt teammate Mike Boyle who scored a season high 18 points that paced NM scorers while Kakaty was content with the win and 11 points. After both teams were tied at halftime, NM outscored the host Pirates in the third quarter to take a 43-35 lead into the final quarter. Hart took a brief lead with two minutes left in the contest only to see NM make six straight free throws to upset the Pirates. Isaac Wendt was again a force on the boards with 13 rebounds while chipping in eight much-needed points. The win over Hart was the only victory on the season over a team with a winning record.

North Muskegon won their second straight game in Conference action with a 74-52 win over a Ravenna team that was still looking for its first win in the WMC in two seasons. Leigh Kakaty led NM with 27 points but got plenty of help from his teammates. Isaac Wendt had 16 points while Mike Boyle tallied 10 and Nick Bolema 8 as NM improved to 5-8 overall and 2-7 in the WMC.

NM took a brief lead in the second quarter only to see the host Spartans of Mason County go on a 14-3 run to take a 38-26 lead at halftime. That momentum carried MCC to a 73-50 victory over NM despite a season high for Norse center Isaac Wendt who scored 19 points while pulling down nine rebounds in a losing cause.

NM got back on the winning track with a 77-70 victory over Hesperia with four players in double figures for NM, a first during the season. NM led at the end of every stop as they recorded their highest scoring output of the season. Leigh Kakaty paced the Norse balanced attack with 19 points, with Nick Bolema and Isaac Wendt each tossing in 12 markers and Mike Boyle 10. Dan Wegner and Kirk Jensen each came a field goal away from also getting into double figures with eight points.

After one quarter was in the books and with NM holding an 18-4 lead, there remained little doubt who was going to win the game as NM pummeled Ravenna 79-44. Kakaty led the onslaught with 27 points with Isaac Wendt adding 18. NM baseball ace Justin Visconti added eight as Ravenna remained buried deep in the WMC cellar.

Oakridge showed why they were the WMC champions in 1994 with an 83-54 thumping of the Norse. Isaac Wendt had 14 Leigh Kakaty 12 and Matt Boyle 10. Not to be discouraged NM would recover to start a mini winning streak.

The Norse won a non-league contest with Holton 52-45 as Issac Wendt had a big day for the winners. Wendt scored 11 of his 16 points in the third quarter as NM came from behind to roll past Holton. Wendt also gobbled up 15 rebounds. Leigh Kakaty connected for 21 points to lead NM scorers.

It was then that NM pulled off a stunner. After losing earlier in the season to Whitehall by 27 points – on their home court – NM pulled off a 69-63 win over the Vikings at the Whitehall gym that yielded rare victories to the Norsemen over the years. It’s doubtful if a NM team in the many games played over the years shot better than NM did in their win over Whitehall. The Norse shot 77 per cent from the field in the opening quarter and stayed hot for most of the game. Especially on fire was junior guard Leigh Kakaty who tossed in 39 points that included six three-pointers. Isaac Wendt scored 10 points for the winners while Nick Bolema added seven points as well as six assists. The win would prove to be the only win by the Norse over Whitehall during the entire 1990s with Whitehall winning 20 of 21 games.

NM came close to pulling off their second upset in as many games but a furious fourth quarter rally fell just short as Montague held on to nip the Norse 60-58 in the final game of the regular season. Nick Bolema, and Mike Boyle keyed the fourth quarter NM rally. Bolema scored six of his seasons high 12 points and Boyle nine of his 11 points in the fourth quarter. It forced Montague’s Lief Ortquist to hit two free throws in the game’s final seconds to win the game for Montague. Kakaty had a game high 17 points as NM finished the regular season with a 9-11 overall record for the third year in a row.

NM drew a winless Saugatuck team in the opening round of the Class D playoffs and had little trouble in breezing to a 69-50 victory. Leigh Kakaty scored 26 points as the Norse had their eyes set on finally getting a tournament win over a West Michigan Christian team that had a rare losing season. However, WMC is WMC and played a much tougher regular season schedule than the Norse. NM won 5 games against teams who had a combined record of 8-96. And that doesn’t include the record of Calvary Baptist who had an unknown record but lost by more than 50 points to WMC in the first game of the playoffs. NM had high hopes of defeating the Warriors and winning their first district title in 20 years. Both teams came into the contest on the Warriors home court with identical 10-11 records. A full house was on hand at the home of the Warriors, and it turned out it was no contest as WMC stunned the Norse 95-63. So balanced was this Warriors team that their high point man only scored 14 of his teams 95 points. Meanwhile NM only had four players score, with three of those Norsemen; Lee Kakaty (27), Mike Boyle (16) and Isaac Wendt (14) scored all but six of NM’s total of 63 points. NM’s season would end at 10-12.

N Muskegon 35 Newaygo 93 Kakata 11

N Muskegon 40 Oakridge 59 Isaac Wendt 11, Kakaty 10

N Muskegon 57 Calvary Baptist 30 Kakaty 19, Mike Boyle 9

N Muskegon 43 Shelby 60 Kakaty 31, Boyle 5, Wendt 5

N Muskegon 66 Pentwater 45 Kakaty 26, Boyle 11

N Muskegon 46 Hart 52 Kakaty 28, Boyle 8

N Muskegon 71 Walkerville 63 Kakaty 35, Wendt 17, Boyle 13

N Muskegon 61 Mason Co 72 Kakaty 24, Boyle 13, Kirk Jensen 9

N Muskegon 50 Whitehall 77 Kakaty 25, Boyle 10

N Muskegon 63 Montague 71 Kataty 25, Nick Bolema 8, Boyle 8

N Muskegon 49 Shelby 64 Wendt 15, Kakaty 12, Boyle 9

N Muskegon 56 Hart 51 Boyle 18, Kakaty 11, Bolema 9

N Muskegon 74 Ravenna 52 Kakaty 27, Wendt 16, Boyle 10

N Muskegon 50 Mason Co 73 Wendt 19, Kakaty 13

N Muskegon 77 Hesperia 70 Kakaty 19, Wendt & Bolema 12

N Muskegon 79 Ravenna 44 Kakaty 27, Wendt 18, Justin Visconti 8

N Muskegon 54 Oakridge 83 Wendt 14, Kakaty 12, Boyle 10

N Muskegon 52 Holton 45 Kakaty 21, Wendt 16

N Muskegon 68 Whitehall 63 Kakaty 39, Wendt 10

N Muskegon 58 Montague 60 Kakaty 17, Bolema 12, Boyle 11

N Muskegon\*69 Saugatuck 50 Kakaty 26, Wendt 18

N Muskegon\*63 WMC 95 Kakaty 27, Boyle 16, Wendt 14

**1994-95 (Coach Mark DeLap 6-15, Whitehall WMC champs)**

The Norsemen would have quite an entertaining year in the 1995-95 season that included some historical scoring feats by 5’10 senior guard Leigh Kakaty. Also returning for NM would be point guard Michael Boyle, a three-sport standout who was third in scoring and the assist leader from the previous 10-12 season. However, the return of those two standouts didn’t transcend into a winning record as NM would win only six games while dropping 15. Four of those wins came against Class D opponents with only one win coming in the West Michigan Conference as NM finished in the cellar. One positive among the negative was NM was much more competitive in their losses as compared to the previous season as there were only a handful of games where NM was badly outplayed. NM was basically a two-man show during the season as no Norse player outside of Kakaty and Boyle would average more than six points per game.

To validate NM’s competitiveness, even in a loss one could look as early as their opening game with Newaygo. The Lions embarrassed the Norsemen in December of 1993 by whipping NM by 58 points. That didn’t happen 12 months later as NM lost by only five points, 85-80 to Newaygo. Leigh Kakaty scored 34 points, one of 13 games during the season in which he would surpass the 30-point barrier in the loss. The Norse carried a five-point lead entering the final quarter, but the Lions roared back in the final eight minutes with a 28-18 edge over NM to earn the victory. Mike Burde led the Lions with 26 while future star bartender at the world-famous Bear Lake Tavern, Matt Shephard netted 20 points. With the score tied at 78-78 Shephard scored six of his 20 points in the game’s final two minutes. Shephard would have the rare feat of playing college basketball at all four levels: JUCO at MCC, D3 at Hope and D2 at IU at Fort Wayne and D1 at Fort Wayne when they advanced to the D 1 level. Shephard, however, had to take a back seat in the Shephard family in the most famous department as his current spouse Stacy Essenbarger, was a former Miss Michigan. Justin Visconti had a season and career high 14 points for NM while Michael Boyle added 12.

Montague made 15-of-17 free throws in the final half to preserve their 44-31 halftime lead as NM loses 83-71 to the Wildcats. Kakaty had 31 points and Boyle 21 to lead NM. Matt Gueldenzoph had 11 points for the Norsemen, his career and season best output for the Norse.

NM’s Leigh Kakaty set a new NM single game scoring record with 54 points as NM nipped Baldwin 85-82 on the northside court. The record eclipsed by one point the former record held by my next-door neighbor Gordy Odell back in 1955. However, should there be an asterisk to this record? Six of Kakaty’s points came on six made three-point field goals. The three-point shot wasn’t in existence in 1955. If not for the new rule, Kakaty would have finished with 48 under the rules from 1955. NM trailed 56-45 to Baldwin in a high scoring first half but went on a key 13-2 run in the third quarter to get back into the contest. Baldwin grabbed an 82-80 lead before Mike Boyle, who finished with 13 points and a reported 15 assists, answered with a driving layup. Kakaty and his mates then added the game’s final three points to preserve the Norse victory. It wasn’t all Kakaty and Boyle in the fourth quarter as Bill Franks added three big points in the final period and Dan Wegner added four of his eight points in the final quarter. To say that NM had a generous statistician in the 1994-95 season might be an understatement. The 6’2 Wegner was reported to have grabbed a game high 20-rebounds in the victory.

Leigh Kakaty was ‘held’ to 25 points as NM was sent back to reality as NM lost to Oakridge 80-48. The NM scoring machine got off to a good start by scoring 12 of his 25 points but then suffered a cold spell. Kakaty made but three of a whopping 27 shots the rest of the way. The Norsemen committed 35 fouls in the contest that resulted in the Eagles making 37 free throws. Mike Boyle added 10 points for NM as the Norse would go into 1995 with a 1-3 record.

NM got a jump start in their road game at Pentwater by gaining a 29-14 advantage over Pentwater enroute to a 87-66 victory. Leigh Kakaty regained his shooting eye by scoring 33 points to lead the Norse while Michael Boyle scored 15 and Justin Visconti 12 for NM.

The NM duo of Kakaty and Boyle scored all but 11 of NM’s total of 64 points in a 76-64 loss to Shelby. Kakaty scored 18 of his 41 points in the fourth as NM tried to come back from a 13-point hole accrued in the opening quarter.

NM continued to dominate Class D opponents as they hammered Walkerville 104-91 in a high scoring run-and-gun shootout. Leigh Kakaty led five Norsemen that reached double figures with 35 points. Michael Boyle scored a season high 25, Dan Wegner added 11 while both Justin Visconti and Billy Frank chipped in with 10 as NM improved to 3-4 on the season. Unfortunately for NM fans, that would be the highwater mark of the entire campaign.

Hart’s Chris Terryn was fouled with under a half-second to play in overtime and sank the front end of a one-and-one free throw to defeat NM 71-70. The loss put a damper on Leigh Kakaty joining the 1000-point club as his 32 points improved his career total to 1014 points. Mike Boyle added 16 for the Norse. Scoring 16 points for the victorious Pirates was Steve Cutter who was best noted for his baseball skills. Cutter, the current head coach of Lansing Community College coached the Norsemen in baseball beginning in 2019 where he would have incredible success with the Norse before moving on to the collegiate ranks.

The Norsemen were still looking for their first win in WMC action after dropping an 81-70 contest at Scottville to Mason County Central. Kakaty scored 24 while Justin Visconti scored 15 of his 16 points on five made three-pointers.

The Norsemen had one bad quarter, and that proved to be fatal as Ravenna’s 25-11 second quarter proved to be the difference in NM’s 75-63 loss to the visiting Bulldogs. It was a battle to see who could escape the cellar and for Ravenna, they not only escaped last place in the standings, but it was Ravenna’s first win in the WMC in four years. Leigh Kakaty’s 25 points led NM while Billy Franks had a season high 16 for NM as their record fell to 3-7.

NM tallied only 36 points in a 59-34 loss at Whitehall. Kakaty had 20 points to lead the Norsemen, but no other NM player scored more than three points. The Vikings settled this contest early when they outscored the Norsemen 18-4 in the second quarter. Whitehall stayed perfect on the season with the victory, one game ahead of Shelby in the WMC.

In a game labled as being ‘sluggish,’ Montague posted a 47-36 win over the Norsemen. Leigh Kakaty scored a season low 16 points, but it was enough to lead NM in scoring, the only Norse player in double figures.

Oakridge continued their magic spell on the Norsemen with a businesslike 72-48 win to complete another series sweep of the Norsemen. Leigh Kakaty had a 31-point game for NM, the only Norsemen in double figures.

Shelby improved to 13-1 on the season with an 83-63 win over NM. It’s not often during the year that Leigh Kakaty wasn’t the game’s leading scorer but that was the case as Shelby’s 6’7 Chris Vanderslice scored 37 points while Kakaty totaled 33. Michael Boyle finished with 16 as NM remained winless in the WMC at 0-10.

The Norse trailed Hesperia 51- 46 at halftime in a shooting match on the Northside court before they turned on the defense in the second half to zoom by the Panthers 90-75. The 1-2 combo of Kakaty and Boyle were clicking as they combined to score 52 points between them while also getting help from Justin Visconti who chipped in with 13 markers. The win snapped a six-game losing streak for NM. All four NM wins came against non-conference foes.

A second quarter spurt by Mason County Central led to another WMC defeat as the Spartans topped the Norsemen 72-65. The visitors from Scottville poured in 23 points to NM’s nine in the pivotal second quarter. Leigh Kakaty again hit the 30-point mark with Michael Boyle supplying the assists to his running mate while also tossing in 15 points.

NM continued their dominance against Class D opponents (WMC excepted) as they used another sizzling scoring night by Leigh Kakaty to defeat Holton 69-58. Kakaty scored more than half of NM’s points with 38 markers to lead NM to their fifth win of the season, all against Class D foes.

It was victory at last in the West Michigan Conference as NM earned a 10-point 66-56 win over the Ravenna Bulldogs. NM used a big 22-9 fourth quarter to make amends for an earlier defeat to the Bulldogs. Leigh Kakaty led NM with 26 while Michael Boyle added 18 for the Norse who would earn their sixth and final win on the season.

Steve Cutter made NM fans proud during his terrific tenure as the Norse baseball coach from 2019-21. He did not make Norse fans happy in the second matchup of the 1994-95 basketball season when Cutter scored 30 points, 14 in the third period as Hart defeated the Norse 75-53. Cutter further added to the Norse troubles when he grabbed 20 rebounds. Cutter nearly doubled the total of NM’s scoring machine Leigh Kakaty who led NM with 17 points.

Whitehall won their last regular season game on the season 75-60 over the Norsemen to clinch the West Michigan Conference Championship. Future Division 1 head basketball coach Tony Jasick led the Vikings with 28 points. Leigh Kakaty led all scorers with 36 of NM’s 60 points.

NM and West Michigan Christian would meet in the playoffs for the fourth consecutive year and the second straight season that they would both have identical records (6-14). Five of NM’s six win came against Class D opponents while WMC faced mostly Class C & B teams. That tournament experience and depth played a factor as WMC wore down the Norse to come away with another tournament victory over NM, 73-66 in a game that was much closer than the final score. NM, behind Leigh Kakaty’s 20 first half points on 8 of 11 shooting sent the Norse into their own locker room at intermission leading 41-32. The Warriors took little time in bouncing back with a 25-14 run in the third quarter to take a two-point lead into the final quarter. Leading by two and with the ball, NM had a pass intended for Kakaty intercepted by the Warriors JJ Luchies that extended the lead to four and iced the game.

Leigh Kakaty, in addition to setting a single game scoring record set nearly 40 years earlier by Gordy Odell, joined Odell as one of only two Norsemen to average more than 30 points per game in a season. Kakaty was a top 10 candidate for Mr. Basketball honors in 1995. Incredulously, NM’s scoring whiz did not earn the respect of the coaches in the West Michigan Conference and was not selected to the WMC all-conference team. When no offers came for a possible career as a college basketball player Kakaty instead turned to pop-rock where he excelled in the music industry.

N Muskegon 80 Newaygo 85 Leigh Kakaty 34, Justin Visonti 14

N Muskegon 71 Montague 83 Kakaty 31, Boye 21 Matt Gueldenzoph 11

N Muskegon 85 Baldwin 82 Kakaty 54, Boyle 13, Dan Wegner 8

N Muskegon 48 Oakridge 80 Kakaty 25, Boyle 10

N Muskegon 87 Pentwater 66 Kakaty 33, Boyle 15, Visconti 12

N Muskegon 64 Shelby 76 Kakaty 41, Boyle 12

N Muskegon 104 Walkerville 91 Kakaty 35, Boyle 25, Wegner 11

N Muskegon 70 Hart (ot) 71 Kakaty 32, Boyle 16, Bill Franks 9

N Muskegon 70 Mason Co 81 Kakaty 24, Visconti 16, Boyle 14

N Muskegon 63 Ravenna 75 Kakaty 25, Franks 14, Boyle 12

N Muskegon 34 Whitehall 59 Kakaty 20

N Muskegon 36 Montague 47 Kakaty 16, Wegner 8

N Muskegon 48 Oakridge 72 Kakaty 31

N Muskegon 63 Shelby 83 Kakaty 33, Boyle 15

N Muskegon 90 Hesperia 75 Kakaty 27, Boyle 25

N Muskegon 62 Mason Co 75 Kakaty 30, Boyle 15

N Muskegon 69 Holton 58 Kakaty 38, Visconti 12

N Muskegon 66 Ravenna 56 Kakaty 26, Boyle 18

N Muskegon 53 Hart 75 Kakaty 17, Visconti 11, Boyle 10

N Muskegon 60 Whitehall 75 Kakaty 36, Wegner 10

N Muskegon\*66 WMC 73 Kakaty 31, Wegner 10

**1995-96 (Coach Mark DeLap 9-14, Shelby WMC champs)**

What a difference a year makes! In the 1994-95 season Leigh Kakaty had 13 games scoring more than 30 points and several more over 20 as North Muskegon won only six games. In this, the 1995-96 season, NM never had one player score 20 points in any game, yet NM won nine games, three more than the previous season. It would be almost a complete retooling of personnel for the upcoming season as only Bill Franks and Dan Wegner saw quality playing time. It would also mark the final season for Mark DeLap as the Norsemen head coach. Waiting in the wings would be a Norse icon who would lead NM back to basketball prominence with a familiar last name known to all in North Muskegon athletic lore. The Norse earned their nine wins despite averaging a mere 47 points per game.

NM’s final total of 30 points resembled a score out of the 1930s as NM was beaten soundly by Newaygo 73-30 in the season opener. NM had scoring balance in this game as nine players would score at least one point, but the high point man had only six points. One would have to go back to Coach Bob Morris’ first game as a NM coach in 1948 to find NM’s leading scorer (Monte Hand) to have less than six points in a game. John Westbrook was NM’s high point producer in the 1995-96 season opener with six points.

After absorbing a solid beating at the hands of a very good Newaygo team, NM was headed for an upset victory over Montague as they led 41-37 heading into the final quarter. That was not to be, however, as Montague stormed past NM to the tune of 28-14 to win going away 63-55. Jay Kakaty, young brother of Leigh, led a balanced NM offense with 12 points, with Park Kersman and Dan Wegner each adding 10 markers.

Oakridge continued to have NM in their hip pocket during the 1990s. Both teams were looking for their initial win of the season and the Eagles had no trouble in making the Norsemen their first victim, winning 64-42. Adams Sellinger pumped in 18 of his game high 31 points in the second half to lead the Eagle attack while Erik Langdon’s modest nine points led the Norse.

The Norse had a long three-week layoff for the Holidays to solve their shooting woes, but it would take NM more than one game for that to happen. Shelby held NM to 43 points, 17 of those points coming from Matt Wikander, while the Tigers scored 72 to hand the Norse their fourth straight setback 72-43.

It was the perfect time to have Walkerville to appear on the NM schedule, a team that would win only one time against North Muskegon in 12 games played over the years. NM scored 78 points, 15 more than they would score in any other game during the season as they had little trouble in their 78-52 win over the Wildcats. Jay Kakaty and Billy Franks each scored 19 points, equaling the high single game point total by a Norse player all season. Erik Langdon chipped in with 12 as the Norse win their first game of the season.

In a battle to see who would leave the cellar in the WMC, it was the Norsemen who would move up following a 58-40 win at home over the winless Hart Pirates. Jay Kakaty and Erik Langdon each had a dozen points while the Norse defense held the Pirates to only 40 points. NM led at the halftime break 34-18 and were never challenged the rest of the game.

Ravenna shot the lights out in the first half, hitting 17 of their first 28 shots to take a 20-point lead on the Norse at halftime. NM mounted a comeback but fell short as the Bulldogs held on to defeat NM 53-48. Matt Wikander had a big night for the Norse with 18 points and nine rebounds while Jay Kakaty finished with 15 and Bill Franks with 10.

Less than 24 hours after a tough loss to Ravenna NM simply ran out of gas in the final quarter in a 66-49 loss to Mason County. The Norse led 43-38 heading into the final quarter only to be blasted 26-6 in the fatal fourth quarter. Bill Franks and Jay Kakaty shared scoring honors for the Norse with 13 points while Dan Wegner pulled down 12 rebounds.

NM and Whitehall were engaged in a defensive struggle with the Vikings outlasting the Norse 39-35. Shooting woes were the rule for both teams as NM’s Erik Langdon was the only player for either team to make a 3-pointer. As opposed to their run & gun teams from his last two teams, Norse head coach Mark DeLap slowed the tempo down and it nearly resulted in a NM upset victory. Bill Franks had 11 points and nine rebounds while Matt Wikander tallied 10 points.

That slow it down tempo did work in NM’s next contest resulting in a tight 45-44 squeaker over Montague. It appeared after three quarters were in the books and NM leading 40-24, that this would be an easy victory. However, Montague threw a scare into the Norse by going on a 19-5 run as NM just hung on to earn the tough win. Matt Wikander led the winners with 13, closely followed by Jay Kakaty and Billy Franks with 11 as NM wins their second victory in the WMC.

The Norsemen again fell to Oakridge as NM went into another fourth quarter swoon, being outscored by the Eagles 23-7 leading to a 53-40 loss. Not a single NM player reached double figures with Matt Wikander’s nine points the closest. Dan Wegner was held scoreless but did grab 10 rebounds for the Norse.

Shelby ran their record to a perfect 15-0, 10-0 in the WMC, holding NM to their lowest offensive output since the first game of the season with a 53-31 victory on the Northside court. NM’s attempt to slow the game down did keep NM in the game, but only briefly as Shelby outscored NM in every quarter. Dan Wegner led NM with 10 points while Billy Franks grabbed 11 rebounds. Shelby impressed the pollsters as the Detroit Free Press ranked Shelby No. 1 in its class in the state.

A vastly improved Pentwater team invaded the home of the Norsemen and came away with a 41-38 win to improve the Falcons record to 9-4 while the Norse dropped to 3-10. A Bill Franks layup tied the score at 37-all with 5:31 still to be played in the game but the Norse were only able to record one point on a Matt Wikander free throw the rest of the game. Billy Franks had 13 points and Eric Langdon 9 to lead NM in another low scoring contest.

NM edged Hart by a single point, 54-53 to ensure that the Norsemen would not finish in the cellar of the WMC. After losing a couple of games in the fourth quarter earlier in the season it was NM’s turn for a last period comeback as they rallied to score 24 points to the Pirates 17 in the game’s final eight minutes to win their 3rd WMC victory and second win in the season over Hart 54-53. NM trailed by nine points with just under four minutes before their rally, led by Billy Franks who scored 10 of his game high 19 points in the final quarter, as rallied NM for the win.

NM again worked their fourth quarter magic to earn their second consecutive one point victory in less than a week with a 45-44 win over Hesperia. Jay Kakaty scored eight of his game high 18 points down the stretch to lead the Norse.

NM slowed the tempo down but Mason County Central, on the cusp of soon becoming a basketball power, had too much firepower in a 49-38 win over NMHS. The Spartans of Scottville improved to 13-3 on the season while NM fell to 5-11. Jay Kakaty led NM with 17 points while Matt Wikander had a dozen.

NM equaled last season’s total victories with a 53-46 triumph over Holton in a non-league contest. Bill Franks led the Norse with 17 while Eric Langdon netted 15 for the victorious Norsemen.

The Norse used another big fourth quarter to make amends for an earlier loss to Ravenna by using a 19-8 fourth quarter splurge to defeat the Bulldogs 48-38. The Norse had three in doubles figures: Bill Franks (12) Matt Wikander (11) and Dan Wegner (10) as NM topped last year’s team for wins in a season with their 7th win of the season. Meanwhile Ravenna was still stuck with only three wins.

In the first matchup between the two local teams in 33 years, back when North Muskegon was a Class B school and Muskegon Catholic Class A, The Crusaders defeated NM 68-45. It would mark the beginning of a series that would be played every year except one (2021) to the present day. The Crusaders cruised to a 20-point lead at halftime as NM had but one player in double figures, and barely, as Jay Kakaty tallied 10 points.

Whitehall finished their regular season in 3rd place in the WMC while NM settled for a 5th place tie with Montague following the Vikings 79-43 trouncing of the Norsemen. Whitehall’s defense forced 23 NM turnovers with Dan Wegner’s season high 16 points leading the Norsemen.

NM had a very favorable draw for the Class D tournament, opening with Saugatuck, a team winless two years earlier, and tiny Calvary Baptist, who was still looking for their first-ever win over the Norse. If there was any apprehension about playing their game with Saugatuck in Saugatuck that went away quickly as NM forged out to a big lead that at one point increased to 19 points late in the third quarter. The host Saugatuck squad then put on a rally that cut NM’s lead to five with two minutes to go before NM pulled away to earn a 63-56 first round victory. All five NM players who scored in the game reached double figures: Dan Wegner (14), Matt Wikander and Jay Kakaty (13), Erick Langdon (12) and Billy Franks (11).

Calvary Baptist threw a scare into the Norsemen as NM had to scratch and claw their way to a three-point victory 59-56, the closest Calvary would come to ever defeating NM in their 10-game series. For the second straight game in the tournament NM took a commanding lead into the final quarter only to see their opponent make a serious charge. NM led Calvary Baptist by 15 at the end of three quarters but had to withstand a 22-10 rally by the upstarts to earn a berth into the final against West Michigan Christian. NM need a career high 19 points from Eric Langdon to advance.

For the fifth straight year NM saw their season end with a 55-42 loss to West Michigan Christian. For the second straight season it was the third quarter that was the deciding quarter in the loss. NM trailed the Warriors by only two points at halftime. Just as he did a year ago, WMC’s hall of fame coach Jim Goorman put on a full court press to begin the second half, and it completely befuddled NM as they scored but two points in the entire third quarter. Matt WIkander with 12 and Billy Franks with 11 led NM as they ended the season at 9-14.

Mark DeLap would leave after four years and would be replaced by a former North Muskegon grad who would in a short period of time develop some outstanding teams and players during his long career. Jeff Cooke would be one of 15 coaches to guide North Muskegon basketball over the many years, but he would be the only coach who was also a North Muskegon grad.

N Muskegon 30 Newaygo 73 John Westbrook 6

N Muskegon 55 Montague 63 Jay Kakaty 12

N Muskegon 42 Oakridge 64 Erik Langson 9, Bill Franks 7

N Muskegon 43 Shelby 72 Matt Wikander 17, Franks 9

N Muskegon 78 Walkerville 52 Kakaty & Franks 19, Langdon 12

N Muskegon 58 Hart 40 Kakaty & Langdon 12

N Muskegon 48 Ravenna 53 Wikkander 18, Kakaty 15, Franks 10

N Muskegon 49 Mason Co 66 Kakaty & Franks 13

N Muskegon 35 Whitehall 39 Franks 11, Wikander 10

N Muskegon 45 Montague 44 Wikander, 13, Kakaty & Franks 11

N Muskegon 40 Oakridge 53 Wikander 9, Kakaty & Westbrook 8

N Muskegon 31 Shelby 53 Wegner 10, Franks 11 rebounds

N Muskegon 38 Pentwater 41 Franks 13, Lamgdon 9

N Muskegon 54 Hart 53 Franks 19, Langdon 11

N Muskegon 45 Hesperia 44 Kakaty 18, Wikander 10

N Muskegon 38 Mason Co 49 Kakaty 17, Wikander 12

N Muskegon 53 Holton 46 Franks 17, Langdon 15, Kakaty 11

N Muskegon 48 Ravenna 38 Franks 12, Wikander 11, Wegner 10

N Muskegon 45 Musk Catholic 68 Kakaty 10, Langdon 9

N Muskegon 43 Whitehall 78 Wegner 16, Langdon 9

N Muskegon\*63 Saugatuck 56 5 Norse in double figures

N Muskegon\*59 Calvary Baptist 56 Langdon 19, Wegner 10

N Muskegon\*42 WMC 55 Wikander 12, Franks 11

**1996-97 (Coach Jeff Cooke 2-19, Mason Co WMC champs)**

Former Norsemen Jeff Cooke would begin a lifelong commitment to his beloved alma mater as a coach and athletic director at the start of the 1996-97 season. It would take Cooke only a couple of years to bring NM basketball back to prominence, but the first two seasons would be rough. Cooke inherited a team that scored less than 50 points per game and a junior varsity team that also struggled to win a handful of games. Jay Kakaty and NM baseball star Matt Wikander were two regulars who returned for the upcoming season. Cooke began developing players at the elementary and junior high level with a keen eye directed at a very tall red head who was entering sixth grade. In the meantime, NM would have to suffer some growing pains as they would win but two games the entire 1996-97 season.

In the Norse opener with non-league foe Newaygo, the Lions blew open a close game at halftime by outscoring the Norse 25-6 in the third quarter as senior Matt Shephard with 22 points led the Lions to a convincing 76-43 win over NM. Nate Mogren was the only Norsemen in double figures with 16 points.

Whitehall then perhaps gave NM’s young coach some second guesses as to why he took over the coaching duties at his alma mater as Whitehall handed the Norse its worse beating in program history between the two teams with a 102-39 spanking. So dominant were the Vikings in this contest that they had a 45-16 rebound advantage against the much smaller Norsemen. Nate Mogren had 16 points for NM while another newcomer to the NM lineup Caesar Douglas scored 10.

North Muskegon than began a brief four-game series with Freesoil, a tiny school located between Scottville and Manistee that once was a powerhouse Class D team back in the early 1960s led by their legendary coach Max Carey. Freesoil would win one game in these four games series: the first, 57-53. The Pirates overcame a four-point NM lead at halftime to earn their third straight victory while the Norsemen would fall to 0-3. Nate Mogren (12), Jay Kakaty (11) and Nate Bolema (10) all scored in double figures in the loss.

NM would experience a winless season in the West Michigan Conference with the second of their losses a 78-46 loss to Montague. Every Wildcat who suited up for the Wildcats scored while Jay Kakaty was the lone Norseman in double figures with a modest 10 points.

Thanks goodness NM had tiny Walkerville on their schedule. NM defeated Walkerville, but just barely 68-65. NM needed a career high 24 points from Caesar Douglas and some woeful 1-for-7 free throw shooting from Walkerville to earn one of the two-wins NM would earn on the season. Jay Kakaty pitched in with 12 to help the Norse cause.

NM took a 11-10 lead after the opening quarter and kept it close for much of the game in their 65-50 loss to Oakridge, a game that would be considered a nail-biter when one looks ahead to the second game played between the two teams. Nate Morgren led NM with 15 while Matt Wikander chipped in with 11.

Shelby, the defending WMC champs, who went 20-0 during the regular season a year ago, more than doubled the score on NM at halftime and cruised to an 83-49 win on the Shelby home court. All 12 Tigers who suited up in the contest scored as veteran Shelby coach Rick Zoulek was kind to the Norsemen. Nate Mogren led the Norse with 11 points.

A slim crowd was on hand to see Mason County Central derail the Norsemen 86-41. The Spartans were in the first of two great years for the boys from Scottville. Led by the 1998 Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame high school sports boy student athlete of the year winner Chad Pleiness, the Spartans would reach the state final four two years in succession. Pleiness, in limited minutes, fired in 22 points to aid the Spartans handing the Norse their seventh defeat. Jay Kakaty had 10 to lead the outmanned Norsemen.

An overtime 63-58 overtime loss to Ravenna would be the closest NM would come to a win in the WMC. After both teams were tied at 52-all after regulation, the Bulldogs outscored the Norsemen 11-6 in the three-minute extra session to push NM deeper into the WMC cellar. It was a three-pointer from NM’s Nate Bolema that sent the game into overtime. Jay Kakaty had 19 points, including four 3-pointers to lead NM, while Matt Wikander with 13 and Nate Mogren had 12.

The Norse let another possible win in the WMC slip away as they led Hart late into the third period only to see the Pirates rally in the fourth to set NM back once more 49-42. Jay Kakaty cashed in 13 points with Nate Mogren also in double digits with 10 as NM falls to 1-9.

The Norse were no problem for Whitehall as the Vikings forged to an 18-point lead at halftime and increased that lead even more in the second half to walk away with an 80-47 victory over the Norsemen. Nate Bolema with 11 and Jay Kakaty and Nate Mogren with 10 led the losing Norse.

Montague stayed one game behind Mason County in the race for the WMC title with their 67-53 conquest of NM. NM stayed close at halftime, but Montague created space by outscoring NM 16-8 to begin the third quarter. Nate Morgren with 13, Jay Kakaty with 12 points and seven assists, and Matt Wickander with 10 points led the Norsemen.

NM won their second, and final game of the long season by defeating Pentwater in a non-conference contest. NM connected on 22 of 29 free throws to aid in their win over the Falcons. Nate Morgren paced the Norse with 19 points and Matt Wikander added 16. Jay Kakaty tallied 15 points and five assists for the Norse and Nate Bolema had 10 rebounds.

NM could not celebrate for long as their next game with Oakridge was not pretty. There was no ‘mercy’ rule in 1997 as there is today, and Oakridge surely showed no mercy. Oakridge opened the game by going on a 20-2 run to begin the first quarter and they added insult to injury with a 31-2 romp in the fourth quarter. The 93-23 final was the second largest margin of defeat in NM program history. One would also have to go all the way back to 1948 when NM scored less than 23 points in a game. Jay Kakaty with seven points was the only NM player who scored more than three points in the debacle. The immediate future didn’t bode well for NM as the JVs lost to Oakridge by 40.

After losing their previous game by 70, to lose by only five points, 53-48 to Shelby had to feel like a moral victory for the Norse. The game was even at halftime and NM trailed by only two heading into the fourth quarter. Nate Wikander and Nate Bolema had big games for NM in the loss. Wikander had 18 points while Bolema had a season high 12 points and 12 rebounds.

The Norsemen again flirted with victory in their next contest at Hart. NM led by three points at halftime but a bad third period led to a Hart rally and a 59-50 loss for the Norsemen. Hart doubled the score on NM in the third 18-9 to dispel any NM hopes for their third victory of the season. Matt Wikander had his season high of 19 points in the loss with Nate Mogren chipping in with 15.

NM was headed for another bad defeat in their non-conference clash at Holton as they were trailing 37-20 at halftime. The Norse then had their best third quarter in recent memory as they outscored Holton 28-8 to lead going into the final quarter. NM couldn’t maintain that momentum in the final quarter as Holton regained their poise and held off the Norsemen 69-64. Nate Mogren had a season high 24 points for the Norse, Jay Kakaty added 15, Matt Wikander 11 and Nate Bolema 10.

The final four games of the season would not bode well for the Norsemen. The first of those final four games was at Scottville to play the WMC champs. Mason County Central head coach Tim Genson was kind to the Norsemen. The Spartans had a commanding 40-19 lead at halftime, but Genson didn’t have his Spartans pour it on the outmanned Norse as they won ‘only’ 71-42, and it could have been worse. NM was deprived of a double-digit scorer, but Jay Kakaty came close with nine points.

NM equaled their lowest scoring mark since 1948 for the second time during the season with a 67-23 loss to Muskegon Catholic. NM never scored more than seven points in any quarter as MCC had their way with the Norsemen. For the second game in a row NM had no player score in double figures. Known more for his low scoring on the golf course, Casey Farwig had six points for the low-scoring Norsemen.

Any hopes for NM winning a game in the West Michigan Conference were dashed by Ravenna as the Bulldogs bolted out to a 31-20 lead at halftime and kept the same pace in the second half to ensure that the Norse would finish the season winless in the WMC. Jay Kakaty and Nate Mogren each had a modest 10 points to lead the Norsemen.

The season came to a merciful end and who else would make the Norsemen turn in their uniforms then West Michigan Christian. Again, as in the recent meetings in the playoffs the Norsemen couldn’t handle the Warriors pressure defense. NM had more turnovers (23) in the first half than points (19) as the Warriors manhandled the Norsemen 85-47. “We just couldn’t handle their pressure and committed too many turnovers”, said NM coach Cooke after the game. “It’s been a disappointing season, but I’m proud of the way the kids have kept after it and the effort they have put forth every game.”

N Muskegon 43 Newaygo 76 Nate Mogren 16

N Muskegon 39 Whitehall 102 Mogren 14, Caesar Douglas 10

N Muskegon 53 Freesoil 57 Mogren 12, Jay Kakaty 11

N Muskegon 46 Montague 78 Kakaty 10

N Muskegon 68 Walkerville 65 Douglas 24, Kakaty 12, Mogren 9

N Muskegon 50 Oakridge 65 Mogren 15, Matt Wikander 11

N Muskegon 49 Shelby 83 Mogren 11

N Muskegon 41 Mason Co 86 Kakaty 10

N Muskegon 58 Ravenna (ot) 63 Kakaty 19, Wikander 13, Mogren 12

N Muskegon 42 Hart 49 Kakatty13, Mogren 10

N Muskegon 47 Whitehall 80 Nate Bolema 11, Kakaty & Mogren 10

N Muskegon 53 Montague 67 Mogren 13, Kakaty 12, Wickander 10

N Muskegon 65 Pentwater 50 Mogren 19, Wikander16, Kakaty 15

N Muskegon 23 Oakridge 93 Kakaty 7.

N Muskegon 48 Shelby 53 Wikander 18, Bolema 12

N Muskegon 50 Hart 59 Wikander 19, Mogren 15

N Muskegon 64 Holton 68 Mogren 24, Kakaty 15, Wikander 11

N Muskegon 42 Mason Co 71 Kakaty 9

N Muskegon 23 Musk Catholic 67 Casey Farwig 6

N Muskegon 39 Ravenna 58 Kakaty & Mogren 10

N Muskegon\*47 WMC 85 Kakaty 12, Wikander 11

**1997-98 (Coach Jeff Cooke 6-16, Mason Co WMC champs)**

NM would struggle in Jeff Cooke’s second year as the NM head coach, but help was on the way. Cooke welcomed the return of 6’4 Nate Morgren, NM’s leading scorer from the previous season and Nate Bolema, another 6’4 performer who reminded your author of his father Ken Bolema, NM’s star player from the mid 1950s. Caesar Douglas, who showed glimpses of potential in his junior year would be a much-improved player from the 1996-97 season. NM would win six games during the current season, a season that would be a building block for some of the best teams in NM history in the not-too-distant future. As far as the West Michigan Conference was concerned, the league was still basking in the glory of both Oakridge and Ravenna winning state championships in football.

NM would open with Newaygo for the 8th straight season. Not only would 1997-98 be the last time the Norsemen had Newaygo as their opening opponent, but it would also be the last time as of this writing in 2024 that they would play Newaygo in a game. Newaygo would win their fifth straight game against NM to conclude the series, but the final score was much closer than the last two games between NM and the Lions. The Norse dropped a tight game to Newaygo 64-60, a vast improvement over their last two games with Newaygo that resulted in blow-out victories for the Lions. NM connected on nine 3-pointers, five from Caesar Douglas while Nate Mogren dumped in 22 points for NM.

NM fans were hopeful that Whitehall’s resounding 82-38 blasting of NM wouldn’t signify another disastrous season for the Norse. The Vikings shot the lights out in the first half as they jumped out to a 41-18 lead at halftime. It wouldn’t be the last time NM took their lumps during the season, but there would be some brighter days ahead. Nate Mogren led NM with a modest 10 points.

NM needed all of Nate Mogren’s career high 29 points in their 83-81 overtime win over Freesoil. NM outscored the Pirates 9-6 in the overtime session to squeeze out a tight win, the first of the young season. Jeff Gowell had 18 points and Nate Bolema 13 in what would prove to be NM’s highest point total for the 1997-98 season.

NM trailed Montague by only four points heading into the final quarter. The visiting Wildcats then had their best quarter, outpointing the Norse 26-21 in the game’s final eight minutes to down the Norsemen 66-57. Nate Mogren continued his torrid scoring with 26 points with his front-line running mate Nate Bolema adding 16 points.

NM welcomed in the New Year with a resounding 72-48 victory over tiny Walkerville. A big second quarter where the Norse outpointed Walkerville 24-13 gave NM a comfortable 19-point halftime lead in their 72-48 victory. Nate Mogren again surpassed the 20-point mark with 21 with Caesar Douglas adding 15. Jeff Gowell had a double-double for the winners with 10 points and 10 rebounds.

Hard to believe that a team can lead at the end of the first quarter 19-17 yet lose by 34 points 80-46, but that’s what happened in yet another NM loss to Oakridge. The Eagles outscored NM 43-10 in the second and third quarters to turn the game into a rout. Nate Mogren finished with 14 points and Nate Bolema had 10 as NM was still searching for its first win in the WMC since 1996.

NM played Shelby much closer, but the Blue & Gold was still struggling to put points on the board. NM trailed by two at halftime before the Tigers pulled away in the second half to down NM 57-43. Nate Mogren led the Norse in scoring for the seventh straight game with 13 points, two more than Caesar Douglas.

A 10-0 run by Hart at the start of the final quarter turned a close game into a big 75-57 victory over NM. Turnovers (19) hurt the Norse chances for a WMC victory. Caesar Douglas took scoring honors away from Nate Mogren with a game high 16 points and 11 rebounds. Mogren did tally 14 points and Nate Bolema 11 for the Norse as they were still searching for that elusive first conference victory.

The chances for NM getting that first conference victory were nil as the Norse next faced arguably the best team in Mason County Central history. The Spartans jumped out to a 21-8 lead after the first quarter and by the time the final buzzer sounded MCC had doubled the score on NM 86-43. The good news for NM, coach Cooke was able to use 12 of his players and 11 scored. The bad news --- nobody for NM scored more than 7 points.

Charlie Cihak, an ace pitcher on the NM baseball team, only had four points but two of his points proved to be the game winner as he drilled a baseline jumper in the game’s final moments to give head coach Jeff Cooke his first ever victory in the West Michigan Conference, a 58-57 win over Ravenna. Caesar Douglas took scoring honors with 20 points with Nate Mogren adding 16 as the monkey was now off the back for a conference win.

Whitehall jumped out to a 29-6 first quarter lead and never looked back as Whitehall made it a clean sweep over the Norsemen with a solid 85-52 blitz of the Norsemen. A young sophomore for the Vikings who had a ‘pretty’ good baseball career, Nate McLouth, was one of five Vikings in double figures for Whitehall. Nate Mogren and Jeff Gowell scored 12 points apiece for the Norse.

In a near carbon copy of their previous game with Whitehall the results were nearly identical with the Norse giving up 85 points while scoring 55 in a loss to Montague. The game did not get out of hand until the final quarter when Montague expanded an 11-point third period lead into 30 following a 29-10 run in the fourth quarter. Again, it was Nate Mogren who led NM in scoring with 19 points.

NM feasted on their fellow Class D opponents during the season as five of their six wins came against teams in their own class. Both teams had huge quarters in this contest, but NM’s 25-12 run in the second was slightly larger than Pentwater’s 15-4 advantage in the third quarter as NM edged the host Falcons 64-59. The Norse fared well at the free throw line as junior Jason McCollum went 7-7 from the line in the final eight minutes and Nate Bolema made 6 of 8 in the fourth quarter to ice NM’s fourth win of the season. Caesar Douglas led NM with 20 points, Bolema finished with 17 and McCollum’s 12 markers would be a season high.

NM showed vast improvement in their second game on the season with Oakridge. After being blown out by nearly forty points in their first meeting the Norsemen were on the cusp of a possible upset as they led 28-21 at halftime. However, the Eagles outscored the Norsemen 54-33 in the second half to earn a 74-61 win over NM. Nate Mogren was the big scorer for the Norse with 18 points.

Shelby once again emptied their bench, and every Tiger suited up for coach Rick Zoulek scored in the Tigers 69-47 win over the Norsemen. Only Nate Bolema was in double figures for the Norse with 10 points.

Playing without an ailing Nate Mogren, the Norse were no match for a hot shooting Hart team as NM was drubbed 90-67. Caesar Douglas helped take up some of the lost production with Mogren sidelined as he tallied a season high 23 points followed by Jeff Gowell with 14 and Nate Bolema with 10.

North Muskegon put up four solid quarters to defeat Holton 82-55 to earn win number five on the season. The Norse got a season high 18 points from Charlie Cihak and help from several Norsemen to aid in the non-conference victory. Caesar Douglas helped with 17 points and 12 rebounds, Jeff Gowell scored 14 and dished off five assists while Nate Mogren was back in the lineup and scored 11 points,

It surely was no disgrace to lose to Mason County Central in 1998. This was arguably the best team in Scottville/Mason County Central’s history --- never mind --- it was the best team ever fielded by MCC. The Spartans would go undefeated until they lost in front of 12,000 fans in the state Class C finals to Detroit DePorress. The leader for the Spartans was Chad Pleiness, a 6’6 post player who was not only all-state in basketball, but also football where he was headed to Central Michigan on a football scholarship. However, his best sport was probably baseball where he surely would have made all-state in if they had all state teams for baseball in 1998. Pleiness would eventually sign a professional contract to play baseball where he played in the minor league for a few seasons. The catalyst for the Spartans was a foreign exchange student who traveled all the way from Western Australia, Adrian Whitten. Whitten was the final piece of the puzzle that propelled MCC to an unbeaten season until they lost to Deporres, a school West Michigan teams could never beat at the state finals in any sport. Whitten was your quintessential point guard with great hands, and a good shooter who could handle the ball like a seasoned pro. Pleiness had 19 points and 10 rebounds in limited minutes against the Norse while Whitten recorded 18 points, five steals and five assists. Jesse Deering was another top-notch player for the Spartans with 14 points and seven assists. For the outmanned Norsemen, Nate Bolema and Caesar Douglas had nine points.

After finally winning a game in the West Michigan Conference earlier to Ravenna, the Norse had high hopes of repeating in their second match. A win would tie Ravenna for 7th in the WMC, no mean feat but better than being alone in the cellar. However, the cellar it would be for the Norsemen as Ravenna played inspired ball on parents’ night in Ravenna to defeat NM 71-59. Nat Mogren gave it his all and scored 23 points to lead the Norse that left them with a 1-13 record in the WMC and 5-14 overall.

NM would play Muskegon Catholic in the final game of the regular season. In 1998 MCC was a member of the River Valley Conference that was stacked with seasoned basketball teams, including Tri-Unity Christian, Covenant Christian and West Michigan Christian, a trio that has won numerous state championships over the years. MCC won the season finale 68-54, turning a two-point lead at the end of the third quarter into a 14-point lead after outpointing the Norse 22-10 in the final quarter. Caesar Douglas (17) Nate Bolema (13) and Nate Mogren (12) provided all but 12 of NM’s points.

North Muskegon would open with Saugatuck for the 5th time in the 1990s and all five games were won by the Norse. The Norse earned a berth in the finals with a tight 66-61 win over Saugatuck thanks to a great night from Jeff Gowell. The starting shortstop in the spring for coach Walt Gawkowski’s baseball team, had a season high 21 points that included hitting 8 of his 9 free throws. Nate Mogren continued his steady play for the season with 15 points.

With their tournament nemesis West Michigan Christian now playing in Class C, the door was open for the Norsemen to win their first district championship since 1974. It was not to be as Holland Calvary Baptist, a fledgling new school who had never won a district took home the trophy with a 59-55 victory over the Norsemen. An 18-5 run by Holland in the second quarter put NM in a big hole. The Norse came back and tied the score twice late in the game on a pair of 3-pointers from Charlie Cihak, but Calvary Baptist answered each time. Nate Mogren ended his senior season with a game high 20 points with Cihak adding 11.

N Muskegon 60 Newaygo 64 Nate Mogren 22, Caesar Douglas 19

N Muskegon 38 Whitehall 82 Mogren 10

N Muskegon 83 Freesoil (ot) 80 Mogren 29, Jeff Gowell 18, Nate Bolema 13

N Muskegon 57 Montague 66 Mogren 26, Bolema 16

N Muskegon 72 Walkerville 48 Mogren 21, Douglas 15, Gowell 10

N Muskegon 46 Oakridge 80 Mogren 14, Bolema 10

N Muskegon 43 Shelby 57 Mogren 13, Dousglas 11

N Muskegon 57 Hart 75 Douglas 16, Mogren 14, Bolema 11

N Muskegon 43 Mason Co 86 State finalist Spartans double the score

N Muskegon 58 Ravenna 57 Douglas 20, Mogran 16

N Muskegon 52 Whitehall 85 Gowell & Mogren 12

N Muskegon 55 Montague 85 Mogren 19

N Muskegon 64 Pentwater 59 Douglas 20, Bolema 17, J. McCollum 12

N Muskegon 61 Oakridge 74 Mogren 18

N Muskegon 47 Shelby 69 Bolema 10. Mogren 9

N Muskegon 67 Hart 90 Douglas 23, Gowell 14, Bolema 10

N Muskegon 82 Holton 55 Charlie Cihak 18, Douglas 17, Gowell 14

N Muskegon 41 Mason Co 77 Bolema and Douglas 9

N Muskegon 59 Ravenna 71 Mogren 23, Gowell 13

N Muskegon 54 Musk Catholic 68 Douglas 17, Bolema 13, Mogren 12

N Muskegon\*66 Saugatuck 61 Gowell 21, Mogren 15

N Muskegon\*55 Holl. Cal Bap. 59 Mogren 20, Cihak 11

**1998–99 (Coach Jeff Cooke 12–10, Shelby WMC champs)**

Three players who saw plenty of playing time for NM the previous year return for the 1998-99 season and all would show much improvement over the previous season. Jeff Gowell, Jason McCollum and Jason Bogue would be joined by sophomores Nick Marietti and 6’4 Steve Privasky as the Norse will experience their first winning season since 1985, back when the Norsemen were coached by Dave Cooke, current coach Jeff Cooke’s father.

It didn’t look like NM was headed for a winning season if one was to look at NM’s season opener with Muskegon Catholic. The Norse were outscored in every quarter by MCC in a 62-43 loss. Jason McCullom had 14 to lead the Norsemen with sophomore Steve Provasky adding 10. However, the Norsemen would improve quickly.

NM bounced back just a day later to defeat Ravenna 63-49, only the second win in conference play in the past three seasons, with both wins coming against the Bulldogs. NM never trailed in the game and enjoyed slight advantages in every quarter to even their season record at 1-1. Jeff Gowell led Norse scorers with 15 points with Jason Bogue (14) and Steve Privasky (10) also in double figures.

Freesoil may have a tiny enrollment, but history has shown this little school near Manistee can play basketball. The Norsemen needed a 3-pointer from Jason McCullom with just under a minute to go in the game to finally take the lead from the Pirates. Jeff Gowell then added a pair of free throws to give NM a tight 61-59 win over Freesoil. McCullom led the Norse with 19 points and five steals. Gowell connected for 17 points and Steve Privasky for the third straight game added 10 points.

Whitehall jumped out to an early 15-6 lead at the end of the first quarter and NM couldn’t quite recover in losing to Whitehall 75-68. NM would not go away and outscored the Vikings over the final three quarters only to come up short of a victory. Jason Bogue had a great game for NM with 21 points while Jeff Gowell contributed 15 points and five assists. Jason McCollum netted 11 while steady Steve Privasky again scored 10 points. Sophomore Nick Marietti keeps improving with every game as he had a team high six assists while also adding eight points.

NM began the New Year with a resounding 79-41 rout of an outmanned Walkerville team. NM led at halftime 47-16 as Norse head coach Jeff Cooke used plenty of his reserves in the second half. Jason Bogue in limited minutes had 14 and Jason McCullum 11 as the starters sat for much of the second half. Ben Lewis had his season high of 11 as 10 Norsemen scored in the game.

Once trailing by as many as 14 points NM battled back to close to within four points with less than two minutes to play only to fall short to Montague 74-67. Jason Bogue had 19 points and five assists for NM while Jeff Gowell added 15 points and 10 rebounds as NM fell to 3-3 on the season.

Norse fans had to believe that they may never beat Oakridge again as the Eagles won their 22nd straight victory over the Norsemen 85-72. The 13-point deficit was a far cry from recent blowouts suffered against the Eagles. Perhaps when the two teams meet in the rematch later in February the Norse could stop the skid. NM garnered a lot of momentum for the rematch as they once trailed Oakridge by 18 at one point early in the fourth quarter, trimming the lead to four points before the Eagles pulled away on made free throws to make the score look worse than it could have been. Jeff Gowell led four Norsemen in double figures with 16 points. Jason McCullum (15), Steve Privasky (12) and Jason Bogue (10) all reached double digits.

The Norsemen led at halftime, but NM let one get away from them in losing to Shelby 64-56. Shelby erased a four-point halftime deficit and took the lead for good with an 18-13 third-quarter run. The Tigers than proceeded to ice the game by hitting 9-of-9 free throws in the fourth quarter to seal the win. Jason McCullum with 15 and Steve Privasky with 14 led the Norse.

NM finally beat someone other than Ravenna in the WMC with a 56-49 win over Hart. The Norse connected on 22 of 24 free throws but it took a couple of Jeff Gowell made 3-pointers late in the game to put away Hart 56-49. Jason McCullum had a season high 20 points, including 12-13 made free throws while Jeff Gowell was 6-6 at the line and 14 points for the Norse.

Mason County Central, with only one starter returning from their state runner-up team from last season pulled away from the Norsemen in the final quarter to defeat NM 64-54. It wasn’t until there was only four minutes left in the game that Mason County took the lead for good over the Norsemen. Sophomore Nick Marietti hit three 3-pointers and scored a season high 15 points to lead the Norse. Jason McCullum followed with 14 and Steve Privasky had 11.

It was now time for the Norse to begin their best run of the season as they would embark on a five-game winning streak. NM began with a 53-43 win at Ravenna. The Norse, trailing 28-22 at halftime, went on a 19-6 run in the third quarter to pull away from the host Bulldogs. Sophomore Steve Privasky took scoring honors with 16, points followed by Jason McCullum with 13 and Jeff Gowell with 12.

You may have to go back into the 1940s or maybe the 1930s to find when an opponent was shutout for an entire quarter. Such was Calvary Baptist’s fate when they were outscored 17-0 in the third quarter in NM’s 64-27 rout of winless (0-10) Calvary Baptist, who also went winless the previous season. NM substituted freely the entire game and only Steve Privasky played long enough to get into double figures as the sophomore center had 13 points and eight rebounds.

The next game with Pentwater was equally lopsided as NM had their highest point total of the season in their 86-50 whipping of the Falcons. Jeff Gowell had the game of his life as he became the 18th member of the NM 30-point club with 32 points as NM climbed above the .500 mark for the first time in years at this stage of the season with a 7-6 record. Steve Privasky had 16 as did Jason Bogue.

After losing 13 of their previous 14 games against Montague, the Norse would begin a streak (winning) of their own against the Wildcats. NM would split the season series with the ‘Cats’ with a 75-59 win. The Norse, after leading by one at the halftime break 32-31, went on a 21-8 run in the third quarter and continued with a 25-20 finish in the fourth to win going away. The Norse were led by a couple of baseball stars in the spring, Jason Bogue with 23 and Jeff Gowell with 18. Steve Privasky had a big game with 17 points and nine rebounds. The game was well covered by Muskegon Chronicle’s brilliant sports editor and writer Cindy Fairfield. Montague head coach Troy Love had special praise for NM’s coach Cooke in a feature story of the contest. “He’s done a great job,” said Lowe of Cooke. “The kids he has now have come up through his program. You can see he teaches the kids to play unselfishly. He’s the kind of guy who emphasizes the right things like sportsmanship and attitude. Give a ton of credit to coach Cooke. His team just plain outworked us on defense,” complimented coach Love. Perhaps the games leading scorer Jason Bogue summed it up for Norsemen basketball: “Basketball here used to be a sport we played before baseball or track.”

Losing 13 of 14 to Montague paled in comparison of the domination Oakridge had over the Norsemen during the 1990s as NM failed to win a single game in the 90s as the losing streak had reached 22. That streak also came to an end as NM defeated Oakridge 62-49. And the Norse got the victory because they got help from players other than the four leading scorers going into the game: Jeff Gowell, Jason Bogue, Jason McCallum and Steve Privasky. Nathan Crosswait had a season high 16 and Nick Marietti, who missed the win over Montague as he was on an academic trip to our nation’s capital had 10.

NM’s winning streak came to an end at five as the Norse lost to a 14-1 Shelby team yet to be defeated in the WMC 76-59. Shelby let it be known to the Norse early that this game belonged to the Tigers as they cruised to a commanding 42-18 lead at halftime before taking the foot off the gas. NM outscored Shelby’s reserves in the final quarter 23-13, Jason McCullum’s 18 points led NM with Jeff Gowell trailing with 11.

Sophomore Nick Marietti was the hero of the hour for NM when he drilled a shot off an inbounds pass with four seconds left in the game to deliver a 59-58 win for the Norsemen against Hart. It was a see-saw battle in the fourth quarter in the tight game as each team scored 20 points, before Marietti had the clinching two-pointer. Jason Bogue scored only four points but that didn’t define his value in this game. Bogue hounded Hart’s Scott Helms, a 23 plus per game scorer and held him to 17 points. Jeff Gowell had 17, Jason McCullum 13 and Nathan Crosswaite 11 as NM improves to 10-7 overall and 6-6 in the WMC.

The Norse made their annual long jaunt to Scottville, and the results were the same as most of those trips, a Mason County Central win and a NM loss. NM kept the game from being a runaway as Jeff Gowell’s five 3-pointers kept the game within reach in the 55-46 loss to the Spartans. Gowell, with 17 points was the only Norsemen in double figures.

In the first regularly schedule game between the two teams in program history, the Norsemen raced out to an 18-4 lead after the first quarter and then played steady ball the rest of the game to defeat Holland Calvary Baptist, a team that deprived NM of a district title a year ago, 59-48. Steve Privasky pumped in 17 points and grabbed 12 rebounds; Jeff Gowell totaled 11 points with 10 boards while Jason Bogue added a dozen points for NM.

The Norse loss their second game to Whitehall by seven points, the same margin of defeat in the first meeting, but this game was much tighter. NM took a 46-45 lead on a bucket by Nathan Crosswait before Whitehall hit some big shots down the stretch to end NM’s regular season at 11-9. Steve Privasky led a balanced NM offense with 13, while Crosswait had 12 and Jeff Gowell 11.

There was good news and bad news for the upcoming Class D tournament. The good news was their first opponent would be Calvary Baptist, a team that hadn’t won a game in two seasons. The bad news, waiting in the finals was West Michigan Christian who was back in Class D after one year in Class C. The Norse took care of business as expected with a 59-48 victory over Calvary Baptist, but the Norse looked far from sharp in a game that should have been a runaway win.

In a streak that defies common logic, West Michigan Christian made it 11 straight games in a row when WMC would eliminate NM in the playoffs. The game was never in doubt as the Warriors pummeled the Norsemen 86-46 on their way to eventually winning the Class D state championship. Nate Bultema, who sank the winning free throw with no time on the clock to defeat Detroit City at the Breslin Center at MSU, had 26 points in the rout of the Norse.

Despite the loss to a superior opponent in WMC, the Norsemen had turned their program around with their first winning season in 14 years. It would get even better as the next century would see the debut of a very tall red head who would attract big crowds to the Northside, not just fans but big-time college coaches.

N Muskegon 43 Musk Catholic 62 Jason McCullom 14, Steve Privasky 10

N Muskegon 63 Ravenna 49 Jeff Gowell 15, Jason Bogue 14

N Muskegon 61 Freesoil 59 McCullum 19, Gowell 17, Privasky 10

N Muskegon 68 Whitehall 75 Bogue 21, Gowell 15, McCullum 11

N Muskegon 79 Walkerville 41 Bogue 14, McCullum 11, Ben Lewis 11

N Muskegon 67 Montague 74 Bogue 19, Gowell 15, McCullum 11

N Muskegon 72 Oakridge 85 Gowell 16, McCullum 15, Privasky 12

N Muskegon 56 Shelby 64 McCullum 15, Privasky 14, Bogue 10

N Muskegon 56 Hart 49 McCullum 20, Gowell 14, Privasky 13

N Muskegon 54 Mason Co 64 Nick Marietti 15, McCullom 14

N Muskegon 53 Ravenna 43 Privasky 16, McCullum 13, Gowell 12

N Muskegon 64 Calvary Baptist 27 Privasky 13

N Muskegon 86 Pentwater 50 Gowell 32, Privasky & Bogue 16

N Muskegon 75 Montague 59 Bogue 23, Gowell 18, Privasky 17

N Muskegon 62 Oakridge 49 Nathan Crosswait 16, Marietti 10

N Muskegon 59 Shelby 76 McCullum 18, Gowell 11

N Muskegon 59 Hart 58 Gowell 17, McCullum 13, Crosswait 11

N Muskegon 46 Mason Co 55 Gowell 17

N Muskegon 59 Holland Cal Bap 48 Privasky 17, Bogue 12, Gowell 11

N Muskegon 53 Whitehall 60 Privasky 13, Crosswait 12, Gowell 11

N Muskegon\*59 Calvary Baptist 48 Marietti & McCullum 12.

N Muskegon\* 46 WMC 86 McCullum 14

**1999-2000 (Coach Jeff Cooke 14-8, Mason Co WMC champs)**

After their first winning season in more than a decade, the Norse were looking for even better things in the 1999-2000 season. Two starters returned from the previous season in 6’7 junior center Steve Privasky and junior guard Nick Marietti. Also returning was a much-improved Nathan Crosswait. NM would get a special boost from Spencer Suchy, a senior transfer from Reeths Puffer. The big news, however, was the arrival of a 6’8 freshman that heralded the beginning of the Drew Naymick era. With a 6’8 Naymick paired with the 6’7 Privasky things were looking up for the Norsemen. Also earning a berth in the starting lineup was junior guard Rod Melton who would put up some big number in the upcoming season.

Muskegon Catholic defeated the Norsemen for the fifth straight time since the series resumed after the 1962-63 season 52-45. The NM-MCC game, except for a couple of years during the Covid 19 era, has always been the first game on NM’s schedule. All the signs were there that the losing streak to MCC was coming to an end as the Norsemen enjoyed a five-point lead heading into the final quarter. However, the Crusaders caught fire in the game’s final eight minutes outscoring the Norse 21-9 to down the Norse 52-45. Football star Jim Casselman sparked the Crusader’s rally with a couple of steals and scoring 13 of his 15 points in the final quarter. Future NFL star Ruvel Martin scored 10 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for MCC. The Crusaders would have their best start in school history winning their first eight games before losing in game number nine to Tri Unity Christian and their future NBA center Chris Kaman.

There would be a new stat for NM players – blocked shots! Freshman Drew Naymick blocked seven shots in the game with the Crusaders, the first of his many blocked shots that would put him at the top of the list in blocked shots in MHSAA history before his career would come to an end at NMHS. Offensively, Naymick would get off to a modest start for his first few games as he scored only four points in his first game in a Norsemen uniform. 6’7 junior Steve Privasky led NM with 14 points while another junior, Nick Marietti added 10.

NM, trailing by two-points after the opening quarter, decided this game in the second quarter when they outscored Ravenna 21-4 enroute to a 56-45 win. Spencer Suchy led NM with 14 points and Nathan Crosswait had 14 for NM.

6’8 freshman Drew Naymick gave NM fans a glimpse at what he could do with the basketball when he gets it down in the low post as he rifled in 18 points, blocked five shots and grabbed seven rebounds in NM’s 79-48 rout of Freesoil. The game would be the fourth and final game in a series with tiny Freesoil. So outmanned was Freesoil that NM had a 54-17 lead at halftime as coach Jeff Cooke used his entire bench throughout the game. Junior guard Rod Melton had 20 points to lead in the scoring department.

Whitehall did a good job of preventing the Norsemen from getting the ball down in the low post to their two big men, 6-8 Drew Naymick and 6’7 Steve Privasky in a 63-45 win over NM. Instead, the Norsemen settled for outside shots that consistently missed its mark as not one Norsemen scored in double figures. Despite a size disadvantage, Whitehall outrebounded NM 36-14, with 15 of those rebounds coming on the offensive end.

NM would begin the new century with a 63-45 win over Walkerville in the final game of their series that saw NM win 11 of the 12 games played. Nick Marietti had 17 points with 15 of those markers coming on five made 3-pointers while Steve Provasky grabbed 10 rebounds.

NM won their second game in West Michigan Conference play with a 71-62 win over a Montague team still looking for its first win on the season. NM jumped out to an early 20-8 lead and were never threatened as the Norse had balanced scoring in the victory. Steve Privasky had 17, Spencer Suchy and Nick Marietti each had 14 as NM was now 2-1 in WMC play.

Although NM & West Michigan Christian would face each other almost annually in the MHSAA playoffs, the two would face each other in a regular scheduled game for the first time in 15 years with the Warriors winning their 12th straight game over the Norsemen 69-58. A poor second quarter where WMC owned a 23-13 advantage was the difference in the game. NM shot poorly from the free throw line as they connected on only 8 of 20 free throws. Steve Privasky, who would transfer to WMC for his senior year, led NM with 20 points while Rod Melton had 17.

After being on the losing end on many lopsided victories during the 1990s, it was NM’s time for a blowout victory as NM throttled Oakridge 66-30. NM took a commanding 60-22 lead into the fourth quarter that forced a running clock, a new rule NM would have welcomed in many earlier losses to the Eagles. Nick Marietti had a season high 24 points and Drew Naymick added 11 for the Norsemen. The Oakridge game would mark the beginning of a streak whereby Naymick would score in double figures in 14 of his next 15 games.

Shelby was another team that dominated NM during the 1990s, winning 20 of 21 games and the last 12 in a row. The Norsemen’s 76-68 win over the Tigers was another bad streak that came to an end. Drew Naymick had a breakout game as the young freshman scored 11 of his 17 points in the pivotal second quarter when NM outscored Shelby 23-9. Naymick, who had an uncanny knack of not only blocking an opponent’s shots but keeping them in play in the style of the great Bill Russell, had eight blocked shots. Spencer Suchy had a career high 25 points, 11 of his points coming in the final quarter to squelch any thoughts of a Shelby comeback.

NM was all alone in second place, one game behind Mason County Central following their 71-60 victory over Hart. Nathan Crosswait had a career high 25 points, many of his points coming on putback rebounds. Steve Privasky and Rod Melton each had 13 points as NM improved to 5-1 in the WMC.

Any thoughts NM might have had about defeating Mason County went out the window in the third quarter as the Spartans took a two-game lead in the WMC with a 66-40 thumping of the upstart Norsemen. MCC went on a 13-1 run and scored 24 points to start the second half and shut down all the Norse players except Drew Naymick who had 20 points.

The Norse had little trouble in disposing of a 1-11 Ravenna team in a 69-45 romp over the Bulldogs. Steve Privasky had a huge game for NM with 15 points and 17 rebounds to lead the Norsemen who made their first 10 free throw attempts in the first half. Four Norsemen were in double figures with Spencer Suchy (14), Drew Naymick (12) and Rod Melton (11) joining Privasky.

How likely would it be in a game between two Class D schools where two of the players in a game would be future teammates at a basketball blue blood school like Michigan State? Both Drew Naymick and Pentwater’s Jason Aerts would be teammates and lifelong friends for Tom Izzo’s Spartans. Although Naymick had 20 points and Aerts but seven points, it was Pentwater who improved to 10-1 on the season with a 59-54 win over the Norsemen on the Falcons home court. The Falcons Joel Closs was the spark that propelled Pentwater as he scored 24 points, including his 1000th point to lead Pentwater to what would prove to be the final victory over the Norse in the two school’s history. Naymick had 12 blocks in the game, many of those blocks coming from shots attempted by his buddy Aerts. However, it was Aerts and his Falcons that would leave the court as the winners.

In what likely will go down as their biggest win of the season, the Norsemen stopped another losing streak, this time a 72-67 victory over Whitehall. The Norse stopped a Whitehall winning streak that had reached 10 games and broke a tie for second place in the West Michigan Conference. 6’7 Steve Privasky had perhaps his finest game in a Norse uniform with 19 points and six rebounds. The other half of NM’s twin towers, 6’8 Drew Naymick followed with 15 points, seven rebounds and three blocked shots. Four Norsemen reached double figures in the big win; in addition to Privasky and Naymick, Spencer Suchy had 14 and Rod Melton 12 points.

After the big win over Whitehall NM struggled somewhat to earn a 58-51 road victory against a struggling Montague team with a 1-12 record. NM led 27-13 at the halftime break as they were outscored by Montague in the second half to make the final score much closer. Drew Naymick had 14 points and blocked seven shots while Spencer Suchy also netted 14 for the Norsemen. The loss by Whitehall paled when tragedy occurred just days later with of the death of their coach.

There was no 36-point blowout in the second meeting of the season between NM and Oakridge. In fact, the Norsemen 66-30 winners in the first meeting at Oakridge, had to make a furious fourth quarter comeback to send the game into overtime. Spencer Suchy’s 3-pointer with less than a minute to go tied the game. After an Oakridge basket Drew Naymick scored on a putback with three seconds remaining to send the game into overtime. NM then outscored the visiting Eagles by four in the extra session to win 67-63. NM got help from several players in this game. Nick Marietti had 15 points, Rod Melton 14, Spencer Suchy 12, while Drew Naymick filled up the stat sheet with 10 points, 10 rebounds and six blocked shots.

Three days prior to NM’s Tuesday night game with Holton, there was very sad news from Whitehall as the Vikings popular head coach Mike Rohen had died of a brian aneurysm. Many years later, while interviewing at that time the head coach of Jacksonville University, Tony Jasick, I knew that Tony had a young daughter by the name of Rohen. Jasick, who played for Rohen while playing for Whitehall high school, thought so highly of his former coach that he named his daughter after his beloved former coach.

The Holton-NM game was a high scoring affair that was won by the Norse 83-71 as five Norsemen reached double figures led by Drew Naymick’s 19. Steve Privasky added 18, Rod Melton 15, Nick Marietti 14, and Spencer Suchy 10 as NM matched last season’s wins at 12.

NM took an early 20-12 lead after the first quarter and kept up the steady pressure the rest of the way to defeat Hart 65-52. Balanced scoring again was the rule for the victors with four in double figures led by Spencer Suchy’s 18 points, seven assists and five steals. Drew Naymick had 16 points while both Naymick and Steve Privasky each had 10 rebounds. Privasky and Nick Marietti each chipped in with 10 points as NM wins their 13th game on the season, the most wins since their head coach Jeff Cooke was in his senior year back in 1981.

NM’s next game was played on a Monday and there could not have been a bigger contrast in games than the second game of the season between NM and Shelby. After scoring 76 points in a 76-68 win earlier in the season, the Norsemen scored a meager 29 in the second contest in a 37-29 loss to the Tigers. However, a Rick Zoulek coached team had a knack for giving Norse misery over the years. Only Drew Naymick was in double figures for NM with 11 points.

The Spartans of Mason County left little doubt as to who was best in the West Michigan Conference in 2000. The Spartans ran the table in the WMC with a perfect 14-0 record after a convincing 67-44 win over the Norsemen. NM would have to settle for a second-place tie with both Shelby and Whitehall with identical 10-4 WMC records. There was a good post matchup between the Spartan’s 6’8 senior Dan Aultmaan and NM’s 6’8 freshman Drew Naymick. Aultman scored 25 and Naymick 18 with Naymick drawing high praise from the senior Aultman. “He’s going to be a real good player,” said Aultman. “He’s just a freshman, but he was moving me around down there. A couple of times I had to think twice about putting up a shot.”

Playing the Class D district on their home floor NM had no trouble in defeating Holland Calvary Baptist 70-47. Rod Melton scored a career high 28 points that included knocking down six 3-pointers, one away from the record of seven set by Joel Johnson in 1992. There would be no time to rest for the Norsemen because waiting in the wings less than 24 hours later would be their arch nemesis, West Michigan Christian, the defending state Class D champions.

The Norse had the misfortune to run into a buzz-saw as the Warriors connected on nine three pointers to once again eliminate the Norse from the playoffs for the 11th consecutive time. NM got 48 points from Drew Naymick (26) and Rod Melton (22) but received little else from the rest of the team as NM’s season ends at 14-8, their best record since the WMC championship team of 1981. Christian would once again make it to the Class D state finals only to lose to Detroit City. With only one senior graduating, the Norse were hopeful of even better things in 2001.

N Muskegon 45 Musk Catholic 52 Steve Privasky 14, Nick Marietti 12

N Muskegon 56 Ravenna 45 Spencer Suchy 14, Nathan Crosswait 13

N Muskegon 79 Freesoil 48 Rod Melton 20, Drew Naymick 18

N Muskegon 47 Whitehall 63 Crosswait 9, Suchy 8

N Muskegon 63 Walkerville 45 Marietti 17

N Muskegon 71 Montague 62 Privasky 17, Marietti & Suchy 14

N Muskegon 58 WMC 69 Privasky 20, Melton 17

N Muskegon 66 Oakridge 30 Marietti 24, Naymick 11

N Muskegon 76 Shelby 68 Suchy 25, Naymick 17, Privasky 10

N Muskegon 71 Hart 60 Crosswait 15, Privasky & Melton 13

N Muskegon 40 Mason Co 66 Naymick 20

N Muskegon 69 Ravenna 45 Privasky 15, Suchy 14, Naymick 12

N Muskegon 54 Pentwater 59 Naymick 20

N Muskegon 72 Whitehall 67 Privasky 19, Naymick 15, Suchey 14

N Muskegon 58 Montague 51 Naymick & Suchy 14, Marietti 12

N Muskegon 67 Oakridge (ot) 63 Marietti 15, Melton 14, Suchy 12

N Muskegon 83 Holton 71 Naymick 19, Privasky 18, Melton 15

N Muskegon 65 Hart 54 Suchy 18, Naymick 16, Privasky 11

N Muskegon 29 Shelby 37 Naymick 11

N Muskegon 44 Mason Co 67 Naymick 18, Privasky 10

N Muskegon\*70 Holland Cal.Bap 47 Melton 28, Naymick 12, Privasky 10

N Muskegon\* 68 WMC 83 Naymick 26, Melton 22

**2000-2001 (Coach Jeff Cooke 15-6, Mason Co WMC champs)**

Expectations were through the roof for the 2000-01 season and why not. NM was returning four starters from their young, but winning team from the previous year.

Both starting guards returned for head coach Jeff Cooke. Now seasoned seniors, with both averaging about 10 points a game in their junior season, Rod Melton and Nick Marietti would bring valuable experience to the backcourt. And NM fans had to be drooling over the thought of seeing 6’9 sophomore Drew Naymick in the front court with 6’7 Steve Privasky. But wait --- During the off season Privasky had made the decision to transfer to West Michigan Christian, even though due to MHSAA rules he would not be able to play for the Warriors until the second half of the season. Derrick McCarty developed into a very good fourth piece of the puzzle, but with the loss of Privasky, NM could never find that fifth man.

NM began the season on a promising note by snapping a six-game losing streak, and fifth in the last five seasons by edging Muskegon Catholic 46-43. Drew Naymick showed his skills early by scoring 19 points, 13 rebounds and six blocked shots. Derrick McCarty helped Naymick on the boards with 12 rebounds while Rod Melton chipped in with six assists and five steals.

In a game tabbed as The Game of the Week in West Michigan, it was the upstart Norsemen hosting Mason County Central, winners of three of the last four West Michigan Conference titles. It appeared as Mason County was going to blow NM out of their own gym as the visitors from Scottville had a stunning 34-14 lead at halftime. The Norse regrouped at halftime and outscored MCC 23-5 in the third quarter and even took a lead on a Nick Mariettu 3-pointer with five minutes left in the game. The Spartans didn’t fold and kept their poise and applied the relenting full court pressure that created 25 NM turnovers to win going away 58-49. The Norse didn’t help themselves down the stretch as they made only 1 of 9 field goals. Rod Melton topped NM scorers with 16 with Drew Naymick adding 14.

Your author, as well as hundreds of his former players and students, were saddened with the passing of long-time NM coach, teacher and athletic director, Bob Morris, who passed away on December 14, 2000. Morris not only was my coach at NMHS during my prep days but became a close friend. I was humbled to give the eulogy for this great man at his funeral.

The Norsemen built a 38-27 lead after three quarters and kept a steady pace in the final quarter to subdue winless Ravenna 53-40. The three returning starters from the previous season paced NM with Drew Naymick (15), Rod Melton (14), and Nick Marietti (13) scoring all but 11 points for NM.

The Norsemen then participated in a holiday tournament hosted by Spring Lake. No longer would NM play a pair of Class D schools, Walkerville and Freesoil who combined won only two games against NM. The Norsemen’s opening round opponent was Godwin Heights, a team North Muskegon hadn’t played since they were only a 10th grade school in 1933. Sixty-Seven years later they would meet in Spring Lake, and the results were the same as their first meeting, a Godwin Heights victory, 61-45. Drew Naymick with 18 points was the only Norse player who scored more than six points against the Furniture City five. NM was unable to handle the pressure defense from Godwin Heights as they committed 23 turnovers. Naymick accounted very well of himself with 11 rebounds and six blocked shots.

The Norse would then play Whitehall in a consolation game with the Vikings edging the Norse 67-65. The Viking’s Brent Smith’s 3-point play with 15 seconds left was the clincher for Whitehall in a game that was tight all the way. Drew Naymick again was the only NM player to reach double figures with a season high 26 points while grabbing 13 rebounds.

Oddly enough, Whitehall and NM would meet once again in a rare back-to-back matchup to begin 2001. NM would win the second of three games played in the season between the two rivals as Rod Melton led the way with 16 points, seven assists and five steals. Drew Naymick finished with 14 points and 14 rebounds while Derrick McCarty also had 14 for the Norsemen.

NM would then face their arch nemesis West Michigan Christian for the second year in a row as the two schools would continue a regular season schedule that is still in effect as of this writing in 2024. The Norse finally snapped a 13-game losing streak to the Warriors with a 53-46 victory. Drew Naymick nearly became the first NM player in program history to record a triple double as he finished with 19 points, 10 blocked shots and nine rebounds. Rod Melton also had a fine game for NM with 14 points, eight rebounds and six assists. The senior guard also came through in the stretch coming up with two steals which he converted into layups in the game’s final two minutes to seal the deal for NM. Derrick McCarty also was in double figures for the Norse with 10 points. The Warriors were playing without 6’7 senior Steve Privasky who stunned Norse followers when he decided to transfer to WMC after his junior year at NMHS. Due to MHSAA rules Privasky would have to sit out the first half of the season until after the semester break, a surprising decision to say the least.

Drew Naymick had another stat killing night in NM’s 64-57 win over Montague. Naymick scored 23 points, grabbed 11 rebounds, blocked eight shots and had four steals. NM led the Wildcats 34-14 at halftime and then held on to collect their 5th victory of the season. Also in double figures for NM were Rod Melton with 14, Nick Marietti with 11 and Mike Wiasura with 10.

Balanced scoring keyed NM’s 65-45 win over Oakridge led By Rob Melton’s 19 points and eight assists. Nick Marietti had 11 points as did Drew Naymick who also grabbed 10 rebounds and blocked six shots. Mike Waisura was in double figures for the second straight game with 10 points.

NM hit their free throws at the right time and moved into sole possession of first place in the West Michigan Conference with a 76-53 victory over Shelby in a game much closer than the final score. Leading by just two points at 52-50 at the 5:25 mark of the fourth quarter, NM went on a 9-0 run to pad their lead. NM went to the line 22 times in the fourth quarter and converted 18 of those free throws to earn the victory. Drew Naymick nearly had another triple double as he scored 16 points 12 rebounds and blocked eight shots. Nick Marietti led Norse scorers with 17 points, including a 9-for-10 showing at the free throw line in the fourth quarter. Again, NM had balanced scoring as three other Norsemen scored in double figures: Rob Melton with 16, Derrick McCarty 12 and Rob Wood, with 10 points, had his season high.

NM had two, and perhaps three games during the season where they played far below their potential. One of those sub-par games was their first game of the season against Hart. In NM’s poorest showing at Hart since they scored only nine points in a game on the old Hart gymnasium floor in 1948, NM tallied only 31 points in a 36-31 loss to the Pirates. The loss was even more painful as it cost NM the outright lead in the WMC that they would now share with three other teams. Drew Naymick’s 10 points was the only Norse player in double figures.

The Norsemen then went from rags to riches just days later against Mason County Central. After losing 24 consecutive games against MCC, and a hard-to-believe 38 of their last 39 games with the Spartans, NM finally broke their longest losing streak against an opponent in school history, and they did it convincingly with a 66-37 victory over the MCC five. NM showed early that this losing streak was about to come to an end as they enjoyed a 41-16 lead at halftime in front of a shocked home crowd in Scottville. Rod Melton matched his season high with 19 points while Derrick McCarty also had one of his highest scoring outputs on the season with 17 points. Nick Marietti chipped in with 13 while Drew Naymick settled for 12 points.

There was little doubt who was going to end the game the winner in NM’s 68-30 win over Pentwater. And although they lost the game Pentwater’s Jason Aert’s can always boast to his buddy Drew Naymick that ‘even though we lost I held you to eight points while I scored 18.’ Naymick and Aerts would two years later become teammates and lifelong buddies while playing basketball for Tom Izzo’s MSU Spartans. Aerts, who for years has a been a resident of North Muskegon, married NM grad and terrific volleyball and track star Anne Shroeder, daughter of longtime NM assistant football coach Ed Schroeder. In the rout of Pentwater Naymick was content to watch his teammates score the points against Pentwaters’ one-man team in Jason Aerts. Eleven Norsemen scored in the game with Nick Marietti’s 16 points the top point producer.

NM raced out to a big 17-3 lead after the first quarter and finished with a 25-14 run to defeat Ravenna 77-54 on the NM court. Derrick McCarty had a career high with 22 points as Ravenna’s emphasis was on stopping NM’s Drew Naymick who had a season low six points. There was good news and bad news for NM senior guard Nick Marietti. The good news – Marietti scored 17 points – the bad news – Marietti was ejected along with a Bulldog for a little extracurricular activity that not only resulted with the ejection of this game, but he would have to sit out the next game as well, an important WMC matchup with Whitehall. Future NFL lineman with the Philadelphia Eagles Todd Herremans had 12 rebounds for Ravenna.

Whether NM would have won if not for Nick Marietti missing the game due to an ejection from his last game, we’ll never know in NM’s loss to Whitehall 49-45. Drew Naymick did his part. The 6’9 sophomore center scored 20 points on 9-of-10 shooting which leaves a question as to why the big guy didn’t get the ball more? Derrick McCarty added nine as the loss slipped the Norse back in second place, one game behind league leading Shelby. Naymick also recorded seven rebounds and blocked nine shots. As one who has watched hundreds of NM basketball games since the 1940s, I’m not sure NM ever had a team block nine shots over an entire season!

NM got off to a blistering start as they welcomed Nick Marietti back into the lineup. The senior guard did not play in the NM loss to Whitehall and to show how much he was missed in the NM loss Marietti blitzed Montague for 21 points in leading the Norse to a 73-60 victory.

NM was next squared up with an Oakridge team that had been struggling to score points as well as wins as they were 0-12 in conference play. The Eagles scored but 20 points in their recent loss to Shelby and didn’t fare much better against NM in a 56-27 loss to the Norsemen. Nick Marietti continued his hot shooting with 20 points as the remaining Norse points were stretched out evenly among eight players.

Marietti scored 15 of his 20 points in the third quarter. Rod Melton had eight assists while Drew Naymick blocked 10 shots.

NM’s big four were all in double figures as NM warmed up for their upcoming big showdown with Shelby with a 69-53 victory over a stubborn Holton team. NM outscored the Red Devils in every quarter and put the game away with a 22-12 run in the fourth quarter. Drew Naymick (18), Rod Melton (16) and 14 assists, Nick Marietti (15), and Derrick McCarty 12 paced the NM attack.

In a game with a share of first place at stake NM hit its first seven shots to stun Shelby 15-1 enroute to a commanding 68-49 win at Shelby. NM pasted together their best game of the season, but could they do the same when the two teams meet again in the first game of the playoffs? Derrick McCarty tallied 18 point and pulled down 10 rebounds. Rod Melton had 16 points and eight assists; Nick Marietti had 11 points while Drew Naymick again made his presence felt with 12 points, 11 rebounds, six blocked shots and two dunks.

It was now up to the Norsemen to clinch at least a tie in the WMC and defeat a Hart team that defeated NM in a low scoring 37-31 tilt a month earlier. The Norsemen took care of business and had no problem in defeating the Pirates 69-46. For the third straight game NM’s foursome of Naymick (20) Melton (18) McCarty (13) and Marietti (10) were in double figures. NM was all prepped and appeared peaking for their first-round game against Shelby, a team they had whipped twice during the regular season and shared the WMC title with the Tigers. Or were they?

Shelby and North Muskegon shared WMC honors with identical 11-3 conference records. NM finished the regular season at 15-5, their most wins in more than 20 years while Shelby completed their season at 16-4, with two of those defeats being dealt by the Norsemen. With NM having defeated Shelby less than two weeks ago by 19 points – at Shelby – NM had to be considered a favorite.

Among those who left the Shelby gym stunned after the Tigers had defeated the Norsemen 50-42 was your author and my broadcast partner Gene Young who traveled to Shelby to bring the folks back in Muskegon the Game of the Week. The Tiger bench outscored the Norse reserves 24-9 and got a huge lift from sophomore center Marty Clevenger who came off the bench to score 13 points. Meanwhile the Norsemen, after having four players score in double figures in three straight games only had one player, Drew Naymick in double figures with 18. “They did a good job double and triple teaming Naymick. When they do that, we’ve got to hope somebody else starts hitting,” said NM coach Cooke following the game. Naymick still managed to score 18 points, but the Tigers held NM’s other scoring threats, Rod Melton, Nick Marietti and Derrick McCarty for only 14 combined points.

N Muskegon 46 Musk Catholic 43 Drew Naymick 19, Derrick McCarty 8

N Muskegon 49 Mason Co 58 Rod Melton 16m Naymick 14

N Muskegon 53 Ravenna 40 Naymick 15, Melton 14, Nick Marietti 13

N Muskegon 45 Godwin Heights 61 Naymick 18

N Muskegon 65 Whitehall 67 Naymick 26, Melton & Marietti 9

N Muskegon 68 Whitehall 55 Melton 16, Naymick & McCarty 14

N Muskegon 53 WMC 46 Naymick 10 points, Melton 14

N Muskegon 64 Montague 57 Naymick 26, Melton 14, Marietti 11

N Muskegon 65 Oakridge 45 Melton 19, Marietti & Naymick 11

N Muskegon 76 Shelby 63 Marietti 17, Naymick & Melton 16

N Muskegon 31 Hart 36 Naymick 10

N Muskegon 66 Mason Co 37 Melton 19, McCarty 17, Marietti 13

N Muskegon 68 Pentwater 30 Marietti 16, Kirk Long 10, Melton 10

N Muskegon 77 Ravenna 54 McCarty 22, Marietti 17, Long 10

N Muskegon 45 Whitehall 49 Naymick 20, McCarty 9

N Muskegon 73 Montague 60 Marietti 21, McCarty 17, Naymick 13

N Muskegon 56 Oakridge 27 Marietti 20, Mike Waisura 9

N Muskegon 69 Holton 53 Naymick 18, Melton 16, Marietti 15

N Muskegon 68 Shelby 49 McCarty 18, Melton18, Naymick 12

N Muskegon 69 Hart 46 Naymick 20, Melton 16, McCarty 13,

N Muskegon\* 42 Shelby 50 Naymick 18

**2001-2002 (Coach Jeff Cooke 16-7, NM, Whitehall, Shelby co- champs)**

Only Drew Naymick returned from the co-champs from 2001-01 but the allure of playing with a player with the talent of Naymick lured a couple of his buddies to transfer to NMHS, Matt Borushko, and midway through the season, Erik Kravako. Never in the more than 90 years of NMHS basketball has NM fielded a more talented trio. The best news --- they were all juniors and would only get better.

It wasn’t until Kravako became eligible in mid-January did the Norse add the key piece to their puzzle. With Kravako added to the lineup North Muskegon would go on an 11-game winning streak, their best winning streak since NM basketball began in 1932. However, until Kravako’s arrival NM struggled with a 5-6 record. To begin the season Naymick would be joined by three newcomers to the lineup. Gage Hyrnes, Brodie Seyferth, and Andy Gowell would join Borushko and Naymick to comprise the starting five. Until Kravako arrived this five would score virtually all of NM’s points, clearly showing one deficiency with NM basketball: a lack of depth.

North Muskegon got off to a 22-12 first quarter lead over Muskegon Catholic and as it turned out it was much needed as MCC made a fourth quarter comeback after NM’s 6’10 junior center Drew Naymick had fouled out with still six minutes remaining in the contest. NM hung on to win 84-81 as Matt Borushko quickly made his presence known. The junior transfer from Reeths Puffer scored 31 points, which oddly enough would be his career high at NMHS although he would have numerous 20 plus point games in his two-year career at NMHS. It is interesting to note but not only did Borushko have a season high in this game but so would guard Gage Hynes with his 12 points. Andy Gowell had 13 in the win over the Crusaders, just two points short of his career high. Naymick scored 22 points and blocked seven shots before his premature exit with foul trouble.

It looked like NM was about to blow Mason County Central out of their own gym when the two teams left the Scottville court at halftime with NM enjoying a comfortable 35-25 lead. However, the host Spartans came out a different team in the second half as they outscored NM 45-22 in posting a 70-57 win over the Norse. Drew Naymick and Matt Borushko were the big guns for NM with 24 and 17 points respectively. Gage Hyrnes added nine, but the rest of the Norsemen could score only seven points.

NM then evened their record in the WMC with an easy 65-49 win over a Ravenna team that was still looking for its first win. The big duo of Naymick (23) and Burushko (18) accounted for 41 of NM’s 65 points. Gage Hyrnes was in double figures with 11, the last time all season Hyrnes would hit double digits in scoring.

NM would then participate for the second year in a row in the Spring Lake Holiday classic. And NM would also for the second straight year go winless in the tourney.

NM played the host Spring Lake Lakers in the first game of the tournament and exploded to jump out to a 20-3 lead to begin the game with Matt Burushko hitting his first five shots. A very young Bill Core Spring Lake team then went into a full court press and that worked to perfection as Spring Lake took off to the tune of 50 points over the middle two quarters to take a 60-54 lead and then put the Norse away with a 9-0 run to start the fourth quarter. NM’s lack of depth was magnified in this game as Burushko and Drew Naymick accounted for 34 of NM’s first half 35 points. Naymick scored a game high 30 points to become the 20th member of the NM 30-point club while Burushko scored 24. Only 13 points were scored by the rest of the NM players. The game was only the seventh game played over the years with Spring Lake, and although 23 years has passed and Bill Core remains as the Spring Lake coach, the two teams have not meant since this game in December of 2001.

NM would again face Whitehall in the consolation game with Whitehall again coming out on top 75-61. Whitehall broke open a close game with a 20-8 run in the second quarter. Whitehall had five players score in double figures while NM had but two, a problem that would persist for NM until Erick Kravako, a transfer from Reeths Puffer becomes eligible in mid-January.

Just as they did a year earlier NM and Whitehall would again play back-to-back games after meeting a week prior in the Spring Lake Classic. The story was much the same except the results showed Whitehall winning more handedly in the second game 89-65. Again, Whitehall’s superior depth was evident with five players in double figures with Matt Burshko (26) and Drew Naymick (24) combining for 50 of NM’s 65 points.

The Norsemen got healthy in a hurry as they took a jaunt to Pentwater and came away with an easy 75-35 victory over an outmanned Pentwater five. Norse coach Jeff Cooke was able to substitute liberally throughout the contest. Matt Burushko played long enough to score 23 points and Drew Naymick got plenty of rest after tallying 15 points. Nine Norsemen scored in the game with Tony Shyne scoring a season high seven and Brodie Seyferth likewise had seven for a season high.

For the second time during the early part of the season NM jumped out to a big first half lead (24-4) only to see the lead slip away during a 58-54 loss to West Michigan Christian. The Warriors wily ‘ole’ veteran coach Jim Goorman, just as he has done often in the past against the Norse, changed his defenses and it worked once again. Matt Burushko, who scored 19 points in the first half was held scoreless in the second half while Drew Naymick scored only seven of his 17 points in the final two quarters. However, his final two points, which was not recognized at the time, was the 1001 points in Naymick’s career.

Following a tight first half the Norsemen pulled away with a 23-14 third quarter run in defeating Montague 67-55 on the Wildcats home court. Although it’s beginning to sound like a broken record the duo of Naymick (26) and Bursuhko (17) carried NM to victory. Naymick came one block away from a triple double with 12 rebounds and nine blocks complementing his 26 game high points.

The NM duo of Burushko and Naymick then outdid themselves as they combined for a ridiculous 60 points in a 72-58 victory over Oakridge. College coaches are now taking a close look at Drew Naymick as he came up with a monster game against the Eagles. Drew scored a career high at the time 35 points, grabbed 14 rebounds and for the second time on the season, and third time in his career, came one blocked shot away from a triple double, a rarity in prep ball with the games contested for 32 minutes.

Shelby applied the clamps defensively as they allowed NM a season low 40 points in a 57-40 home court win against NM. Drew Naymick was held to 17 and Matt Burushko only six, well below both player’s averages. The win boosted Shelby’s record in the WMC to a perfect 6-0 while the Norsemen’s record in the WMC fell to 3-3, leaving them three games behind the league leaders, and their chances to repeat as co-champs looked bleak. However – hold everything – help was on the way.

Not only did the Norsemen welcome with open arms 6’3 junior Erick Kravako but nine out of NM’s next 11 games would be at home. With Kravako netting 13 points in his debut as a Norsemen the Norse wouldn’t let a big 22-4 first quarter run get away from them as it did in two earlier losses during the season. For only the second time all season NM had three players in double figures in their 66-42 win over Hart. Matt Borushko netted 18, Kravako 13 and Naymick 11. Kravako didn’t just score 13 points. He increased his value to the Norsemen by collecting 10 rebounds and dishing off eight assists. Naymick with 11 blocks, amazingly had as many blocks as points as things were now looking very favorable for NM basketball.

NM nearly let one get away from them again as NM, once leading 24-7, needed a put back rebound basket from Drew Naymick with two seconds remaining in the game to give NM a thrilling 48-47 win over Mason County Central. Naymick’s game winner trumped a Scottville three-pointer that gave the visiting Spartans the lead at 47-46 with nine seconds left. Naymick finished with 15 points, seven assists and seven blocked shots. Erick Kravako finished with 10 while Gage Hyrns chipped in with nine points on three made 3-pointers.

NM had to wait a day as their Friday night scheduled WMC game with Ravenna was postponed a day due to bad weather. For the second straight game the Norse needed a rebound basket off a missed Norse shot by Drew Naymick to secure a 56-54 victory over a stubborn Ravenna team. The win drew NM within a game of first place as parity was the norm in the WMC in the 2001-02 season. Naymick paced NM with 23 points with Eric Kravako adding 11 and Andy Gowell 9. Surprisingly, high scoring Matt Borushko was held to but three points, well below his average.

Perhaps energized with the appearance of MSU coach Tom Izzo, who was interested in a 6’10 redhead in a NM uniform, NM atoned for two earlier losses to Whitehall by stomping the Vikings 74-59 and thrust themselves right back into the hunt in the West Michigan Conference race. The chase was on for luring Naymick as UM coach Tommy Amaker was at an earlier NM game. Many big-time college coaches would visit NM during the next few months. Izzo surely didn’t lose interest in Naymick as the big redhead scored 28 points, had 14 rebounds six blocks and three crowd appealing slam dunks. The big three put their talents on display as Matt Borushko scored 22 points and Erik Kravako 15, scoring all but 9 of NM total of 74 points.

After an emotional win over Whitehall NM lost their mojo somewhat as they had to hold off a determined Montague team to earn a 65-63 win. NM, leading by three points and with Montague with the ball with seconds left in the game, intentionally fouled a Wildcat to prevent a possible game-tying 3-pointer. The strategy worked, the Wildcat made the first, missed the second but NM grabbed the rebound to preserve the win and keep their WMC title hopes alive. The trio of Borushko (24), Naymick (23) and Kravako (11), scored all but seven of NM’s 65 points.

With Oakridge coach Brandon Barry focused on stopping Drew Naymick down low, NM took advantage of some free space to connect on nine 3-pointers in downing Oakridge 72-51. The unselfish Naymick was content to let his teammates fire away from out court and finished with a season low six points. Matt Borushko made four 3-pointers and scored 25 to lead the Norse. Andy Gowell scored a career high 15 and Eric Krvako 12.

NM had a midweek tune-up game with a 2-14 Holton team and cruised to a 59-36 win over the Red Devils. A 14-3 opening quarter set the tone for the Norse as the Holton shooters had a tough time as they were rejected an astounding 16 times by Drew Naymick. Matt Borushko fired in 21 points and Naymick 13 as the stage was set for a big clash three days later with Shelby.

Shelby had played a near perfect game in their earlier 17-point victory over NM, but that was before Erik Kravako donned a Norse uniform at the semester break. Tom Izzo and his assistant Brian Gregory were again at courtside in a game that was far from perfect. Only the final score was perfect for NM coach Jeff Cooke as his Norsemen had outlasted Shelby 45-40 to move from three games back to earn a tie in a logjam at the top of the West Michigan Conference. NM trailed 28-27 before a key 3-pointer from Kravako and a layup from Andy Gowell built the Norse lead to 34-28. Drew Naymick’s third dunk of the game bumped the lead to 38-31. NM held on from there for the victory as Naymick was again a one-man wrecking crew. The 6’10 redhead produced 18 points, 14 rebounds, six blocked shots, five steals and three assists.

One game remained in the WMC as well as the regular season and NM was almost assured of at least a tie as their final round opponent was a winless Hart team with an 0-18 record, a far cry from the glory days of the Stretch Hansen led Pirates from 1943 and other Pirate powerhouse teams until the middle 1950s. Still looking for their first victory as a huge underdog the Pirates led NM at halftime 34-26. It was then that Drew Naymick took charge as he led NM to a 26-9 advantage in the third quarter as the Norse eventually pulled away to secure a 75-62 victory. Naymick notched his career high in this game with 39 points while grabbing 15 rebounds. The win moved NM into a 3-way tie at the top of the WMC with Shelby and Whitehall, all sporting a 11-3 record in conference play.

NM would finish their 2001-02 season by playing their final four games at Hart, with three of those games in Class C tournament play.

Although NM had beaten Montague twice during the regular season the Cats played NM close in both of those games giving the Wildcats confidence, they could pull off a first-round tournament upset. And they nearly did. A possible game winning 15-footer at the buzzer by Montague missed its mark and NM was fortunate to come away with the win. Montague led NM most of the game It was not until early in the final quarter when NM took its first lead at 51-50 on an Erik Kravako layup. Down the stretch the lead changed four times as both teams squandered numerous opportunities to take control. Drew Naymick finished with a game high 17 points and eight blocks. Matt Borushko had 16 and Kravako finished with 14, setting up another date with Shelby in the district semi-finals.

In a game that was nearly a complete opposite of their last meeting in a low-scoring 40-35 NM victory, the district battle saw plenty of offensive fireworks as NM edged the Tigers 70-69. The Norse made a huge comeback to earn the win as they trailed Shelby by 11 points late in the third quarter. NM that went on a serious 20-4 run over a six-minute span to seal the win. The NM big trio again dominated the scoring for NM with Naymick leading the way with 24, closely followed by Borushko with 21 and Kravako with 18.

NM led Muskegon Heights for much of the game but ran out of gas in the late stages of the third quarter as the Heights depth, pressing defense, and team speed proved too much for the Norse as the junior dominate Norsemen fell 90-71. With University of Michigan coach Tommy Amaker looking on, as well as Stanford head coach Mark Montgomery who traveled all the way from California and traveled the snow- and ice-covered Michigan highways to Hart, Drew Naymick didn’t disappoint in the district championship game. Drew finished with 27 points, but it was when Naymick went to the bench in the second quarter with two personal fouls was when the Heights got back in the ball game by going on a 13-2 run. Matt Borushko finished with 23 points while the lone senior on the team, Andy Gowell had 12 points. NM’s season ended with a 16-7 record with 11 of those wins coming in the final 12 games of the season before losing to a Muskegon Heights team that advanced all the way to the final four at MSU.

The following year Muskegon Heights was a Class B school. One can only speculate as to how far the Norsemen would have advanced into the playoffs in 2002 if Muskegon Heights was Class B. The Heights had 503 students enrolled in 2002, (NM had 287). In 2003 Heights gained five students to go from a high-end Class C to a low-end Class B. The Heights missed advancing into Class B by a handful of students in 2002, a move up in class NM would have more than welcomed.

N Muskegon 84 Musk Catholic 81 Matt Burushko 31, Drew Naymick 22

N Muskegon 57 Mason Co 70 Naymick 24, Burushko 17, Gage Hyrnes 9

N Muskegon 65 Ravenna 49 Naymick 23, Borushko 18, Hyrnes 11

N Muskegon 67 Spring Lake 79 Naymick 30, Burushko 24

N Muskegon 61 Whitehall 75 Naymick 24, Burushko 16 A. Gowell 9

N Muskegon 65 Whitehall 89 Burushko 26, Naymick 24

N Muskegon 75 Pentwater 35 Burushko 23, Naymick 15

N Muskegon 54 WMC 58 Burishko 19, Naymick 17

N Muskegon 67 Montague 55 Naymick 26, Burushko 17

N Muskegon 72 Oakridge 58 Naymick 35, Burushko 25

N Muskegon 40 Shelby 57 Naymick 17

N Muskegon 66 Hart 42 Borushko 18, Erik Kravako, Naymick 11

N Muskegon 48 Mason Co 47 Naymick 15, Kravako 10, Hyrnes 9

N Muskegon 56 Ravenna 54 Naymick 23, Kravako 11, Gowell 9

N Muskegon 74 Whitehall 59 Naymick 28, Borishko 22, Kravako 15

N Muskegon 65 Montague 63 Borushko 24, Naymick 23, Kravako 11

N Muskegon 73 Oakridge 51 Borishko 25, Gowell 15, Kravako 12

N Muskegon 59 Holton 36 Borushko 21, Naymick 13 & 16 blocks, WIN 600

N Muskegon 40 Shelby 35 Naymick 18, Kravako 8

N Muskegon 75 Hart 62 Naymick 39, Kravako 12, Burishko 11

N Muskegon\*57 Montague 56 Naymick 17, Borushko 16, Kravako 14

N Muskegon\*70 Shelby 69 Naymick 24, Borushko 21, Kravako 18

N Muskegon\*71 Musk Heights 90 Naymick 27, Burushko 23, Gowell 12

**2002-2003 (Coach Jeff Cooke 24-2, NM, WMC district & regional champs)**

The 2002-03 North Muskegon team posted an amazing 24-2 record and came oh so close to being the first NM team to advance to the final four in basketball. Never has NM put on the floor at the same time three players with the abilities of Drew Naymick, Matt Borushko and Erik Kravako. The Norse were led by the 6’10 Naymick, who by his senior year had committed to play for Michigan State. The big Red Head was selected to play in the prestigious Michael Jordan all-star post season classic featuring the top 25 players in the entire country. However, due to his loyalty to his high school and NM baseball team, Naymick declined the invitation as MHSAA high school rules would have made Naymick ineligible for baseball where he was an outstanding first basemen. It’s a no-brainer as of this writing to say the 2002-03 team was the greatest team ever fielded in more than 90 years of NM basketball.

NM began the season with a 58-38 win over their traditional opening game rivals from Muskegon Catholic. If NM had one major issue in 2002-03 it was their lack of depth. The heralded trio of Matt Burushko (22) Erik Kravako (20) and Drew Naymick (10) scored all but six of NM’s total, a trademark for Norse basketball during the season. There would be only one game in the entire season when a Norsemen, other than the big three would score in double figures in a game. NM had no trouble in defeating the Crusaders as the game was never in doubt with the Norse taking a commanding 43-24 lead entering the final quarter. Naymick was playing somewhat tentatively as he was recovering from a broken foot but managed to block five shots.

NM led Hart 54-15 forcing a running clock in the final period as NM overwhelmed the Pirates 69-42. Erik Kravako led the Norse with 24 points, Matt Borushko added 11 points and five steals. Still resting his ailing foot Drew Naymick scored but five points but made his presence known with nine rebounds and nine blocked shots. Ten different Norsemen got into the scoring column for NM as Norse head coach Jeff Cooke was able to empty his bench early.

Always a tough opponent over the years NM would win the first of a season sweep with a 62-40 victory over Mason County, the first season sweep over the Spartans since 1981. Drew Naymick, slowly recovering from foot surgery showed that he is starting to get back into peak condition as he scored 24 points, 12 rebounds and eight blocks. Erik Kravako, who’s early fourth quarter breakaway slam dunk sent the Norse fans into a frenzy had 26 points to send the Norsemen into the first ever Greater Muskegon Sports Hall of Fame Classic against Class A Mona Shores with terrific momentum.

In front of a sold-out crowd at Mona Shores High School the Norse ended the game on a 22-5 run to overcome a 50-39 deficit to pull out a thrilling 61-55 win over the host Sailors. Drew Naymick scored eight of his game-high 22 points in the fourth quarter to lead the comeback victory. Erik Kravako came up big for NM with 18 points while Matt Borusko pumped in 13 points and added four assists. NM had a 37-24 rebounding edge over the Sailors with Drew Naymick pulling down 23 missed shots. NM would not receive another invite to the Hall of Fame Classic for the next 19 years.

NM would then face a very talented and undefeated Muskegon Heights team in the finals of the two-day classic. (Now a one-day affair). Drew Naymick put on a show where he had the first triple-double in NM history and it came against the toughest of opponents in the Heights Tigers. NM had one Division 1 player while the Tigers had two in Eddie Spencer (22) and Jesse York (21) as well as a bench far superior to NM. The Norse had only four players score in the 72-58 loss to the Heights led by Naymick’s 23 points. Erik Kravako with 15 and Matt Borusko with 14 were in double figures while Gage Hynes with 6 points were the only NM players with points. Heights went on a 13-2 run late in the second period to break open a tight game as the teams played even the rest of the way in front of another sellout crowd. “Playing a Class A and Class B opponent on consecutive nights will make this team better,” said coach Cooke following the game. “We’re not going to face anyone more athletic or better than the Heights this year,” added Cooke. It would be two months before NM would taste another defeat. Cooke’s words proved prophetic as the Tigers would make it all the way to the Class B championship game in March.

After the Hall of Fame classic NM would face much easier competition and they would rarely be challenged until the playoffs. NM traveled to Ravenna and outscored the Bulldogs in every quarter to earn a 77-55 victory. Erik Kravako joined the now crowded NM 30-point club with a 32-point night against Ravenna. Kravako had a complete game with 11 rebounds. Drew Naymick had 21 points, 10 rebounds and five blocks. “He (Naymick) makes a lot of people around him better,” said Ravenna head coach Mike Dunnock.

A win over a Jim Goorman coached West Michigan Christian team is never easy. NM needed a 22-point fourth quarter in a game where the tempo was slowed down by WMC coach Gorman to finally pull away from the Warriors to earn a 51-41 victory. Eric Kravako and Drew Naymick each scored 16 points while Kravako also contributed 10 rebounds and five steals and Naymick blocked six Warrior shots.

It’s also rare when North Muskegon totally dominates Whitehall in a basketball season. It happened in 2003 and gives further verification of why this NM team was tops in Norse history. NM hit three of their first four 3-point attempts in the first quarter as the Norse enjoyed a commanding 21-4 lead over the Vikings after the game’s first eight minutes. It appears that Drew Naymick flirts with a triple-double in nearly every outing. Against the Vikings Drew had 18 points, 19 rebounds and seven blocked shots in NM’s 76-47 thrashing of Whitehall. Erick Kravako continued his torrid shooting with a game high 23 points with Matt Borushko adding 12 points and six assists.

Montague gave NM a couple of close call games in 2002 but there were few dramatics in 2003. NM again got out of the blocks quickly by jumping out to an 24-7 lead as Drew Naymick scored 10 of his 23 points as NM continued to roll in the WMC with a 74-46 win over the Wildcats. Naymick also added 12 rebounds and seven blocks. Naymick’s buddies Erik Kravako and Matt Borushko each scored 18 points.

Brodie Seyferth had the game of his life as he scored 17 points, 15 of those coming on made 3-pointers as NM took firm control of first place in the WMC with an 81-55 win over Oakridge. Seyferth, an underrated point guard who played in the shadow of Naymick, Kravako and Borushko had his only game on the season where he reached double figures. Naymick had 20 points, 10 rebounds and blocked six shots with Matt Borushko adding 20 points and five assists.

MSU coach Tom Izzo was again back in town to check on his NM recruit Drew Naymick. The 6’10 senior didn’t have one of his signature games, but he did chip in with 11 points, 11 rebounds and 8 blocks. Erick Kravako continued his outstanding play with 22 points and nine rebounds. Matt Borushko totaled 11 points while NM got some fine play from their role players Gage Hyrnes (six points and assists while Brodie Seyferth had three assists as NM had their lowest number of turnovers on the season with 10.

As the second half of the West Michigan Conference season began, it had now become crystal clear that all the teams would be chasing the Norsemen, but to no avail. The Norse started the second half like it began with a win over Hart 56-49. Erick Kravako scored 29 and a team high 12 rebounds with Drew Naymick adding 18 as NM kept their record perfect in the WMC.

Playing on back-to-back nights NM added two more victims to their list with WMC victories over Ravenna (58-43) and Mason County Central (58-47). In their first game against Ravenna the Norse needed a big second half as Ravenna led the heavily favored Norsemen 22-15 at the half. NM then woke up in the second half after a ‘few words of advice’ from coach Cooke to outscore the Bulldogs 43-21 in the second half. Kravako again led NM scorers with 19 with Naymick close behind with 17. Both players pulled down nine rebounds while Matt Borushko added 11 points and five assists.

In a makeup of an earlier games that was scheduled during the week but moved to Saturday due to bad weather, NM made their long trip to Scottville a successful one with an 11-point win over the Spartans to improve to a perfect 10-0 in conference play. The host Spartans had no answer for NM’s Drew Naymick as the big redhead pumped in 19 points to lead the Norse. Matt Borushko added 16, Erik Kravako 9 and Gage Hyrnes 4, the only Norsemen to score in the game.

One would have to go back more than 50 years, to the Bill Duplissis led Norsemen of 1951 to find a game when Whitehall scored less than the 22 points they scored against NM in a 44-22 Norse victory. The Vikings never scored more than seven points in any quarter. After giving up 76 points in their earlier loss to NM, the Vikings went to a stall offense to begin the game but after NM outscored the Vikings 16-6 in the second quarter that strategy clearly failed. The NM trio of Naymick, Kravako and Borushko all scored 13 points, all but five of the Norsemen’s total of 44.

The highlight of NM’s 68-40 victory over Holton came in the opening quarter when Drew Naymick took an alley-oop pass from Gage Hyrns and dunked to eclipse the NM all-time scoring record of 1366 points set by Lee Kakaty. Naymick scored 17 points as did Erik Kravako while the third part of the NM terrific trio, Matt Borushko added 16.

Borushko hoisted up nine 3-point shots and made six for his 18 points, just one made three away from the school record of seven by Joel Johnson in 1992 as NM defeated Pentwater 58-39 on a Wednesday night in February. Drew Naymick, just named as one of the 10 finalists for Mr. Basketball, was content to watch his teammates score as he settled for eight points.

Drew Naymick didn’t take a shot in the first quarter and made but one free throw in the first half as NM’s Matt Borushko was nailing 3-pointers to give NM a 27-22 lead at halftime. Then Naymick took over. Somehow the big redhead who makes his teammates better with his unselfish play had another triple double as he finished with 13 points, 10 rebounds and 10 blocked shots in a 58-39 win over Montague. Borushko finished with 19 points and Erik Kravako netted 12 as NM padded their first-place lead in the WMC.

NM’s next game with Oakridge would be the final game on the Northside court for Drew Naymick and his two pals, Eric Kravako and Matt Borushko. And the terrific trio capped their home court career in style as NM defeated Oakridge 77-51 and in the process clinched the WMC championship with a perfect 13-0 record and an overall record of 18-1, the best in school history. Naymick went out in style with 29 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots. Kravako netted 22 points while Borushko finished with 14. Only the final game of the regular season at Shelby awaited the Norsemen and their chance to complete a perfect season in the WMC.

Playing before a sold-out crowd of 2400 rebid fans on the Shelby home court (about 2000 more fans than the Shelby gym your author played in back in the late 1950s) the Norsemen jumped out to a 7-0 lead and never looked back to defeat Shelby 53-43. Naymick had a typical Drew Naymick game with 20 points and 18 rebounds as several of his teammates pitched in. The backcourt duo of Gage Hyrnes and Brodie Seyferth played an excellent floor game, handling Shelby’s full court pressure and working the ball up court and into the capable hands of the big three scorers. NM only had eight turnovers on the evening with Kravako (15) and Borushko (13) complementing Naymick. With both teams pitted in separate districts there was a great chance these two rivals would meet once again in the regional tournament.

The Norsemen moved south for the Class C district in 2003. South to Muskegon Catholic Central’s Ray Cioe gymnasium where NM’s first opponent was fellow WMC foe Ravenna, a team NM handled easily during the regular season. The tournament game was no different as NM used 32 points and 13 rebounds from Erik Kravako to easily defeat the Bulldogs for the third time on the season. Drew Naymick added 12 points and 11 boards while Brodie Seyferth had five steals and five assists.

The Norse than faced Kent City in the second round in the first meeting between the two schools in 15 years. Drew Naymick and the Norse were too tough for Kent City as the Norse advanced to the district finals with a 68-50 win. Naymick scored 30 points while grabbing 10 rebounds and blocking four shots. Naymick’s buddies also fared well. Erik Kravako added 16 points and seven assists while Matt Borushko had 15 points and nine rebounds.

Waiting to play the Norsemen in the district finals was the team NM probably wanted to see least, the Warriors of West Michigan Christian. The two teams since 1987 had played one another in the district tournaments 12 times, and Christian had won all 12. The MHSAA playoffs had not been kind to Norsemen basketball over the years. It had been 30 years since the Norsemen won a district tournament with WMC being the biggest culprit. It was not a pretty game as the Norse shot only 27 percent from the floor. Anybody who followed NM during the regular season knew that NM got most of their offense from the trio of Naymick, Kravako and Borushko. But that didn’t happen as the big three combined for only 24 points, 14 of those from Naymick. Instead, a pair of role players stepped up big time for the Norsemen. Guards Gage Hyrns and Brodie Seyferth each hit three 3-pointers for nine points each to lead NM to a low scoring 42-34 win and their first district title, many years before the players on the floor were even born.

In what surely was a puzzling site for a regional site, three of the four teams in the regional, were located on the shores of Lake Michigan: NM, Shelby and Fennville.

All three teams had to travel more than two hours east to Sanford-Meridian High School. The Norsemen and Shelby, a couple schools about a half hour from each other on the US 31 Expressway met in the first round on a Wednesday school night in Sanford-Meridian. If that contest would have been played at a neutral site closer to home like Reeths Puffer, as many as 3000 fans would have attended this rivalry game. However, the MHSAA evidently was subservient to Sanford-Meridian, ignoring the travel involved by NM and Shelby and the loss of major dollars that could have enriched the pockets of the MHSAA had the two teams meet somewhere in the middle of Mid-Michigan. My sidekick Gene Young and I broadcast this game as we knew that there were many fans who were reluctant to make the long trip. The game was as exciting as one would expect when Shelby and North Muskegon met in a big game. NM won a thriller 61-58 as Drew Naymick sank 6-of-6 free throws in the game’s final moments to ice the game. Trailing by three points with 12 seconds left in the game after Naymick, in a one-and one situation, hit two clutch free throws, Shelby hoisted a 3-pointer in hopes of sending the game into overtime. However, Naymick was clutch again and not only blocked the shot but caught the ball to end the game. Naymick finished with 21 points with Matt Borushko netting 14 and Erik Kravako 13 to send the Norsemen into the regional finals and another two-hour trip back to Sanford-Meridian.

Followers of North Muskegon sports had a big decision to make: Travel to Kalamazoo to watch the NM volleyball team play in the state semi-finals or drive 150 miles down turning, twisting roads for Friday’s regional championship basketball game against a Sanford-Meridian team playing on its home floor. No problem. Both teams won. In fact, the girls’ volleyball game was over by about 3:00 PM with the gals winning which gave hundreds of NM’s volleyball fans time to make the long trek to watch the boys game. NM disappointed the mostly favorable crowd of 2000 fans with a near perfect game to triumph 53-40 and win their first regional crown since 1974. The game was not as close as the final score as Sanford-Meridian scored the game’s final 11 points against NM’s reserves. Matt Borushko set the tone early with a couple of 3-pointers. NM then silenced the home rooters with a 14-0 run and with 2:44 remaining in the first half NM enjoyed a commanding 26-9 lead. Borushko finished as NM’s high scorer with 18 points with Naymick filling up the stat sheet with 13 points, eight rebounds and four blocks. Erik Kravako was far below his average with nine points, but he contributed to the win in multiple ways. Kravako played a key part with his ball handling in breaking the press, had seven rebounds, four assists and three blocked shots. And how did NM celebrate their victory the next day? They drove to Kalamazoo to cheer on the girls playing for a state volleyball championship.

Norse fans couldn’t have asked for more. NM, playing perennial state powerhouse Flint Beecher, probably played their best game of the season but fell just short of their first trip to the final four with a 60-54 loss to Flint Beecher. NM led at all the stops only to be outpointed 17-9 in the deciding final quarter. The Norse out rebounded Beecher 20-16 and shot 52 percent from the floor and hit 9-of-10 free throws. Drew Naymick capped his brilliant career with yet another big-time effort in the loss. Drew scored 23 points, grabbed seven rebounds and blocked eight shots. Naymick clearly outplayed his future teammate at MSU Marquis Gray, who finished with 14 points and seven rebounds. Twenty-two years has now gone by, and still no NM team has matched the exploits of the team of 2002-03. Drew Naymick set an all-time state record for blocked shots in a career with 527. He would also do the same at the highest level in college basketball while starring at Michigan State. Matt Borushko and Erik Kravako would also play college ball at Muskegon Community College. To have three players from one team play at the next level was unprecedented in NM basketball annals.

N Muskegon 58 Musk Cath. 38 Matt Borushko 22, Erik Kravko 22

N Muskegon 69 Hart 42 Kravako 23, Borushko 11

N Muskegon 62 Mason Co 40 Kravako 26, Drew Naymick 24

N Muskegon 61 Mona Shores 55 Naymich 22, Kravako 18, Borushko 13

N Muskegon 58 Musk Heights 72 Naymick 23, Kravako 15, Borushko 14

N Muskegon 77 Ravenna 55 Kravako 32, Naymick 21

N Muskegon 51 WMC 41 Naymick & Kravako 10, Borishko 9

N Muskegon 76 Whitehall 47 Kravako 23, Naymick18, Borushko 12

N Muskegon 74 Montague 46 Naymick 23, Borushko & Kravako 18

N Muskegon 81 Oakridge 55 Naymick & Borushko 20 Brode Seyferth 17

N Muskegon 53 Shelby 43 Karvako 22, Naymick & Borushko 11

N Muskegon 56 Hart 39 Kravako 29, Naymick 18

N Muskegon 58 Ravenna 43 Kravako 19, Naymick 17, Borushko 11

N Muskegon 58 Mason Co 47 Naymick 29, Borushko 16, Kravako 9

N Muskegon 44 Whitehall 22 Naymick, Borushko & Kravako 13

N Muskegon 68 Holton 40 Naymick & Kravako 17, Borushko 16

N Muskegon 58 Pentwater 39 Borushko 18, Kravako 10, Naymick 8

N Muskegon 58 Montague 39 Borushko 19, Naymick 13, Kravako 12

N Muskegon 77 Oakridge 51 Naymick 29, Kravako 22, Barushko 14

N Muskegon 65 Shelby 54 Naymick 20, Kravako 15, Borushko 13

N Muskegon\* 66 Ravenna 41 Kravako 32, Naymick 12, Borushko 8

N Muskegon\* 68 Kent City 50 Naymick 30, Kravako 16, Borushko 15

N Muskegon\* 42 WMC 34 Naymick 14, Seyferth 9, Gage Hyrnes 9

N Muskegon\* 61 Shelby 58 Naymick 21, Borushko 14, Kravako 13

N Muskegon\* 53 Sanford Mer. 40 Borushko 18, Naymicj 13, Kravako 9

N Muskegon\* 54 Flint Beecher 60 Naymick 23, Kravako 12, Borushko 11

**2003-2004 (Coach Jeff Cooke 1-20, Shelby WMC champs)**

From first to possibly worse. That sums up the 2003-04 season as head coach Jeff Cooke lost virtually his entire team from 2003 through graduation. Only Mike Verscheuren and Drew Barker saw any quality time during NM’s great 2003 season. The Norsemen scored 1606 points last season, but only 83 of those points were tallied by a returning Norsemen. After averaging more than 61 points in 2003, the Norsemen of 2004 managed to tally but 43 points per game. Only in one game during the season did a NM player score 20 or more points in a single game. The 43 points per game was the lowest offensive output for a NM team since 1950. NM would incur some growing pains over the next two seasons, but the Jeff Cooke led Norsemen would bounce back shortly.

Muskegon Catholic stopped a modest three game losing streak to the Norsemen with a 64-49 victory to begin the season. Drew Barker and Mike Verschueren, the only two returning Norsemen with any quality time from 2003, led NM with 11 and 10 points respectively.

In just the second game of the season NM would match their total losses from the previous season following a 63-51 loss to Hart. NM had won nine of the previous matchups between the two long-time rivals. It looked like NM was headed for victory as they led 27-21, but a fateful third quarter when the host Pirates outscored the Norse 25-10 did in the Norsemen. Adam Dunn, who connected on four 3-pointers led NM with 15 points followed by Drew Barker with 10. For Dunn it would be a season high.

The Norse pulled to within one point in the third quarter to Mason County Central before the Spartans erupted for 21 points in the final quarter to win going away 53-40. The officials were kind in this game at Scottville, especially towards the host Spartans. MCC was whistled for only four fouls in the entire game and none in the first half. No Norse players reached double figures in the loss, but Drew Barker and Brandon Stickle came close with nine points.

Ravenna was another team that ended a Norsemen winning streak during the season. The Bulldogs had lost 11 games in a row before defeating NM soundly 73-45. Ravenna ended this game early by jumping out to a 42-20 halftime lead. Again, NM didn’t have a player score in double figures as Drew Barker and Brandon Stickel each finished for the second straight game with nine points.

Perhaps the Warriors of West Michigan Christian were still smarting from losing a pair of games to the Norsemen last season. After NM went on a 10-0 run to tie the game at 14 to end the first quarter, the rest of the game belonged to Christian as they went on a 60-26 advantage to make the final score WMC 74 and NM 40. Junior Drew Arends paced NM with 14 points with Mike Verschueren adding 10.

The inexperienced Norsemen tied their game with Whitehall at 34-34 midway through the third quarter but were outscored 27-13 the remainder of the game as Whitehall handed NM their sixth straight defeat 61-47. Drew Barker hit three 3-pointers for NM and had 16 points to lead Norse scorers. With no 6’10 center to grab rebounds for NM in 2004, Whitehall outrebounded the Norse 39-23. There was a piece of good news for Norse fans. The game marked the last in the middle school gym of Whitehall as the Vikings would move into their new digs to start the 2004-05 season.

Points were hard to come by for the 2004 Norsemen. The 2003 Norsemen averaged more than 60 points per game. This year’s team never once scored 60 points in a contest. NM only put 28 points on the board in losing to Montague 58-28. Not only scoring points were a concern for the Norse but so was rebounding. For the second game in a row the smaller Norse were outrebounded by Montague 36-22. NM lost by 30, even though the score was tied at 8-all after the first quarter. No Norseman reached double figures, but Adam Quail just missed with 9 points.

The Norsemen for the first time during the season scored more than 50 points in a game but Oakridge scored more than 70 as NM losses to the Eagles 78-58. The Norse hung around as they trailed Oakridge 39-31 at halftime, but the second half belonged to the Eagles. For the first-time all-season NM had three players in double figures led by Drew Arends 19 points. Adams Quail had 11 and Drew Barker 10 as the defending WMC champs were still looking for their first win in conference play. In perhaps the biggest disparity in NM hoops history, Oakridge hit 22-of-25 free throws while the Norsemen made none (0-6).

NM held Shelby to a 12-10 lead before the Tigers went on a 24-7 second quarter run. But then it got worse. Shelby pummeled the Norse 29-8 in the third quarter to force a running clock the rest of the way as Shelby spanked the Norse 72-32. It was quite a turnaround for the first place Tigers after losing all three games to NM the previous season, including a game in the regional. All 13 players who dressed for Shelby scored while NM’s Drew Arends and Mike Verscheuren led NM with 10 points.

NM had a fragile one-point lead over Hart going into the final quarter, giving the sparse Norse crowd of rooters hopes that their Norsemen just might end their losing streak. However, it was not to be as Hart took the lead for good with two minutes left in the game to keep NM winless 46-43. Drew Barker had 13 points and 12 rebounds while Mike Verscheuren finished with 10 points.

An old problem reared its head again as the Norse let a first half lead turn ugly quickly in a 74-52 loss to Mason County Central. The Norse led at halftime 30-24 only to see another opponent come roaring back in the second half. The visiting Spartans from Scottville outpointed the Norse an overwhelming 50-22 in the second half to win going away. It didn’t take long for the Spartans to take the lead as they began the third quarter on a 17-1 run. Mike Verscheuren led NM with a season high 15 points with Drew Barker adding 13.

There was no need to worry about a team making a second half rally in their next game with Ravenna. Not with the Bulldogs already comfortably in front 33-17 at the half. Ravenna kept up the pressure in the second half enroute to a 63-34 win to drop the Norse to 0-12.

The Norse were on the verge of getting that long sought after win as they trailed by only one point at 42-41 early in the final quarter. However, the Norse couldn’t buy a basket in the final minutes of the game as they only managed a basket from Steve Dunn as the visiting Hesperia Panthers pulled away to earn a 54-43 victory over the struggling Norsemen. Dunn finished with 12 points to lead the Norse with Drew Arends adding 11.

Again, it was the third quarter blues for NM as Whitehall, with Pat Welsh scoring 14 of his 36 points in the third quarter, broke a halftime tie and Whitehall rolled on to a 54-45 win over the Norsemen. Drew Arends connected on four 3-pointers to lead the Norsemen with 17 points. Mike Verschueren had 12 points while Drew Barker pulled down 15 rebounds for the Norse.

After playing Mona Shores in the inaugural Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame Classic, NM and the Sailors began a series scheduled over the next three years. What a difference a year makes. There was a swing of 41 points from NM’s six-point victory last year to losing by 35 in 2004. The Sailors led by 20 points at halftime and cruised to a 64-29 victory on the Northside home court. Drew Barker’s nine points was best for NM.

If not for a bad start –and it was indeed a bad start – NM could have very well earned their first win of the season as they lost by only three points, 53-50 to Montague. NM started off the game shooting nothing but blanks as they made but one of their first 21 shots. NM didn’t quit and game back to send the game into the fourth quarter tied with the Wildcats, only to see a possible victory slide away. Drew Barker had a double-double for the Norse, 17 points and 10 rebounds. Mike Verscheuren also had a modest double-double with 10 points and 11 boards.

There was no one in North Muskegon happier than NM’s popular head coach Jeff Cooke after NM’s first (and only) win of the season 59-43 over Holton. “The kids were definitely fired up,” said Cooke. “They’ve worked hard all year and competed in games where we had a chance to win but fell apart in a quarter. Tonight, we were able to keep up the intensity and we didn’t have any letdowns.” NM jumped out to a 19-9 lead and then proceeded to play four solid quarters of basketball to earn the win. Drew Barker finished with 14 points and 10 rebounds. Brandon Stikel had his best scoring output of the season with 10 points. Four Norsemen were in double figures in NM’s highest scoring game of the season. Also reaching double digits were Mike Verschueren with 13 and Drew Arends with 10.

Coach Cooke’s quote above where he lamented on how NM would play well but have one quarter proved prophetic once again as Oakridge. leading by a slim one point near the end of the third quarter, the Eagles blitzed NM 19-4 in the final quarter to win going away 62-46. Drew Arends with his 21 points in the loss had the highest single game point outing of the season for NM.

NM and Mason County Eastern began a four-game series beginning in 2004 and the boys from Custer, the season champs in the West Michigan D league, defeated NM 51-38. Mike Dean hit a trio of 3-pointers and accumulated a season high 11 points to lead the Norse.

It was wishful thinking if NM was going to earn at least one win in the WMC as their final hope for victory was a Shelby team that had already clinched the West Michigan Conference championship. Shelby showed why they were worthy champs as they hammered the Norse 82-48. Ironically, the Norseman led in this game 17-9 at the end of the first quarter and trailed by only a point at the half. Shelby then scored 58 points in the second half as the regular season came to an end.

NM had the misfortune of drawing the host school Kent City in the first game of the MHSAA playoffs. Kent City finished the regular season at 18-2 and were coming off a Friday night victory over Wyoming Rogers, rated number six in the state in Class B. NM accepted their fate and fell handedly to the host Eagles 70-29 as the season came to a merciful end.

N Muskegon 49 Musk Cath. 64 Drew Barker 11, Mike Verschueren 10

N Muskegon 51 Hart 63 Adam Dunn 15, Barker 10

N Muskegon 40 Mason Co 53 Brandon Stickel 9, Barker 9

N Muskegon 45 Ravenna 73 Stickel & Barker 9, Adam Qual 8

N Muskegon 40 WMC 74 Drew Arends 14, Verscheuren 10

N Muskegon 47 Whitehall 61 Barker 16, Arends 8

N Muskegon 28 Montague 58 Adam Quail 9

N Muskegon 58 Oakridge 78 Arends 19, Quail, 11, Barker 10

N Muskegon 32 Shelby 72 Arends 10, Verschueren 10

N Muskegon 43 Hart 46 Barker 13, Verscheuren 10

N Muskegon 52 Mason Co 74 Verscheuren 15, Barker 12

N Muskegon 34 Ravenna 63 Barker & Arends 7

N Muskegon 43 Hesperia 54 Dunn 12, Arends 11

N Muskegon 45 Whitehall 54 Arends 17, Verscheuren 12

N Muskegon 29 Mona Shores 64 Barker 9, Arends 8

N Muskegon 50 Montague 53 Barker 17, Arends 12, Verscheuren 10

N Muskegon 59 Holton 43 Barker 14, Verscheuren 13, Stickel 10

N Muskegon 46 Oakridge 62 Arends 21 Verscheuren & Quail 8

N Muskegon 38 Mason Co East. 51 Mike Dean 11

N Muskegon 48 Shelby 82 Barker 17, Stickel 8

N Muskegon\* 29 Kent City 70 Arends 6

**2004-05 (Coach Jeff Cooke 5-16, Shelby WMC champs)**

It would be another tough year for the Norsemen who would finish with a 5-16 record. The 2003-04 Norsemen can now rest in peace as their infamous record of scoring the least number of points per game was ‘beaten’ by the 2004-05 squad that was only able to post an average of 39 points on the board per game. The current team was able to win five games, including a sweep of Oakridge. NM returned three regulars from the previous season: Adam Dunn, Mike Dean and Drew Arends with the lack of size a big problem for the Norse.

With the lack of a big man or two, NM started off the season with hopes that they could stay competitive with outside shooting. However, that was not the case in their opener with Muskegon Catholic as NM made only 4 of-27 3-pointers in a 64-53 loss to the Crusaders. Drew Arends, a returning regular from 2004 led the Norsemen with 19 points. Ironically, with 20 games still to be played during the season, Arends 19-point outing would be the highest single game mark for a NM player for their entire schedule of games.

Points were hard to come by for NM during the season. NM was only able to score 25 points in their 66-25 loss to Shelby. The Tigers blew the game open early by jumping out to a 21-2 first quarter lead and led by 34 entering the final quarter. The 25 points scored by the Norse was their lowest total team score in 54 years. The 25 points wasn’t even the low point of the season as NM would twice score only 24 points in a game. Mike Dean hit two 3-pointers for six points, NM’s high scorer in the contest.

The Norse then fell to Hart 53-36 in a game where the Norse stayed close until the final quarter. Trailing by five points after three quarters, the Pirates pulled away from the Norsemen with a 21-9 run in the fourth quarter. Hart was playing its first year with a new coach with an abundance of coaching experience. For seven years Terry Smith was the head coach at Division II Grand Valley State University, retiring to take a teaching and coaching position much less stressful at Hart High. No Norsemen reached double figures for the Norse with Drew Arends and Mike Dean sharing high point honors with eight.

After making but 4-of-27 3-pointers in their opener with Muskegon Catholic Central, the Norse did an about face with another MCC, Mason County Central and connected on 8-of-12 from behind the arc to pull off an upset over the visiting Spartans 62-59. NM almost gave a six-point lead away in the game’s final minutes when MCC converted a couple of steals into two-pointers. Drew Arends made 1-of-2 free throws to extend the NM advantage to three and the Norse intercepted a full-court pass to seal the win. It was the first game in two years where NM scored 60 points in a game. Leading the way for the Norsemen’s first victory was Drew Arends who had 17 points. Nick Cooke, NM head coach Jeff Cooke’s nephew, drained three treys and finished with 13 points while Austin Aamondt had 11.

In a non-conference game played in very late December the Norse were no match for Mona Shores. The Sailors blitzed the Norse 27-2 in the third quarter that forced a running clock for the rest of the game in a 79-31 defeat. NM scored only eight points in the entire second half with Zack Kidder’s seven points the high for NM.

After being overwhelmed by Mona Shores to end 2004, NM pulled off a shocker to begin 2005 with a 60-58 upset victory over West Michigan Christian. Trailing 50-44 entering the final quarter the Norse rallied to outscore the visiting Warriors 16-8 to earn their second and most improbable victory of the season 60-58. NM made eight treys in the game, but it was a 4-pointer that was the key play in the victory. Drew Arends tied the game at 50-all when he was fouled while making a 3-pointer and converted the free throw. Mike Dean hit a 3-pointer on the next possession that put NM ahead for good. Nick Cooke with 17 points led the balanced NM offense while Arends and Dean followed with 15 and 14 points.

Ravenna broke open a tight game at halftime to break away to outscore the Norse 37-19 in the second half to earn a comfortable 61-37 victory over the visiting Norsemen. Austin Aamodt led NM with 11 while Nick Cooke scored 10 for the Norse.

Yet another poor second half spelled defeat for the Norsemen as Whitehall posted a dominate 37-21 advantage over the final two quarters to send NM to a 62-41 loss. Ten Norsemen shared in the scoring, but none hit double figures with Drew Arends nine points being the top scorer.

Poor shooting paved the way for a 68-27 loss to Montague as the Norsemen only shot 18 per cent from the field. The Norsemen only scored 8 points in the entire first half while the Wildcats poured in 39 and just coasted to a win over NM in the second half. Nick Cooke’s nine points was best for the Norse.

The Norse enjoyed a short-lived 49-46 lead with two minutes remaining in the game before Mason County Eastern unleashed a final 12-3 run to send NM to their eighth loss of the season as opposed to but two wins. Nick Cooke scored 15 for the Norsemen while Steve Dunn dished out nine assists.

After holding a 26-18 lead at halftime, the Norsemen survived a near-even second half to win their third victory of the season and second in the WMC with a 47-41 win over Oakridge. Nick Cooke made his Uncle Jeff Cooke, the NM head coach happy as he scored 16 points to lead the Norsemen. Drew Arends added 14 while Steve Dunn added five assists and three steals for the Norse.

The Norse had victory in their grasp as they trailed Whitehall 38-37 with five minutes left in the game. The Vikings then dashed the Norsemen’s hopes with a 15-3 run as NM is defeated 55-40. Zack Kidder had a season high 11 points with Adams Dunn pitching in with 10.

Shelby again showed supremacy over the Norsemen as they doubled up the Norse 62-31 to stay perfect in the West Michigan Conference. NM was held below 10 points in each quarter with their high point producer Zack Kidder tallying only six points.

It’s tough to win when the object of the game is to score points. NM scored only 12 points in the first half but trailed by only seven, 19-12. Hart then scored 36 points in the second half, NM’s total for the entire game as Hart improved to 7-2 in the WMC with a 55-36 victory. Nick Cooke did manage to hit double figures for the Norsemen, barely, with 10 points.

Mason County Central, a team that lost to NM back in December, showed vast improvement in their second meeting with the Norse by whipping the Norsemen by 30 points 54-24. NM was only able to score but seven points in the second half, two in the third quarter, as the NM low total of 24 points now becomes the lowest points scored by NM in a game since the Norse scored only 22 points vs. Coopersville in 1950.

Normally when you hold your opponent to 42 one can expect a victory. Not the case however with the Norsemen of 2005. Hesperia defeated NM 42-40 as the Norse played the Panthers tough but fell short. NM led in the game at one point 27-24 and was tied at 31-all before Hesperia pulled away for the narrow two-point win. Nick Cooke led the Norse with 14 points followed by Drew Arends with 10.

On their home court the Norsemen and Ravenna were tied at 36-all heading into the fourth quarter giving the Norse rooters some hope. Those hopes were dashed when the Bulldogs outscored NM 14-6 in the game’s final eight minutes to defeat the Norse 49-40. The Norse were only able to make one field goal in the pivotal final quarter and were back in the cellar of the WMC with a conference record of 2-10. Nick Cooke was the shining light for North Muskegon with a season high 18 points.

NM made only 9-of-21 free throws in a 57-35 loss to Montague as their losing streak had reached eight games without tasting victory. NM did win the first quarter 12-10 but unlike the Continental Basketball League where the Muskegon Mayhem had a brief two year run before folding following the 2006 season, points aren’t awarded in high school basketball for winning a quarter. Nick Cooke led NM with 14 points.

For the second year in a row NM was grateful that Holton was on their schedule. With their lone win last year coming in a game with Holton, NM won again in 2005 to snap a eight game skid 49-39. What was ironic about this was that all 11 players suited up for the game scored for the Norsemen despite scoring only 49 points. Josh Chovaz, who has been working his way into the rotation of late scored six of his game high 14 points in the third quarter to key NM’s 20-11 run.

NM scored only 42 points in their final game of the regular season, but it was enough to defeat Oakridge and escape out of the West Michigan Conference cellar with a 42-39 victory. Nick Cooke nailed two free throws to give NM a 42-39 lead with seven seconds left to seal the victory. Austin Aamondt had 11 to lead NM in the low-scoring affair. Scoring in double figures for Oakridge with 10 points was Ryan Schalk, the current head softball coach at Saginaw Valley State and the son of the late Mike Schalk, an outstanding player for NM in the early 1970s who averaged more than 22 points per game in 1972.

West Michigan Christian more than avenged their earlier two-point loss to the Norsemen as they forced a running clock in a 63-24 rout of NM to end NM’s season at 5-16. At one point in the first half in the district contest hosted by Ravenna High School, the Warrior went on a 21-2 run. It was the fourth time during the season when NM scored less than 28 points in a game. One would have to go all the way back to 1949, Bob Morris first year as the head coach, when NM suffered through a 1-13 season, to find a NM team that scored less than 30 points more than four times.

N Muskegon 53 Musk Catholic 64 Drew Arends 19, Mike Dean 9

N Muskegon 25 Shelby 66 Dean 6

N Muskegon 36 Hart 53 Arends & Dean 8

N Muskegon 62 Mason Co 59 Arends 17, N. Cooke 12, A. Aamondt 11

N Muskegon 31 Mona Shores 79 Zack Kidder 7, Nick Cooke 6

N Muskegon 60 WMC 58 Cooke 17, Arends 15, Dean 14

N Muskegon 37 Ravenna 61 Aamondt 11, N. Cooke 10

N Muskegon 41 Whitehall 62 Arends 9

N Muskegon 27 Montague 68 N Cooke 9, Adam Dunn 7

N Muskegon 52 Mason Co East. 58 N Cooke 15, Dean 9

N Muskegon 47 Oakridge 41 N Cooke 16, Arends 14

N Muskegon 40 Whitehall 55 Kidder 11, Dunn 10, Arends 9

N Muskegon 31 Shelby 62 Kidder 6

N Muskegon 36 Hart 55 N Cooke 10, Dunn 9

N Muskegon 24 Mason Co 54 Arends 8, Dunn 7

N Muskegon 40 Hesperia 42 N Cooke 14, Arends 10

N Muskegon 40 Ravenna 49 N Cooke 18

N Muskegon 35 Montague 57 N Cooke 14, Aamondt 8

N Muskegon 49 Holton 39 Josh Chovaz 14, N Cooke 11

N Muskegon 42 Oakridge 39 Aamondt 11, Cooke 9, Chovaz 8

N Muskegon\* 24 WMC 63 Chovaz 6

**2005-06 (Coach Jeff Cooke 4-17, Mason County WMC champs)**

Although their record won’t show it, the 2005-06 Norsemen were an improved team from the previous season. The team was much better offensively as they scored nearly 10 points more per game than the 2004-05 Norsemen. Two of their 17 losses were in over time while five more losses were decided by less than five points. Only in a handful of games were the Norse badly beaten. The Norsemen returned their leading scorer back for the 05-06 campaign in Nick Cooke, a multi-sport standout who also excelled on the NM football team, and the nephew of Norse head coach Jeff Cooke who began his 10th season guiding Norsemen roundball. A sprinkling of others also returned aided by a few newcomers to the program led by a transfer from West Michigan Christian, Troy Forton, an all-state baseball player for NM in the Spring.

If the opening game of the season was supposed to signify an improvement in the Norse offense, that didn’t happen as the Norse only made one 3-pointer in a 52-38 loss to Muskegon Catholic. The Crusaders were on target with seven made long toms with Nick Cooke, NM’s leading scorer with 14 points, making NM’s only long-distance shot.

NM won the first of their four victories with a 51-44 decision over an Oakridge team who lost twice to NM in the previous season. The Norse led 11-4 at the end of the first quarter and held on for the win. NM did have one advantage over Oakridge -- practice time. Many of the Eagle players had little time to practice but for a very good reason. Oakridge just a few days earlier had won the state championship in football. Nick Cooke scored 14 points for NM while newcomer Troy Forton was in double figures with 11. NM did much of their damage at the free throw line making 18-of-26.

To confirm that NM had improved from the previous season one could look at NM’s next contest with Shelby, the defending WMC champs. NM lost to the Tigers twice in 04-05 by more than 30 points but lost by only five 59-54 when they first clashed in 05-06. The two teams were deadlocked at 51-all midway through the final quarter before Shelby’s Nate Plummer, who led all scorers with 32 points, hit three triples down the stretch to down the Norse. Turnovers were costly for the Norse as they committed 25 to the Tigers 13. Troy Forton led NM with 13 points and 10 rebounds while Chris Scheldt had a season high 12 and Mike Hermanson 10.

NM lost a tight one 51-48 to Hart but there were signs that the future was looking better as the NM JV team won 73-28. NM led 21-18 at the half but Hart’s 14-8 advantage in the third quarter would prove to be too much for NM to overcome as both teams tallied 19 points in the final period. Only four players scored for NM. Troy Forton became the first Norsemen to score 20 points in a game in two seasons with 20 markers while Mike Hermanson followed with 11.

NM trailed by one point heading into the final quarter before making a slight rally in the final quarter to defeat Mason County Eastern for the first time in three meetings 53-48. Nick Cooke had the hot hand for NM with 20 points, including four made 3-pointers. It was Cooke’s final 3-pointer with time running out that was the game-winner for the Norsemen.

The Norsemen and the West Michigan Christian Warriors were all tied at halftime, but the Warriors came alive in the second half to outpoint NM by 15 to win 67-52. Troy Forton, a transfer from WMC had his highest scoring game of the season against his former schoolmates with 24 points, the only NM player to reach double figures. WMC dominated in the free throw department making 19 free throws to NM’s poor 5-of-13.

NM gave another good account of themselves before losing in Scottville 48-43 to Mason County Central. The Norse took a slim one-point lead into the final quarter before the Spartans finished on a 21-15 run. Again, NM hurt themselves at the free throw line as NM attempted but four free throws while the Spartans netted 10. Troy Forton with 15 and Nick Cooke with 13 led NM. Mason County Central would go on to win the WMC with a 13-1 conference mark.

In the last game ever played between the two local schools in a brief five game series that began in 1963, Mona Shores needed overtime to pin a 58-54 defeat on the Norsemen. NM once again had the fourth quarter blues as the visiting Sailors outscored NM by three points in the final period to force overtime. The Sailors made six of their eight points in the extra session on free throws, but it was not free throws that cost NM the game. NM was a perfect 12-for-12 at the charity stripe, all made by Nick Cooke (20 points) and Troy Forton (19) as the duo combined to score 39 of NM’s total of 54 points.

Ravenna came out smoking hot in the first quarter as the Bulldogs opened with a 16-2 start to take a lead that NM was not able to recover in the Bulldogs 57-50 win over the Norse. The Norse battled back and came within three points of Ravenna midway through the final period but then the Bulldogs made enough free throws down the stretch to down the Norse. Ravenna completely dominated at the free throw line making 16 charity tosses to NM’s 4. Nick Cooke had 18 and Mike Hermanson finished with 14 to lead the Norsemen.

For the second straight outing NM fell behind early to their opponent as Whitehall

jumped out to a 16-6 first quarter lead enroute to a 63-46 win over the Norse. With the win the Vikings stayed unbeaten in the WMC. Nick Cooke had a career high 21 points and 10 rebounds in a losing cause for NM.

For the first time this season NM was never in the game as Montague won 61-44. The Cats used a big second quarter to pull ahead and were never again challenged. Nick Cooke was the only Norseman in double figures with 16 points as no other NM player tallied more than six markers.

With three minutes left in the game and the Norse leading 41-36, it looked like NM was headed for a win over Oakridge. However, NM never scored another point, and Oakridge hit a game winning three-pointer with 19 seconds left to send NM to their 10th defeat on the season 43-41. NM turned the ball over 23 times; a trait not lost on NM coach Jeff Cooke. “It seems like in the last 3 minutes every time we touched the ball we turned it over,” said the disappointed coach. “Oakridge played well but turnovers killed us.” Mike Hermanson with 10 points led NM in the low-scoring affair.

In the first ever meeting between the two schools, NM must have thought they ran into a buzz saw as they absorbed their biggest loss of the season 91 to 49 to Grand Rapids Covenant Christian. The host team from GR lit up the scoreboard in the first half scoring 55 points and, even with a running clock for part of the final quarter, still rang up 28 points. Troy Forton had 18 points to lead NM.

Trailing by as many as 21 points in the fourth quarter NM mounted their best rally in ages only to come up two points short in a 64-63 loss to Shelby. The loss spoiled the game of his life for NM’s Austin Aamondt. Having scored no more than six points in a game, and playing in five games where he was scoreless, Aamondt had a career high 21 points and seven rebounds. The 63 points were the most points scored by NM during the season. Nick Cooke and Mike Hermanson each had 10 points for NM.

NM held a poor shooting Hart team to only 17 points through the first three quarters of play while the Norse had doubled that total with 34 as NM snapped a nine-game losing streak with a 53-34 win over the Pirates. NM in the past often had some poor shooting woes from the free throw line but not in this game as they hit 11-of-12. Nick Cooke’s 15 points led the Norse with three of his teammates each scoring seven points.

An old proneness came back to haunt the Norse once again -- scoring points. NM would score no more than 35 points in each of their next two games, both losses: the first to Mason County Central 59-35 and the second to Holton 42-33. Mason County jumped out to a 32-14 lead and added to their total in the final two quarters as NM never threatened the Spartans. NM was beaten in all phases of the game: outrebounded 43-28 while committing 23 turnovers. Nick Cook’s 12 led NM scorers.

The Norse let a possible win get away from the as they held a slim 24-24 lead entering the final quarter only to see Holton outgun NM 18-8 in the final quarter to win 42-33. Mike Hermanson’s 12 points was best for the Norse.

NM then played Ravenna on a Wednesday night game, and the Norse came through with their fourth, and final win of the season with a 46-35 win over the host Bulldogs. A big 20-10 third quarter was key for the Norse as Chris Scheldt led NM in scoring for the first time in the season with 11 points.

The Norsemen made a nice rally in the fourth quarter to send the game into overtime only to lose in the extra session by three points to Whitehall 58-55. The game earlier in the season when NM went 12-for-12 at the free throw line was now a distant memory as the Norse missed three attempts late in the fourth quarter and three in the overtime session. Nick Cooke and Chris Scheldt each had 12 while Mike Hermanson tallied 10 to lead the frustrated Norsemen.

NM seemed to make it a habit of turning the ball over 23 times as they did in their final game loss in the regular season 67-44 to Montague. Montague outscored NM in every quarter as NM ends the regular season with a 4-16 record but did escape the cellar in the WMC with a 3-11 record, one game better than Oakridge. Mike Hermanson’s 13 was best for NM.

The season ended as the host school Kent City squad, with a 40-21 lead at halftime, went on to trim the Norsemen 71-58. Nick Cooke finished his career with 13 points, the only Norsemen in double figures.

One normally cannot always rely on a junior varsity team that had a great record to have the same impact at the varsity level. However, NM’s JV team was outstanding during the season as varsity head coach Jeff Cooke let most of those good JV players stay together for the season in hopes they would have the same chemistry when they move up to the varsity. As one will soon see, Cooke did it right.

N Muskegon 38 Musk Catholic 52 Nick Cooke 14

N Muskegon 51 Oakridge 44 Cooke 14, Troy Forton 11

N Muskegon 54 Shelby 59 Forton 13, Chris Scheldt 12

N Muskegon 48 Hart 51 Forton 20, Mike Hermanson 11

N Muskegon 53 Mason Co East. 50 Cooke 20 Forton 12

N Muskegon 52 WMC 67 Forton 24, Sheldt & Cooke 8

N Muskegon 43 Mason Co 48 Forton 15, Cooke 13

N Muskegon 54 Mona Shores (ot) 58 Cooke 20, Forton 19

N Muskegon 50 Ravenna 57 Cooke 18, Hermanson 14

N Muskegon 46 Whitehall 63 Cooke 21

N Muskegon 44 Montague 61 Cooke 16

N Muskegon 41 Oakridge 43 Hermanson 10, Cooke 9

N Muskegon 49 GR Cov. Christ. 91 Forton 16

N Muskegon 63 Shelby 64 Austin Aamondt 21

N Muskegon 53 Hart 34 Cooke 15

N Muskegon 35 Mason Co 59 Cooke 12

N Muskegon 33 Holton 42 Hermanson 12

N Muskegon 46 Ravenna 35 Scheldt 11

N Muskegon 55 Whitehall (ot) 58 Cooke & Scheldt 12, Hermanson 10

N Muskegon 44 Montague 67 Hermanson 13, Aamondt 8

N Muskegon\*58 Kent City 71 Cooke 13

**2006-07 (Coach Jeff Cooke 15-6, Mason County WMC champs)**

The Norsemen made a huge turnaround after three losing seasons by posting a 15-6 overall record and placed second behind Mason County Central in the race for the conference title. NM received a big boost from 6’4 junior Harry Barendsen who would lead NM in scoring with nearly 14 points per game. Mike Hermanson, also at 6’4 returned as did Kyle Cooke. Ben Reider moved up from the JVs as NM could field a front line of three players at 6’4. Ian Schutek joined NM at the semester break as NM showed great balance throughout the season.

NM broke up a close game by going on a 21-11 run in the fourth quarter to snap a three-game losing streak to Muskegon Catholic in a low-scoring 42-35 victory. One newcomer and one returning veteran paced NM with Harry Barendsen scoring a game high 15 points and pulling down nine rebounds while Mike Hermanson totaled eight points and four steals. Returning playmaker Chris Scheldt added six assists as for the first time in four years NM starts off the season with a victory. NM caught the Crusaders at the right time as many of the Crusaders had but two weeks of practice as they were busy earlier helping MCC win a state championship in football.

NM went on the road for their second game of the season and played the Tigers almost dead-even, except for one disastrous quarter. With the game tied at 20-all at halftime, the Tigers put together a 15-3 run against the cold shooting Norsemen in defeating NM 50-36. Turnovers, a trait that plagued the Norse a year ago, again posed a problem has NM committed 22 miscues, as opposed to only 12 in the opener with Muskegon Catholic. NM didn’t have a player reach double figures in NM’s lowest offensive output of the season with guards Travis Gale and Glen Barker leading NM, each with eight points.

To say that Hart got off to a woeful start would be an understatement as the Pirates never scored a point in the first quarter while NM scored 11 as NM had an easy time defeating the visiting Pirates 60-34. NM, with a height advantage over the Pirates enjoyed a big rebounding edge as 6’4 Harry Barendsen with 14 and 6’4 Mike Hermanson with 12 led the Norse scorers.

The Norse gave the defending WMC champions from Mason County Central, who returned most of their regulars, a battle before falling 64-62 in a thriller held at the Northside gymnasium. NM can look no further than free throws on the stat sheet for a telling explanation for their close defeat. The Spartans connected on 15 free throws to NM’s mediocre 4-of-12. The free throw stat is surprising as NM made eight 3-pointers in the loss, normally a sign that a team would have good free throw shooters. NM trailed 52-43 in the final quarter, but the pesky Norse wouldn’t go away as NM made three 3-pointers late to put a scare into the undefeated Spartans. Travis Gale led NM with 17 points with 15 of those markers coming on five made 3-pointers. Kyle Cooke, nephew of NM head coach Jeff Cooke connected on three 3-pointers and scored 12 for the Norse.

Scoring 75 points in their 75-64 win over Ravenna, NM had their best offensive output in four years. Harry Barendsen joined the 30-point club with 33 points, 21 tallied in the first half to lead the Norsemen. Ben Reider had his best game thus far on the season with 16 points while Mike Hermanson finished with 12 as NM improved to 3-2 on the season.

NM made the long journey to downtown Custer, Michigan a success as they used a strong second half, where they outscored Mason County Eastern 29-9 to earn a 56-31 win. The four wins before reaching the New Year of 2007 already equals the total number of wins from last season. Chris Scheldt led NM with 13 points followed by Glen Barker with nine.

One of the busiest coaches in the area, who in the late Fall had coached Muskegon High to a state championship in football, uses his ‘spare’ time to coach the Whitehall Varsity basketball team. Unlike in football where Muskegon’s iconic Ronald Johnson saved the day with a hit and a fumble recovery in the end zone that preserved Muskegon’s state final victory over Warren DeLaSalle, there was no magic for Tony Annese and his Whitehall Vikings in their game with North Muskegon. 6’4 Ben Reider tipped in a missed shot shortly before the buzzer sounded to give NM a 65-64 win over Whitehall as the NM students rushed onto the floor to celebrate the victory. The thrilling win snapped a six-game losing streak to the Vikings and moved NM into contention in the WMC with a 3-2 record. Ryan VanBergen, who Annese would have loved playing football for him at Muskegon High and who later starred for the UM Wolverines, scored 17 for Whitehall. NM had balanced scoring with Reider and Mike Hermanson each scoring 12 while Kyle Cooke and Harry Barendsen added 11 points.

Another six-game losing streak went by the wayside as the Norse defeated Montague 62-49. NM trailed at halftime, but NM then held Montague to four points in the third quarter to pull away behind the second half scoring of Harry Barendsen who scored 18 of his game high 24 points in the second half. NM had 15 steals in the win while Ben Reider with 11 and Chris Scheldt with 10 also reached double figures in scoring for the streaking Norsemen.

NM busted their next game with Oakridge wide open early with a commanding 49-22 lead at halftime. Harry Barendsen scored 12 of his team-leading 16 points in the second quarter. Mike Hermanson added 14, Travis Gale 15 and Parker Zikcl 10 as NM made it six wins in a row, their longest winning streak since the Drew Naymick era Norsemen of 2003.

West Michigan Christian’s defense, always troublesome in the Jim Goorman WMC era to solve, caused 24 Norsemen turnovers in Christian’s 67-61 win over NM. WMC also caused NM troubles at the free throw line as the Warriors made 10-of- 10 free throws in the final quarter to hold off the Norse. WMC outscored NM at the line 18 to 6 to overcome a NM 27-22 advantage in field goals. Mike Hermanson had a game high 19 points to lead NM while Ben Reider chipped in with 11 and Kyle Cooke 9.

NM atoned for an earlier loss to Shelby by nipping the visiting Tigers 58-55. Kyle Cooke also made up for two missed free throws with NM holding a slim one-point lead but quickly redeemed himself with a steal and a layup to seal the deal for NM. The game was tight all the way with Shelby holding a 52-49 lead with two minutes remaining. Harry Berendsen, one of four NM players at 6’4, scored six points in the final two minutes to recapture the lead for NM who are now 8-3 overall, and tied for 2nd place in the WMC with Shelby at 6-2. Berendsen’s 15 points led NM with Ben Reider close behind with 14.

NM caught Hart on a down year as the Pirates, now 1-9 on the season were again soundly defeated by NM 68-38. Ten Norsemen scored in the rout led by Harry Barendsen’s 17 tallies while Kyle Cooke added 11 and seven steals.

The following day on a snowy Saturday, NM traveled to White Cloud to play the first game between the two schools in 30 years. NM outscored the host Indians in every quarter to post an easy 75-51 victory. Harry Barendsen led NM’s balanced attack with 14 points as 10 Norsemen scored in the contest.

One only must compare this year’s results to last year’s game with Covenant Christian to appreciate the marked improvement in one year. The Norse lost to the Chargers by more than 40 points last season but won 56-51 a year later. NM held off a late Charger rally as the Chargers hit four 3-pointers to throw a scare into the Norsemen. With NM leading by only three with inside a minute to play, Travis Gale hit a pair of free throws to seal the win. Ben Reider led the Norse with 14 points with Gale finishing with 10.

Even though it was very early in February Mason County Central clinched at least a tie to earn their second straight WMC championship with a not-so-easy 49-43 win over the visiting Norsemen. NM held a two-point lead over the Spartans before the hosts limited NM to but five points through the first seven minutes of the final quarter to secure the victory. Harry Barendsen was the only Norsemen in double figures with 13 points.

After leading by five points at halftime The Norse pulled away from Ravenna by beginning the second half with a 15-6 run enroute to a 62-43 win to complete a season sweep of the Bulldogs. NM’s 62 points were spread among 11 players who scored as coach Cooke used his bench throughout the contest. Travis Gale’s 12 points led NM scorers.

Holton gave NM a good run in the first half as they trailed the Norsemen 30-29, but NM then used some solid defense in the final two quarters to outscore the visiting Red Devils by 16 points to win going away 70-53. Harry Barendsen led NM with 18 while Ian Shutek had a season high 14 points.

Future UM football standout Ryan VanBergen used his 6’5 250 body to overpower the Norsemen by scoring 25 points to lead Whitehall to a 65-59 win in a game that was decided in two overtimes. VanBergen’s three-point play to start the second overtime began a 10-0 Whitehall spurt to send NM to a defeat and dropped the Norse out of a tie for second place in the WMC with the Vikings. Ben Reider had a career high 22 points to lead the Norse while Kyle Cooke had an excellent game for NM with 15 points, five assists and three steals. Harry Barendsen, averaging about 15 points per game got into early foul trouble and was held scoreless by the Vikings.

Ben Reider scored eight of his ten points in the final quarter as NM made a huge comeback in the final quarter to defeat Montague 57-52. NM trailed 38-30 entering the final quarter before Reider and his teammates began their rally. Harry Berendsen led NM with 15 points.

The Norse had their best defensive performance of the year as they held Oakridge to but 28 points in NM’s 59-28 win. Eleven NM players got in on the scoring act led by Harry Barendsen’s 14 points. NM held Oakridge to less than 10 points in every quarter to finish the regular season at 15-5, a massive improvement over the last three years.

NM played at Kent City in the Class C district tournament and for the second consecutive season were eliminated by the host school 67-56. NM would have liked to have played the third quarter over again as they were outscored 24-11 after having taken a brief one-point lead at halftime. Free throws surely played a part in the exit from the tournament as Kent City made 20 from the charity stripe to NM’s four. Harry Barendsen ended his junior season with 18 points to pace the Norsemen.

N Muskegon 42 Musk Catholic 35 Harry Barendsen 15, M. Hermanson 8

N Muskegon 36 Shelby 50 Travis Gale 8, Glen Barker 8

N Muskegon 60 Hart 34 Barendsen 15, Hermanson 12

N Muskegon 62 Mason Co 64 Barendsen 17, Kyle Cooke 12

N Muskegon 75 Ravenna 64 Barendsen 33, Ben Reider 16

N Muskegon 56 Mason Co East. 31 Chris Scheldt 13, Barker 9

N Muskegon 65 Whitehall 64 Reider and Hermanson 12

N Muskegon 62 Montague 49 Barendesen 24, Rider 10, Sheldt 11

N Muskegon 71 Oakridge 46 Barendsen 16, Gale 15, Hermanson 14

N Muskegon 61 WMC 67 Hermandson 19, Redier 11

N Muskegon 58 Shelby 55 Barendsen 15, Reider 14, Hermanson 10

N Muskegon 68 Hart 38 Barendsen 17, Cooke 11

N Muskegon 75 White Cloud 51 Barendsen 14, Ian Shutek 11, Gale 10

N Muskegon 56 GR Cov Christ. 51 Reider 14, Gale 10

N Muskegon 43 Mason Co 49 Barendsen 13

N Muskegon 62 Ravenna 43 Gale 12

N Muskegon 70 Holton 53 Barendsen 18, Shutek 14, Reider 10

N Muskegon 59 Whitehall (ot) 65 Reider 22, Cooke 15

N Muskegon 57 Montague 52 Berendsen 15, Reider 10

N Muskegon 59 Oakridge 28 Berendsen 14, Cooke & Reider 8

N Muskegon\*56 Kent City 67 Barendsen 18, Hermanson 8

**2007-08 (Coach Jeff Cooke 16-5, Montague WMC champs)**

North Muskegon began the season starting five seniors. Unfortunately for Jeff Cooke and the Norsemen one of his projected starters and leading scorer from last year’s outstanding team, Harry Berendesen, had moved with his family to Oregon that created a major hole in the 2007-08 NM lineup. Despite Berendsen’s untimely departure, the Norsemen would have another successful season posting an outstanding 16-5 record.

With an all-senior lineup as opposed to Muskegon Catholic starting all underclassmen, experience won out as the Norsemen defeated a talented MCC team 57-51 as Ian Shutek scored 23 points, 11 more than his best effort from the previous season. Shutek was at its best when it counted most, in the fourth quarter as he scored 14 of his 23 points in the game’s final eight minutes, including 8-of-9 free throws. NM was helped by MCC’s poor free throw shooting as the Crusaders only made 8-of-20.

For the first time since 2003 the Norsemen had two players score 20 or more points in a game as Ben Reider and Ian Shutek each hit right on the 20-point mark in a 73-50 romp over Oakridge. Kyle Cook and Parker Zickel each hit the 10-point mark right on the button while Shutek also dished off six assists.

NM then handed Shelby a 56-34 loss to start their season perfect at 3-0 overall and 2-0 in the WMC. NM needed a big fourth quarter to pull away from the Tigers. With NM clinging to a 41-38 lead early in the fourth quarter Ian Shutek took over, scoring seven straight points that increased the lead to 52-38 and it was all over but the shouting. Ben Reider continued his fine play with 15 points with Shutek adding 13 and Alex Wierda chipping in with nine.

Playing their third game in a week, with none of the games played on the old traditional Tuesday and Fridays due to girls’ basketball in Michigan moved from the Fall to Winter, NM played their third game of the week on a Saturday afternoon in a non-conference clash with White Cloud. And, for the third time in a week the Norse emerged victorious with a 66-44 win over the visiting Indians. NM outscored White Cloud in every quarter as coach Jeff Cooke was able to go to his bench early with eight Norsemen figuring in the scoring led by Ben Reider’s 15 points and Karl Ketterhot’s 13.

Only in one game during the regular season did NM score less than 50 points in any one game. Perhaps the NM players were still thinking about Christmas shopping as their attention must have been diverted elsewhere as NM was only able to score 31 points in an improbable loss to Hart 32-31. To illustrate how improbable, in their next meeting later in the season the Norse would score 77 points. So --- in the two meetings with Hart-- the Norse would score their fewest (31) and their highest (77) points vs. Hart. Ben Reider with 15 points had nearly half of NM’s 31 points in the loss to Hart.

Mason County Central now must know how NM coach Jeff Cooke felt after his NM team went from 24-2 in 2003 to 1-20 the following year. The Spartans, after back-to-back West Michigan Conference Championships lost their fourth game in a row without a victory in a 50-40 loss to North Muskegon. The Spartans regressed so far in one year that they had two quarters where they scored four and five points as they combined to score only 40 points in losing to NM 51-40. Ben Reider scored 12 and Ian Shutek 11 as NM improved to 5-1.

The Norsemen started off 2008 with a convincing 72-58 over Ravenna. NM put together two good opening quarters to lead 40-30 at the halftime break and then coasted to the victory. Parker Zickel scored a career high 16 points, equaling Ben Reider as high point man for the Norse with Ian Shutek adding 15 points and 12 assists. Kyle Cooke dished off six assists while scoring 10 points as NM spread out the scoring.

Once a cellar dweller in the West Michigan Conference, NM moved into first place in the WMC after a thrilling 54-51 overtime victory over Whitehall. Ian Shutek drilled a 3-pointer with 90 seconds remaining in the overtime to give NM the lead for good. Ben Reider led the Norse with 19 points while Shutek finished with 14

NM stayed in first place in the WMC after a narrow 57-55 win over Montague but as Jeff Cooke said it best: “We’re fortunate to be in first. Several of our games could have gone either way.” Montague battled back after trailing by eight points at one time in the fourth quarter and had a chance to tie the game with two seconds left. Montague’s Mike Mack made the front end of a one-and-one but missed the second. Parker Zickel grabbed the rebound, was fouled and made one free throw with one-second left to ice the game for the Norsemen. The trio of Ben Reider (23), Ian Shutek (16), and Parker Zickel (16) scored all but five of NM’s 57 points.

Unlike last season when multiple players were needed to put points on the board for NM, that was not often the case in 2008. In NM’s 62-53 win over Oakridge four players scored all 62 points led by Ian Shutek’s 23 markers. Ben Reider, with 18 has now scored in double figures in all of NM’s first 10 games. Alex Wierda scored a season high 14 while Kyle Cooke’s seven markers comprised all 62 points. NM helped their own cause by connecting on 21-of-25 free throws.

There must be a story unbeknownst by your author as North Muskegon played for the only time in program history Bear Lake – not the famous NM Tavern – but a little community located on US 31 north of Manistee. The visitors, sporting an impressive 8-1 record, made the long journey to NM on snow covered roads only to lose to the Norsemen 70-58. Ben Reider scored a season high 26 points while a season best also was attained by a rapidly improving Alex Wierda who tallied 19.

It was NM’s turns to make a trip north on snow covered roads, but they only had to travel to Shelby where the Tigers began the game cold. NM started off with a 13-4 run and doubled the score at halftime 32-16 on their way to a rare season sweep over Shelby with a 61-41 victory. Steady Ben Reider’s 15 was tops for the Norse. Ian Shutek netted 14 and Kyle Cooke added 12 as NM stayed on top of the WMC standings.

After NM blasted Hart 77-40 one had to wonder how in the world did NM score only 31 points in their only loss thus far in the WMC to Hart back in December? The Norsemen after busting out to a 21-7 lead after the first quarter surpassed the entire previous point total of 31 points early into the second quarter in the rematch. The win was the eighth straight for the Norsemen and improved their record to 12-1. Ben Reider again led the Norse with 26 points with Ian Shutek netting 20. Many of those points by the NM duo came from passes from Kyle Cooke who had 11 assists.

NM again got off to a great start in a 73-48 win over Mason County Central to earn their 9th straight victory. Only a puzzling 32-31 loss early in the season to Hart kept NM from a perfect 14-0 start. NM had four players in double figures, and they almost had five as Karl Kettelhut missed by one point with nine. Reider (17) Wierda (14) Shutek (12) and Zickel (10) led the balanced attack.

North Muskegon had their bubble burst as they ran into a talented West Michigan Christian team that dominated the entire game with a 76-50 thumping of the Norsemen. Only in the first quarter was the game close as WMC led NM by only two points 17-15. The Warriors then outscored NM 47 to 21 over the next two quarters to hand NM only their second loss on the season. WMC’s heralded trap defense forced NM into 24 turnovers while limiting NM’s high scoring Ben Reider to 11 points. Ian Shutek led NM with 11 points and nine rebounds. The Warriors would go on to win the Class D state championship in March.

NM jumped on the back of Ian Shutek to rally from being down 33-24 in the third quarter to tie up the game with Ravenna and send the game into overtime with NM eventually winning 57-53. Shutek scored 10 of his game high 26 points in the fourth quarter to keep NM at the top of standings in the WMC. Alex Wierda finished with seven points, all seven in the overtime period. NM played the game without the services of their leading scorer Ben Reider.

For the third time in their last four meetings, North Muskegon and Whitehall had to go into overtime to decide a winner. NM won the earlier meeting in OT, but Whitehall turned the trick in the second meeting 66-65. Whitehall jumped ahead in the overtime mainly on free throws to deny NM a chance to clinch at least a tie for the WMC championship. Alex Wierda, who had a key 3-pointer to send the game into overtime, had a big game for the Norse with 16 points and nine rebounds. Ian Shutek collected 14 points, and eight rebounds and Ben Reider chipped in with 12 points and five assists.

North Muskegon needed a basket off a rebound from Ben Reider to nip Holton 57-55 in a non-league game. Reider finished with 19 points while Ian Shutek added 13 points and 10 rebounds. The two teams wouldn’t have to wait long for the rematch as they would meet again in the semifinals of the Class C district tournament in Montague.

It was winner take all when Montague and North Muskegon played in the final game of the regular season. It was the first time the two teams met to decide the WMC championship since 1959 when your (now very old) author was playing hoops for the Blue & Gold. Unlike the game from 49 years earlier when NM walked away with the win and the championship, it was Montague’s turn to earn the title on the very same floor the two teams played on in 1959. The 2008 year would be a memorable year for Wildcat fans as the fall of 2008 would see Montague win the state title in football. Three members of that championship football team helped defeat NM in the basketball game, including Cody Kater, who drilled a couple of three pointers to start the third quarter that gave Montague its biggest lead at 39-22, an advantage too much for NM to overcome. The Cats drilled 7-of-14 three pointers, with 5-of-7 made in the first half when Montague took control of the game. Ian Shutek drained three from long range in leading NM in scoring with 18 points, Parker Zickel scored 11, Alex Wierda 10 with Ben Reider adding nine points while leading Norse rebounders with 11.

NM defeated Holton for the second time in a week to advance to the finals in the Class C district tournament in Montague. In a physical battle NM prevailed 56-48 as the Norsemen made 10-of-13 free throws in the final quarter to aid in the win. NM took the lead for good in the final quarter on a pair of free throws by Ben Reider at 50-48 as NM scored the final eight points of the contest. Reider finished with 23 points while Ian Shutek added 12.

North Muskegon began and ended the season against Muskegon Catholic, winning the opener but losing in the district finals to the young Crusaders 51-45. NM trailed throughout most of the game and did make a furious fourth quarter rally outscoring MCC 11-4 only to fall short. MCC won despite shooting a dismal 8-of-26 from the free throw line. A gracious NM coach Cooke gave praise where praise was earned: “They are much better tonight than they were in the first game.” Ian Shutek closed his NM career with 15 points. Ben Reider, averaging near 17 points per game was held to four points but did grab 12 rebounds.

NM ended the season with an excellent overall record of 16-5, just missing out on a WMC title. If NM could play one game over again, it would be their surprising one-point loss early in the season with Hart that cost NM at least a share of the MWC title.

N Muskegon 57 Musk Catholic 51 Ian Shutek 23, Ben Reider 11

N Muskegon 73 Oakridge 50 Shutek & Reider 20, Cooke, Zickel 10

N Muskegon 56 Shelby 34 Reider 15, Shutek 13, Alex Wierda 9

N Muskegon 66 White Cloud 44 Reider 16, Karl Ketterhut 13

N Muskegon 31 Hart 32 Reider 15

N Muskegon 51 Mason Co 40 Reider 12, Shutek 11

N Muskegon 72 Ravenna 58 Parker Zickel & Reider 16, k15

N Muskegon 54 Whitehall (ot) 51 Reider 19, Shutek 14

N Muskegon 57 Montague 55 Reider 23, Shutek 16, Parker Zickel 13

N Muskegon 62 Oakridge 53 Shutek 23, Reider 18, Wierda 14

N Muskegon 70 Bear Lake 58 Reider 26, Wierda 19, Shutek 10

N Muskegon 61 Shelby 41 Reider 15, Shutek 14, Cooke 12

N Muskegon 77 Hart 40 Reider 26, Shutek 20, Kettelhut 9

N Muskegon 73 Mason Co 48 Reider 17, Wierda 14, Shutek12

N Muskegon 50 WMC 76 Shutek 16, Reider 11, Cooke 9

N Muskegon 57 Ravenna (ot) 53 Shutek 26, Alex Jones 10

N Muskegon 65 Whitehall (ot) 66 Wierda 16, Shutek 14, Reider 12

N Muskegon 57 Holton 55 Reider 19, Shutek 13, Cooke 9

N Muskegon 54 Montague 61 Shutek 18, Zickel 11, Wierda 10

N Muskegon\*56 Holton 48 Reider 23, Shutek 12

N Muskegon\*45 Musk Catholic 51 Shutek 15, Wierda 8, Reider 12 reb.

**2008-09 (Coach Jeff Cooke 6-15, Montague WMC champs)**

NM with virtually a new team would take a big step back in the 2008-09 season as coach Jeff Cooke patiently waits for his young team to develop. One of his youngsters was a freshman who would take his game to an unprecedented level before his four years are up at NMHS. Karl Kettelhut would certainly qualify as a candidate for the most improved player in NM’s long history. After averaging less than five points per game in his junior season Kettelhut scored 456 points in his senior season for an average close to 22 points per contest. During the season Ketterhut would top the 30-point mark three times while also setting the record for the most 3-pointers in a game with eight in a February game vs. West Michigan Christian.

However, the first game, and much of the year were a struggle for the Norse, but it was encouraging to see the improvement the team made in the closing stages of the season. The first game was a matchup between a very experienced Muskegon Catholic team and a very raw NM team that returned only one player, Kyle Ketterhut who saw any quality playing time from the 16-5 NM team of 2008. NM briefly surprised the Crusaders, who featured several players who were two weeks removed from a 14-0 state championship football team by taking an 18-12 lead after the first quarter. But then it was all MCC as the Crusaders outscored NM 49-14 in the second and third quarters in a 75-43 romp over NM. NM was led by a young freshman, Spencer Krannitz who scored the first of his over 2000 points he would score in his high school career. Krannitz finished with 16 points with Karl Kettelhut scoring 13. The duo scored 39 of NM’s 43 points.

NM then played Montague, yet another team that two weeks prior were crowned Division 6 state champs in football. Many of those football players were also very good in roundball as witness the 80-50 triumph for the Wildcats over the Norsemen.

The Wildcats unleashed 34 points on the Norsemen in the second quarter compared to NM’s 15 and the rout was on. Krannitz again had 16 points, Kettelhut 15 and Chase Raymond 12 to account for most of NM’s points.

Kark Kettelhut became the 23rd Norsemen in program history to top the 30-point mark with 31 points in NM’s 73-62 victory over Hart. NM led at all the stops to earn their first win of the season. Spencer Krannitz tallied 18 points despite making only 4 of 17 free throws, a department where he will surely show vast improvement as the freshman develops.

Ravenna stayed unbeaten as they snapped a five-game losing streak to NM with a 57-41 victory on the Bulldogs home court. Ravenna ran off to a 19-9 first quarter lead and stretched the lead to win going away. Karl Kettelhut had 12 and Spencer Krannitz 11 for NM.

Take away a bad second quarter when Whitehall blitzed the Norse 20-5, NM played the Vikings even in the other three quarters as no overtime was needed as Whitehall defeated the Norsemen 55-40. Krannitz with 11 and Kettelhut with 10 were the only Norse players in double figures as the young Norsemen continued to struggle.

Holton nipped the Norsemen 61-59, a win they would have to savor as it would be the last time Holton would win over NM over the next 14 games. It was a game the Norse would like to play back as they had a 55-43 lead with three minutes remaining before Holton rallied to go on an 18-4 run to pull out the victory. With the game tied the young Norsemen team put up an ill-advised shot with still 13 seconds remaining. The shot missed, Holton secured the rebound and a long pass led to Brett Bearup resulted in a Holton layup and a Norse loss. Again, it was the NM duo of Krannitz (19) and Kettelhut (16) who led the Norse point scorers.

NM lost their second straight nail-biter as Mason County Central rallied to edge the Norse 75-73 at the Northside gymnasium. The Norse became foul prone in the final quarter as the Spartans capitalized on the over aggressive Norse and made 15-of-21 free throws. The scoring twosome of Karl Kettelhut with 22 and Spencer Krannitz had 21 to lead the Norse.

Once again NM allowed a lead to get away in a 71-66 loss to Shelby. NM enjoyed a 34-30 lead at halftime, but the host Tigers regained the lead in the third quarter and held off the Norse the rest of the way. Karl Kettelhut made six 3-pointers, one off the school record of seven held by Joel Johnson in 1992 and tallied 29 points to lead NM. Spencer Krannitz added 14 as coach Cooke was still waiting for another NM player to step up and score in double figures.

NM wins their second game of the season, both wins coming in the WMC with a 62-48 victory over Oakridge. The Norse for perhaps the first time all season put together four consistent quarters in securing the win. The double K boys for NM, Krannitz and Kettelhut each poured in 20 points for NM.

Grand Rapids Covenant Christian had more firepower than the Norsemen as the visiting Chargers tallied 88 points to NM’s 64. Spencer Krannitz scored a season high 24 to lead the Norse while Karl Kettelhut netted 16 as NM falls to 2-8 on the season.

Montague stayed perfect at 8-0 in the WMC with a 96-63 win over the young Norsemen. NM trailed by only four points at the break at 43-39 but the second half was all Montague. The K boys did their best to keep NM in the game as Kettelhut netted 25 points while Krannitz continued his amazing play for a freshman with 19.

NM outscored Hart 23-4 in the fourth quarter to bus out of Hart with their second victory of the season over the Pirates 61-40. The Double K boys scored 50 of NM’s 61 points with Kettelhut scoring 28 and Krannitz 22. One other Norseman did reach double figures, not in points, but in rebounds as Ben Sheler grabbed 10 caroms for NM.

NM lost to Ravenna by 22 point 70-48 as NM led at half 27-25 only to see the visiting Bulldogs dominate second half action. Karl Kettelhut had 19 points, right on his average while Spencer Krannitz had 11 for NM.

Karl Kettelhut made a school record eight 3-pointer while scoring 32 points, but it wasn’t enough as NM lost 74-68 to West Michigan Christian. NM led the talented Warriors 40-35 at the break as they again came up short in the second half. With his proud grandfather watching in the stands, Spencer Krannitz again was in double figures with 11 points. Spencer’s granddaddy, Ken Krannitz, was an outstanding player for West Michigan Christian in the early 1950s. It surely was no disgrace to lose to the Warriors as Jim Goorman’s Warriors would go on to win another Class D state championship in March.

The Norse had one good quarter, the first, taking a 15-8 lead over the host Vikings before Whitehall caught fire and had a 41-24 run in the middle two quarters in defeating NM 64-57. Karl Kettelhut continued his torrid scoring with 30 points for the losing NM team, 15 of his tallies came on five 3-pointers, with Spencer Krannitz adding 12.

The Norse traveled to the Furniture City to play Grand Rapids North Point Christian in the first ever meeting between the two schools. It was once again the second half blues that bit the Norsemen as they were soundly beaten in the second half in a 77-54 loss. It was a tale of two halves as NM ‘won’ the first half 41-32 but North Pointe was a different team in the second half as they overwhelmed NM 45-23. Karl Kettelhut popped in 23 for the Norse while Chase Raymond became the first NM player in 16 games, other than the two Ks to score in double figures with 12.

A trademark (IMOP) of a well-coached team is one that shows improvement as the year progresses. NM was a much better team in the closing stretches of the season beginning with a 60-45 victory over a Mason County Central team NM lost to earlier in the season. The Big K duo of Kettelhut (26) and Krannitz (23) scored all but 11 of NM’s points in a 60-45 win over the Spartans. The Norse solved their second half blues by outpointing MCC 21-11 in the third quarter. Adam Hulsingh grabbed 12 rebounds for the Norsemen as all four of their wins have come in the WMC.

NM posted one of their highest scoring quarters in years, and it came at the right time in NM’s 71-64 win over Shelby, the second straight WMC team NM defeated to makes amends for an earlier season loss. NM popped in 32 fourth quarter points to rally back from a 46-39 deficit after three quarters for the comeback victory. Karl Kettelhut and Spencer Krannitz combined for 21 points in their fourth quarter run with NM getting some timely production from Adam Hulsingh who scored a season high 10 to become only the 2nd NM player other than the double Ks to score in double figures. Kettelhut scored 21 of his points on seven made 3-pointers with Krannitz finishing his night with 22 points.

NM went on the road and made a fourth quarter comeback to send the game into overtime only to lose in the extra session 58-56 to Oakridge. The Norsemen trailed 49-42 after three quarters and held the Eagles to only three points in the final quarter while scoring 11. Oakridge was the third team NM played during the season that also were state champs in football in the Fall. Two of the stars on the Eagles football state champs, Jamie Potts (19) and Mike Shoop (12) were the big scorers for the Eagles. Spencer Krannitz had 17 for NM with Adam Hulsingh scoring a season high 14. Karl Kettelhut was held to a season low of 12 points as NM concluded the regular season at 5-14.

Holton became the third team who defeated NM in the first game of the season only to lose in the rematch when NM defeated the Red Devils 70-63 in the first round of the Class C districts. Kettelhut with 26 and Krannitz with 23 was a big one-two punch Holton couldn’t contain.

Montague demonstrated why they were the WMC champs and boasting of a 21-2 record following a 91-54 victory over NM to win the district title on their home court. It was the second time during the season when Montague rang up 90 or more points on the scoreboard vs. the Norsemen. Kark Kettelhut concluded his outstanding senior season with 22 points. After scoring in double figures in 20 consecutive games, freshman Spencer Krannitz was held to three points, Aaron Jones, a late callup from the junior varsity team scored nine points as did Chase Raymond.

N Muskegon 43 Musk Catholic 75 Spencer Krannitz 16, Karl Kettelhut 13

N Muskegon 50 Montague 80 Krannitz, 16, Kettelhut 15, Raymond 12

N Muskegon 73 Hart 62 Kettelhut 31, Krannitz 18

N Muskegon 41 Ravenna 57 Kettelhut 12, Krannitz 11

N Muskegon 40 Whitehall 55 Krannitz 11, Kettelhut 10

N Muskegon 59 Holton 61 Krannitz 19, Kettelhut 16

N Muskegon 73 Mason Co 75 Kettelhut 22, Krannitz 21, Ben Sheler 9

N Muskegon 66 Shelby 71 Kettelhut 29, Krannitz 14

N Muskegon 62 Oakridge 48 Krannitz & Kettelhut 20

N Muskegon 64 GR Cov. Christ. 88 Krannitz 24, Kettelhut 16

N Muskegon 63 Montague 94 Kettelhut 25, Krannitz 19

N Muskegon 61 Hart 40 Kettelhut 28, Krannitz 22, Sheler 10 reb.

N Muskegon 48 Ravenna 70 Kettelhut 19, Krannitz 11

N Muskegon 68 WMC 74 Kettelhut 32, Krannitz 11

N Muskegon 57 Whitehall 64 Kettelhut 30, Krannitz 12

N Muskegon 64 GR NP Christ 77 Kettelhut 23, Chase Raymond 12

N Muskegon 60 Mason Co 45 Ketterhut 26, Krannitz 23

N Muskegon 71 Shelby 64 Ketterhut 22, Krannitz 22, Hulsing 10

N Muskegon 56 Oakridge (ot) 58 Krannitz 17, Adam Hulsingh 14

N Muskegon\* 70 Holton 63 Kettelhut 26, Krannitz 23

N Muskegon\* 54 Montague 91 Ketterhut 22, Chase Raymond 9, Jones 9

**2009-10 (Coach Jeff Cooke 11-12, Shelby WMC champs)**

North Muskegon would start an all-underclassmen lineup for 2009-10, a season that would have their ups and downs but several highlights. NM almost doubled their win total from the previous season with 11 wins against 12 defeats.

The Norse opened the 2009-10 with their annual opponent, the Crusaders of Muskegon Catholic. The Norse snapped a brief two-game losing streak with a 56-42 victory. Junior Aaron Jones led North Muskegon with 20 points with sophomore Spencer Krannitz adding 15 points, eight rebounds and four assistss. MCC pulled within five points midway through the third period, but NM finished strong to go up 40-31 at quarter’s end. Eight NM players joined the scoring column with only Jones and Krannitz having played in the previous season.

A talented Oakridge team featuring Jamie Potts defeated NM in a game that was close all the way until Oakridge sealed the deal with free throws in the closing moments to defeat NM 53-45. Nick Huisingh had 15 points to pace the Norse while Spencer Krannitz totaled 10 points. John Hardy snagged 11 rebounds for NM.

Just a few days after leading Montague to back-to-back state championships in football, Cody Kater (25) and Matt DeJong with 19 points combined to lead the defending WMC basketball champs to a 66-52 victory over the Norsemen. The Norse trailed at every stop, but the loss was much closer than the three lopsided defeats Montague pinned on the Norse in 2008-09. Spencer Krannitz began to heat up with 19 points, with Aaron Jones (12) and Nick Huisingh (11) also in double figures.

It appears that some hard times are coming for the Hart basketball program that once was the scourge of WMC basketball in the 1940s and early 1950s. NM handed the Pirates a 66-52 defeat to hand the Pirates their fourth straight setback without a victory. To make matters worse for the upcoming seasons, the NM JVs handed the Pirates a 54-9 whipping in the JV game, a score very similar to a 59-9 beating the once potent Pirates handed NM’s varsity in 1948. Spencer Krannitz poured in 26 points to lead the Norse with Aaron Jones adding 17 while Drake Cooke had five steals as the Norse earn their first victory in conference play.

Ravenna outscored NM in all but the fourth quarter but by then the damage was done as Ravenna defeated NM 63-47. Spencer Krannitz had a big night with 25 with Aaron Jones adding 10 as NM fell to 2-3 in the early season.

Whitehall led all the way as the young Norsemen fell to the Vikings 74-53. The Vikings came out firing as they netted eight 3-pointers in the first half to build up a big early lead. NM did have three players in double figures: Krannitz (13), Jones 12 and John Hardy 10.

NM finally came out a winner and it came at against a team on the Scottville home court where the Spartans often had an edge over the years, Mason County Central. NM took a 49-41 lead into the final quarter and just hung on to earn a 59-58 win over the Spartans. Spencer Krannitz had 23 points, Nick Hulsing 18 and Aaron Jones 14 as the trio combined for all but four of NM’s total points.

Veteran head coach Jeff Cooke was a happy camper following NM’s convincing 70-48 victory over Shelby, their second win in the same week over an WMC opponent. “We seem to be coming together as a team,” said Cooke. “The win on Tuesday gave us some confidence and tonight I was really proud of how we played.” The win threw the WMC title chase into a log jam with three teams tied at the top and now NM lurking in the background at 3-4. Spencer Krannitz scored a career high 28 points for NM and got scoring help from Aaron Jones with 13 with Drake Cooke and Nick Huisingh both netting eight markers.

Spencer Krannitz joined the 30-pont club with 35 points against a very talented Grand Rapids Covenant Christian team although in a losing cause as the Chargers won 76-62. For those keeping score that was a sophomore record for points scored by a Norseman.

Graham Preston made only four points, but it was his 10-foot jumper with two second left that won the ball game in NM’s thrilling 58-57 win over Oakridge. “It felt good to make the shot after some of the misses earlier in the game,” said Preston. “It felt true when I shot it. It definitely is the biggest shot I have ever made,” ‘said the jubilant junior guard. The win knocked Oakridge out of a first-place tie in the WMC. Spencer Krannitz led the Norse with 20 points with Drake Cooke and Aaron Jones each adding 10.

A weary NM team traveled to Hudsonville the next day to play the only game in program history against Hudsonville Freedom Baptist and came back to NM on the short end of a 64-42 loss. Hudsonville steadily pulled away by outscoring NM in each quarter as the Norse were held to one of their lowest scoring games on the season. Spencer Krannitz led NM with 14 as Drake Cooke had a season high 12.

North Muskegon had a 10-point lead with less than six minutes to go but then Montague went on a 20-7 run to rally and defeat the Norse 67-64. The loss nullified a great effort from junior Aaron Jones who scored a career high 29 points with help from Spencer Krannitz who had 14 markers.

The Norse bolted out to a huge first quarter lead at 18-4 in a 57-47 victory over a Hart team was still looking for its first victory in the WMC. Aaron Jones and Spencer Krannitz shared high point honors with 15 with Nick Huisingh close behind with 14. The Norse enjoyed a 16-2 advantage in free throws made.

NM avenged an early season loss, a clear sign of an improved Norsemen team, with a 57-47 victory over Ravenna. Spencer Krannitz led NM with 23 points with Aaron Jones chipping in with 12. After a tight first half NM held the Bulldogs to seven third quarter points. The win over Ravenna would begin a streak whereby NM would win the next 25 games in a row against the Bulldogs without tasting defeat.

NM didn’t avenge an earlier 21-point loss to Whitehall but showed vast improvement over their earlier licking by taking Whitehall into overtime before losing 48-46. The Norsemen had the ball with a chance to take a final shot in overtime only for Whitehall to come up with a steal that set up Tyler Vanbergen’s last second field goal that spelled defeat for the young Norsemen. Spencer Krannitz had 15 in the low scoring contest with Drake Cooke, who hit three 3-pointers, equaling his season high with 12.

The Norsemen than had a rare lopsided 65-33 win over Mason County Central to improve their record to 8-7 on the season. NM put together four solid quarters in the romp with Krannitz again pacing Norse scorers with 20 points, right on his average up to this point in the season while getting offensive help from Nick Huisingh with 13 and Aaron Jones with 12 points.

West Michigan Christian showed the Norsemen on why they won 26 of 28 games and yet another Class D state championship in 2010 with a 79-54 victory over NM. The Warriors Evan Bruinsma, who would later star for the University of Detroit scored 40 points, against the Norsemen, the only opponent to score 40 or more points vs. a NM team. Bruinsma was also a force on the boards with 20 rebounds. NM hung around through three quarters before the talented Warrior team outpointed NM 21-10 in the fourth quarter. Spencer Krannitz with 15 and Nick Huisingh with 12 were in double figures for NM.

NM took a momentary step backwards in losing to Shelby 60-41. The Tigers had all the incentive working for them on their home court as the win clinched the West Michigan Conference championship for the Tigers. The middle two quarters were the difference makers in the contest as Shelby outscored NM 34-14. NM was held to their lowest offensive total of the season by the Tigers with Spencer Krannitz the only Norsemen in double figures with 16 points.

The Norsemen closed to within a point of Grand Rapids North Pointe Christian before the visitors pulled away in the closing moments to hand NM their third straight defeat 70-63.

NM closed out the regular season with a win over Holton 51 -45 as Spencer Krannitz scored 23 points, had eight rebounds, three steals and three assists. Nick Huisingh pulled down 12 rebounds for a NM team heading into next week’s MHSAA playoffs.

NM got a favorable draw in the MHSAA playoffs as they easily thumped a 2-19 Hesperia team 73-60. Coach Cooke was able to substitute freely as NM led 65-41 after three quarters. Ten players scored for NM led as usual by sophomore wonderkid Spencer Krannitz who netted 25 points. Nick Huisingh added 13.

NM made Hart a loser once again as the Pirates experienced one of their worse teams in history as they finished with a woeful 1-20 record on the season following NM’s 67-49 victory, Aaron Jones scored 14, Nick Huisingh 14, John Hardy had a season high 13 while Spencer Krannitz settled for 11 points as NM wins their 11th game of the season.

Montague then made it a three-peat for the second straight season as they eliminated the Norsemen 67-51. Montague again wins the district tournament and carries an impressive 19-4 record into the regional tournament. Spencer Krannitz, who finished the season with 441 points that averaged out to better than 19 points per game had 14 to lead the Norse with Nick Huisingh adding 14

N Muskegon 56 Musk Catholic 42 Aaron Jones 20, Spencer Krannitz 15

N Muskegon 45 Oakridge 53 Nick Huisingh 15, Krannitz 10

N Muskegon 52 Montague 66 Krannitz 19, Jones 12m Huisingh 11

N Muskegon 69 Hart 47 Krannitz 26, Jones 17

N Muskegon 47 Ravenna 63 Krannitz 25, Jones 10

N Muskegon 53 Whitehall 74 Krannitz 13, Jones 12, John Hardy 10

N Muskegon 59 Mason Co 58 Krannitz 23, Huisingh 18, Jones 14

N Muskegon 70 Shelby 48 Krannitz 28, Jones 23

N Muskegon 62 GR Cov. Christ 76 Krannitz 35

N Muskegon 58 Oakridge 57 Krannitz 20, Drake Cooke 10, Jones 10

N Muskegon 42 Hudsonville FBapt. 64 Krannitz 14, Cooke 14

N Muskegon 64 Montague 67 Jones 29, Krannitz 14

N Muskegon 57 Hart 47 Krannitz & Jones 15, Huisingh 14

N Muskegon 54 Ravenna 46 Krannitz 23, Jones 12

N Muskegon 46 Whitehall (ot) 48 Krannitz 15, Cooke 12

N Muskegon 65 Mason Co 33 Krannitz 20, Huisingh 13, Jones 10

N Muskegon 54 WMC 79 Krannitz 15, Huisingh 12

N Muskegon 41 Shelby 60 Krannitz 16, Huisingh 8

N Muskegon 63 GR North Point Ch. 70 Krannitz 22, Huisingh 13, Jones 11

N Muskegon51 Holton 45 Krannitz 23

N Muskegon\*73 Hesperia 60 Krannitz 25, Huisingh 13

N Muskegon 67 Hart 49 Jones 24, Huisingh 14, Hardy 13, Krannitz 11

N Muskegon 51 Montague 67 Kannitz 13, Huisingh 13

**2010-11 (Coach Jeff Cooke 13-10, Montague WMC champs)**

With virtually their entire team returning from the previous season the Norsemen would have a much more experienced team to work with in the 2010-11 season. All three of their leading scorers return including a pair of Juniors, Spencer Krannitz (19.2 ppg) and Nick Huisingh (9.4 ppg) and senior Aaron Jones (11.3 ppg). Drake Cooke, Graham Preston, John Hardy and Greg Sicho also saw extended action in the 2009-10 season that will provide head coach Jeff Cooke much-needed depth.

North Muskegon as usual opened their season against Muskegon Catholic and recorded a surprisingly easy 63-31 win over the Crusaders. Spencer Krannitz took up right where he left off as a sophomore by leading the Norse with 23 points. Nine players scored for the Norsemen but only Krannitz was in double figures although Graham Preston was close with nine.

NM then defeated Ravenna 68-22; the fewest points scored by the Bulldogs since NM defeated Ravenna 35-22 back in 1937. So decisive was this game that nearly the entire second half was played with a running clock due to the mercy rule. Eleven Norsemen scored in the contest with Junior Nick Huisingh and John Hardy in double figures with 14 and 13 points respectively. Spencer Krannitz was content to let his teammates have fun in the rout as he scored nine points.

NM then routed Hart 78-30 as once again 11 Norse joined in on the scoring parade. Even with a running clock in effect for much of the fourth quarter the NM reserves were still able to outscore Hart 18-2 in the final eight minutes. In limited minutes Spencer Krannitz scored 18 points with Zac McCamant and Nick Huisingh each adding 11 for the 3-0 Norsemen.

North Muskegon and Saugatuck renewed their rivalry with NM breaking the game wide open with a 23-5 run in the second quarter to win easily for the fourth straight time to begin the season 71-42. Spencer Krannitz poured in 27 points for the Norsemen with Graham Preston adding 12 and Nick Huisingh 10.

NM began the new year by losing to their nemesis from the past three season, the Montague Wildcats. The Wildcats broke open a 39-32 halftime lead with a 17-7 run in the third quarter to slide past the Norse and win going away 71-56. It was the eighth straight win by Montague over the Norsemen. The game was a battle of the unbeatens with Montague the team now sporting the perfect record with NM dropping to 4-1. Spencer Krannitz led NM with 21 points with John Hardy adding seven for the Norsemen.

A big fourth quarter with the Norsemen netting 23 to the Eagles 8 put the game way for the Norsemen as they defeated Oakridge 71-48. At one point beginning late in the third period, NM went on a 17-0 run. Drake Cooke netted a career high 16 points for NM with Krannitz (15) and Preston 13) close behind as 10 Norsemen entered the scorebook.

NM played four solid quarters in NM’s 66-52 win over Mason County Central. Spencer Krannitz scoring eight of his game high 25 points in the final quarter. Nick Huisingh had a season high 18 points as the duo scored 43 of NM’s 66 points. NM was now an impressive 6-1 on the season but they would encounter a little bump in the road ahead.

Shelby used some sharp free throw shooting to hand NM a 74-69 defeat in a game played on the Northside court. The Tigers sank 15-of-21 free throws with 13 of those coming in the final quarter to send the Norsemen to their second defeat in the WMC. NM had four players in double figures led by Spencer Krannitz with 24. Graham Preston had a season high 16 with 12 of his points coming on four made 3-pointers. Aaron Jones added 11 and Nick Huisingh 10.

NM played a steady game as they defeated Whitehall 57-49. NM’s best quarter was the first as they outscored Whitehall 16-10 and then held their own the rest of the game. Nick Huisingh made a huge 3-point play with less than three minutes to play to give NM enough cushion to hang on. The Norse won despite only converting on 18-of-34 free throws. Scoring in double figures for the Norsemen were Krannitz (10), Huisingh (13) and Preston (10).

The Norse fell behind early and could never catch up as GR Covenant Christian edged the Norse 70-55. Spencer Krannitz’s 18 led the Norse while Graham Preston equaled his season high with 16.

It appears it went unnoticed by the media as Spencer Krannitz became the fourth Norsemen in school history to score 1000 points in NM’s 84-48 romp over Ravenna. Krannitz’s game high 28 points gave the Junior 1011 career points with still a season and a half remaining. Krannitz also grabbed 12 rebounds before taking a seat to make way for the reserves in the final quarter. John Hardy notched 12 points and Drew Chandonnet 10.

NM again had an easy time in the second matchup with Hart as NM again forced a running clock in a 74-31 pasting of Hart. Ten Norsemen scored in the thrashing with Krannitz (19), Preston (13) and Huisingh all in double figures.

In a near complete reversal of their first meeting it was Oakridge who defeated the Norse after absorbing an earlier 71-48 loss to NM. Oakridge led 32-30 at the break but then NM went stone cold in the third quarter as they scored only six points while the Eagles countered with 17. Oakridge’s three sport star Jamie Potts did the most damage as he scored 21 of his 27 points in the second half. Spencer Krannitz had 20 and John Hardy 12 for NM.

North Muskegon only trailed twice but the second time counted the most as Mason County Central’s David Soraci connected on a 3-pointer late in the game that was the game winner in the Spartan’s 72-70 win over the Norsemen. NM had a pair of 3-point shots that missed their mark in the game’s final seconds but missed both potential game winners. Spencer Krannitz had a big game for NM with 26 points with John Hardy adding 12.

It was the Spencer Krannitz show in Shelby as the junior scoring machine poured in a career high 37 points as Krannitz’s big night led to a 63-55 victory over Shelby as NM got back into a winning mode. No other Norsemen came close to double figures as Krannitz scored more than half of NM’s points.

North Muskegon often had many bad shooting nights at the old Whitehall gymnasium (your author would be a great example), but the Norse didn’t shoot much better on February 17, 2011, at the new Whitehall complex as they failed to make a 3-pointer in a 49-48 loss to the Vikings. Not only were the Norsemen shooting blanks from behind the 3-poinrt arc, but they didn’t fare much better at the free throw line as they shot an abysmal 7-of-18. Double teamed by the Vikings, NM’s Spencer Krannitz still scored 12 points, the same as his teammate Drake Cooke.

It was a strange four quarters in NM’s 83-67 loss to West Michigan Christian. In the first quarter WMC outscored the Norsemen 31-13. NM then scored 30 points in the second stanza to 19 for the Warriors. After NM won the third quarter battle 21-17, NM suddenly went stone cold in the final period as the Warriors outpointed NM 16-3. With Grandpa Ken Krannitz , a former cage great nearly a half-century earlier at WMC watching from the stands, his grandson Spencer Krannitz scored 16 of his 28 points in the first half to keep NM close before the Blue & Gold ran out of gas in the fourth quarter.

North Muskegon, er--- Spencer Krannitz gave undefeated Montague a battle before falling to a Montague team that would boast of an 18-0 record after their narrow 61-58 victory over the Norse. Krannitz scored 34 of NM’s 58 points as he kept NM in the game. Kranitz was a perfect 18 of 18 at the free throw line, a performance that still stands today as a NM record for one game marksmanship at the charity stripe. Montague needed a pair of timely 3-pointers from Chade Casebolt to earn the victory. His first 3-pointer with 30 seconds left tied the game and another 3-pointer at the buzzer was the winner.

NM traveled to Grandville for their first ever meeting with Grandville Calvin Christian but came back to NM the losers 71-60. The hosts from Grandville used a couple of bookend quarters, the first and fourth to thump the Norse. Spencer Krannitz had yet another scoring flurry as he pumped in 32 points to lead the Norse with Graham Preston reaching double digits with 10.

NM ended their four-game skid and tuned up for next week’s playoffs with a 77-57 victory over Holton. The Norse took a big 41-19 lead at halftime and coasted to victory. Spencer Krannitz scored 29 points while Graham Preston had a career high 21 for the Norse as they ended the regular season with a winning record of 11-9.

Ravenna’s season came to a merciful end as the Bulldogs 78-36 loss to NM left them winless for the year at 0-21. Even with a running clock NM outscored the hapless Bulldogs 36-7 in the second half. Playing limited minutes Spencer Krannitz still had enough time to drill 26 points, Preston Graham had 14 and football star Jonathan Ackley scored in double figures with 10.

North Muskegon and Holton met for the second time within a week, and the results were much the same with NM topping Holton 80-67. NM opened the game with a 21-9 run in the second quarter. Spencer Krannitz, who is averaging 30 points over his last six games scored right at 30 to lead NM into the final against West Michigan Christian. Preston Graham added 14 and Drake Cooke 11 as NM earned the right to play West Michigan Christian in the district finals.

West Michigan Christian, winners of three state Class D state championships came into Friday’s finals after ending host school Montague’s 20 game unbeaten streak. Already holding a 16-point win over NM earlier in the season it would indeed be a tough task to upset the powerful Warriors. The second game was much tougher than the first matchup as NM had the lead at 46-45 heading into the final eight minutes. It’s a huge understatement to say that the Warrior were tournament tested as they have now won 27 straight games – IN THE TOURNAMENT. WMC showed their composure and hit some big free throws down the stretch to end NM’s season at 13-10.

N Muskegon 63 Musk Cath 31 Spencer Krannitz 23, Graham Preston 9

N Muskegon 68 Ravenna 22 Nick Huisingh 14, John Hardy 13, Krannitz 9

N Muskegon 78 Hart 30 Krannitz 18, ZacMcCamant & Hulsign 11

N Muskegon 71 Saugatuck 42 Krannitz 27, Preston 12, Huisingh 10

N Muskegon 56 Montague 71 Kraanitz 21, Hardy 11

N Muskegon 71 Oakridge 48 Drake Cooke 16, Krannitz 15, Preston 13

N Muskegon 66 Mason Co 52 Krannitz 25, Huisingh 18

N Muskegon 69 Shelby 74 Krannitz 24, Preston 12, Jones 11

N Muskegon 57 Whitehall 49 Krannitz 18, Huisingh 13, Preston 10

N Muskegon 55 GR Cov. Chris. 70 Krannitz 18, Preston `14

N Muskegon 84 Ravenna 48 Krannitz 28 (1011 career), Hardy 12

N Muskegon 74 Hart 31 Krannitz 19, Preston 13, Huisingh 11

N Muskegon 51 Oakridge 62 Krannitz 20, Hardy 12

N Muskegon 70 Mason Co 72 Krannitz 26, Hardy 12

N Muskegon 63 Shelby 55 Krannitz 37

N Muskegon 48 Whitehall 49 Krannitz & Cooke 12, Aaron Jones 10

N Muskegon 67 WMC 83 Krannitz 28, Preston 10

N Muskegon 58 Montague 61 Krannitz 34, Hardy 8

N Muskegon 60 Calvin Christ. 78 Krannitz 32, Preston 10

N Muskegon 77 Holton 57 Krannitz 29, Preston 21, Hardy 11

N Muskegon\*78 Ravenna 36 Krannitz 26, Preston 14, Jon Ackley 10

N Muskegon\*80 Holton 67 Krannitz 30, Preston 14, Cooke 11

N Muskegon\*63 WMC 68 Krannitz 29, Ackley & Jones 8

**2011-12 (Coach Jeff Cooke 15-8, Shelby WMC champs)**

The Norse would play in front of packed gyms throughout the season with the number one drawing card being Spencer Krannitz, who was on pace to become the area’s all-time leading scorer. NM would incur a couple of double overtime defeats that if the scores were reversed it would have made an already good season even better.

NM had a 28-20 lead at the half before Muskegon Catholic came roaring back in the second half to hand the Norsemen a 57-52 loss in their season opener. In the opener of what would be a historic season for NM four-year starter Spencer Krannitz,scored 27 points in his 2011-12 debut. No other Norsemen scored more than seven points as Spencer was the only returning regular back from last year’s team.

NM traveled to Ravenna and cruised to an easy 69-37 victory behind 26 points from Spencer Krannitz. The senior sharpshooter also led NM in rebounds with 12. Football star Jonathon Ackley had 10 points and seven rebounds as nine Norsemen scored. The win marked the 700th win in program history.

Spencer Krannitz scored 38 of NM’s 61 points as NM ended a Montague nine game winning streak against the Norsemen. NM only made 1-of-15 3-pointers but did well at the free throw line with Krannitz making 9-of-10. Chase Raymond had 10 rebounds for NM as well as eight points.

NM jumped out to an early 21-3 lead after the first quarter and then went on to down Hart 68-42 in a road win at Hart. Spencer Krannitz made a 30-point game look routine as he poured in 33 points as 10 Norsemen scored in the rout over the Pirates. Junior Zach Rummery and senior Jonathon Ackley each had seven points while junior Adam Edict led Norse rebounders with nine. To say Hart had a bad day at the free throw line would be an understatement as the Pirates made only 7-of-26 free throws.

Holton was no match for NM in the first game of the New Year of 2012. The Norse led 51-16 forcing a running clock in the fourth quarter. Every Norsemen who suited up in the contest scored with Spencer Krannitz leading the way with 20 points in limited minutes. Chase Raymond had 9 points and 12 rebounds with junior Chase Cooke and Jonathon Ackley each adding eight for the 4-1 Norsemen.

NM nearly let a 33-21 halftime lead get away from them as Oakridge started the second half with a 18-7 run to close within one heading into the final quarter. NM regained their momentum and went on a 9-0 run and then held on to edge the Eagles 54-50 to stay undefeated in the WMC at 4-0. Spencer Krannitz scored 22 to go along with seven rebounds and six steals. Chase Raymond had 12 points on four 3-pointers and 11 rebounds. Patrick Giddings of Oakridge, who made eight 3-pointers, led all scorers with 26 points. Scoring eight points for Oakridge was senior Nick Huisingh, a transfer from North Muskegon. After playing their first five games on the road, it was the first home game for the Norsemen.

After their one home game to start the season NM again hit the road for their annual journey to Scottville to face the Mason County Central Spartans. NM fell into an early hole, trailing 22-10 after the first quarter. NM then chipped away at that lead and sent the game into overtime at 50-all. Each team scored eight points in the first overtime session forcing a second overtime. The Spartans sent the Norse packing with a loss outscoring NM 12-10 in the second overtime to capture a 70-68 heartbreaking loss to the Norse 70-68. The Norse had the misfortune to run into a player who had a hot hand. Sophomore guard Kody Ambrose, who went scoreless in the first half scored all his 26 points in the second half to lead MCC to victory. Spencer Krannitz did all he could for the Norse, scoring 36 of NM’s 68 points. Chase Raymond chipped in with 10 points and 12 rebounds.

It hardly caused a blip in the rapidly failing coverage of the Muskegon Chronicle that was amid some major downsizing as Spencer Krannitz put on an amazing show in the Norsemen’s 69-68 victory over Whitehall. Krannitz scored 48 points, the third highest point total in a single game by a Norsemen. Only Gordy Odell’s 53 scored against Whitehall and Leigh Kakaty’s 54 against a Class D Baldwin team ranked higher in NM annals. Krannitz’s performance wasn’t against any old foe, but a proven rival like Whitehall. Krannitz hit a pair of free throws with three seconds on the clock for the victory. Spencer also surpassed the all-time NM career scoring record od 1559 of Drew Naymick with his block buster of a night. Krannitz following this game now has a career total of 1579 points, just two points shy of Grant’s Joe Schuitema’s 1581 set in 1988. Krannitz connected on 7-of-9 three pointers, 10-of-14 two pointers and was 7-of-8 from the free throw line. With the season not even half completed, could Krannitz possibly become the area’s all-time career leader in points scored? Next on the list is the leader, Todd Bayle of Walkerville with 1911. The following Tuesday the Chronicle’s brilliant sports editor Tom Kendra, working with a staff that had faced some major downsizing wrote a great feature on Krannitz’s huge night.

Spencer Krannitz did surpass Joe Schuiteman with a 33-point effort, but it came in a losing cause as NM was defeated by Shelby 69-59. The Tigers stayed perfect on the season with a 9-0 record as they connected on 11 3-pointers in their home win over the Norsemen. So dependent are the Norse with Krannitz carrying the load that no other NM player had more than four points.

NM again hit the road for their 10th time in 11 games the following night after their game at Shelby. NM led 44-34 at the half, 55-52 after the third quarter before running out of gas in their second game in two nights as a very strong Grand Rapids Covenant Christian team defeated NM 82-76. Spencer Krannitz showed the home folks in the Furniture City of his talents as he rifled in 36 points. Spencer got some scoring help in this game from Sam Powell, who scored a career high 14, Zach Rummery with 11 and Chase Raymond with 10.

For only the second time all season NM played a game on their home court. NM Head Coach cannot fault the NM athletic director for the quirky schedule as Jeff Cooke wears both hats as the head basketball coach and athletic director. The Norsemen quickly showed the hometown fans that they like playing at home as they pounded out to a big 29-11 lead over Ravenna and coasted to an 86-46 rout of the Bulldogs. Spencer Krannitz played long enough to score 28 points. Chase Raymond added 11 points and 10 rebounds while Zach Rummery scored a career high 16 for the Norsemen.

Krannitz again did his thing with 34 points and eight steals in NM’s 68-55 win over Montague but got plenty of help from his teammates. Drew Chandonnet had a season high 13 points while Chase Raymond did a good job on the boards by grabbing 11 rebounds.

February 1st was a dark day for high school sports coverage as our beloved Muskegon Chronicle was taken over by a conglomerate known as Mlive.com. Box scores that had been posted for North Muskegon and all local team for 80 years was now a distant memory. An impossible job was given to the lone remaining sports reporter in our area, Marc Opferman who was given the ridiculous task of covering all sports. Instead, out sports pages were inundated with national and major college coverage of which none were located near Greater Muskegon.

Coverage of NM’s first game in February was limited to one paragraph, two days after the game was completed, with a NM rout of Hart 82-38. NM led at halftime 48-15 as head coach Jeff Cooke was able to substitute freely. “We came out strong and had a lot of people score,” was a quote from Cooke who phoned in the score. Spencer Krannitz led the Norsemen with 22 points as his pursuit of the area’s all-time career scoring record was getting closer. Will Byl, with the shortest name in NM history, came off the bench to score 13 points for NM with Jonathon Ackley in double figures with 11.

Oakridge made amends for an earlier loss to NM with a 62-57 victory over NM. There was zero coverage in the Muskegon coverage for this game but somehow your author discovered that Spencer Krannitz had another big game with 31 points with Chase Raymond adding 10 in a losing cause.

What a difference from game one to game two between NM and Mason County Central. After NM lost in a game that took two overtime sessions, there was no need for overtime in the rematch as NM bombed the Spartans 70-46. Krannitz stayed on pace to set an all-time area career scoring record with 33 points. No other Norsemen was in double figures, but eight other players did score for NM with Drew Chandonnet leading the second tier with eight points. Chase Raymond grabbed 11 rebounds as NM improved to 10-5. NM broke the game open in the third quarter outscoring the Spartans 24-13 as Krannitz scored 10 of his 33 points.

NM then posted the biggest upset to date in the West Michigan Conference as they handed Shelby their first loss of the season 62-59. This game wasn’t decided until after the final buzzer had sounded. With NM up by three with 4.9 seconds left Spencer Krannitz missed a game clinching free throw. The Tigers got the rebounds and an off-balanced desperation 3-pointer heave near midcourt banked in off the glass. However, both officials immediately waved off the basket as it occurred after the final buzzer had sounded. Despite Krannitz’s miss of the free throw it was probable that coach Cooke just ‘might’ keep Spencer in the starting lineup for the next game. Krannitz, despite being hounded all night by the Tiger defense, still scored a game high 24 points.

North Muskegon then swept a season series with Whitehall for the first time in 50 years (1962) with a 63-47 victory over the Vikings. Spencer Krannitz scored half the number of points as he scored in an earlier victory over Whitehall but still managed to score 24. Zach Rummery scored 16 much-needed points for the Norse while Chase Raymond filled up the stat sheet with six points, 11 rebounds, and four assists.

You know NM has had a good season anytime they can defeat West Michigan Christian. The Norse broke an eight game Warrior winning streak with a 43-37 win over WMC. NM held WMC to 37 points, the second lowest point total scored by WMC against the Norse in the 71 games played over the years between the two local rivals. Even more remarkable, the win was on the Warriors home court. Spencer Krannitz, although ‘held’ to 21 points heated up when it counted most in the low-scoring contest. WMC entered the final quarter leading NM 28-27 as Krannitz scored five points in the final quarter as NM outscored the hosts 15-10 to build their record to 13-5

NM can only have some wishful thinking on how much better their overall record would be this season if they would have won both of their games that went into double overtime. Except, they lost both including their second, and final game played against Grandville Calvin Christian. Spencer Krannitz scored 42 points to bring his career total to 1907, just five points away from the areas all-time record of 1911 of Walkersville’s Todd Bayle. Krannitz was a perfect 11-of-11 from the free throw line while Drew Chandonnet had a double-double, 12 points and 10 rebounds.

It was a historic night when North Muskegon hosted Saugatuck on March 1, 2012. Everything went right except for the final score as Saugatuck, who came to the Northside gym having never defeated NM in five previous games, defeated NM 65-60 in the last game of the regular season. It was also the last appearance on the NM court for Spencer Krannitz. With a packed crowd in attendance, that included the Area’s All-Time leading scorer going into the game Walkerville’s Todd Bayle, with 2:09 left to play in the first quarter Krannitz score a layup that broke the record. The game was stopped and with a touch of class, Todd Bayle stepped out on the court and handed the game ball to Krannitz. Ironically it was at the NM gymnasium where Bayle scored his last points as a player, in a district loss to West Michigan Christian. Krannitz would finish the game with 28 points to bring his career total to 1935. NM never led in the game, but the Norse did tie the game at 60-60 on Chase Raymond’s rebound putback with 37 seconds left. Saugatuck then made 5-of-6 free throws to make the final score 65-60.

North Muskegon defeated Ravenna 69-56 in the first game of the MHSAA playoffs 69-56 as Spencer Krannitz tallied 24 points.

NM struggled at times but had enough firepower and height to defeat Kent City 57-54. NM outrebounded Kent City, who didn’t have a player taller than 6’1, 43-30. Spencer Krannitz scored 20 points, but NM had enough balance to advance. Drew Chandonnet had 14 points and 11 rebounds while Chase Raymond added nine points and 14 rebounds to assist Krannitz. Kent City aspired of an upset as they jumped out to a 18-11 first quarter lead before NM bounced back to take the lead for good with a 16-2 run in the second quarter.

NM’s season came to a crushing end as Montague, who had lost in their two meetings during the regular season, defeated NM for the second time in three years 53-48. NM had a late chance to send the game into overtime. Trailing by five points with little time remaining, Spencer Krannitz cut the lead to two with a 3-pointer with 19 second remaining. After Montague made one of two free throws Krannitz was fouled on a last second shot. A very tired Krannitz missed his first two shots, intentionally missed the third but his free throw didn’t touch the rim and Montague held on for the victory. Krannitz ended his career with 29 points and became the first Greater Muskegon area player to score 2000 points with a final career total of 2008.

N Muskegon 52 Musk Catholic 57 Spencer Krannitz 27, Zach Rummery 7

N Muskegon 69 Ravenna 37 Krannitz 26, Jomathon Ackley 10, WIN 700

N Muskegon 61 Montague 53 Krannitz 38, Chase Raymond 8

N Muskegon 68 Hart 42 Krannitz 33, Adam Edict 9 rebounds

N Muskegon 71 Holton 31 Krannitz 20, Raymond 9 & 12 rebounds

N Muskegon 54 Oakridge 50 Krannitz 22, Raymond 12

N Muskegon 68 Mason Co 70 Krannitz 36, Raymond 10

N Muskegon 69 Whitehall 68 Krannitz 48

N Muskegon 59 Shelby 69 Krannitz 33,

N Muskegon 76 GR Cov. Christ. 82 Krannitz 36, Sam Powell 14

N Muskegon 86 Ravenna 46 Krannitz 28, Rummery 16

N Muskegon 68 Montague 55 Krannitz 34, Drew Chandonnet 13

N Muskegon 82 Hart 38 Krannitz 22. Will Byl 13, Ackley 11

N Muskegon 57 Oakridge 62 Krannitz 31, Raymond 10

N Muskegon 70 Mason Co 46 Krannitz 33, Chandonnet 8

N Muskegon 62 Shelby 59 Krannitz 24

N Muskegon 63 Whitehall 47 Krannitz 24, Rummery 16

N Muskegon 43 WMC 37 Krannitz 21

N Muskegon 74 Calvin Christian 82 Krannitz 42, Chandonnet 12

N Muskegon 60 Saugatuck 65 Krannitz 28.

N Muskegon\* 69 Ravenna 56 Krannitz 24

N Muskegon\* 57 Kent City 54 Krannitz 20, Chandonnet 14

N Muskegon\* 48 Montague 53 Krannitz 29

**2012–13 (Coach Jeff Cooke 6-15, Montague WMC champs)**

The Spencer Krannitz era is over, and the Norse would take a step backward in the 2012-13 season. Only Sam Powell and Zach Rummery returned from the regular rotation from the previous season as the Norsemen would win 6 games while losing 15.

Sam Powell, one of only a handful of returnees from last year’s outstanding team recorded a double-double with 15 points and 12 rebounds as NM won their traditional opener with Muskegon Catholic 60-51. A 17-9 first quarter got NM off to a good start as NM was helped with the Crusaders shooting only 3-21 from the 3-point line. Zach Rummery also added 15 points for the Norsemen.

Montague had too much size for the smaller Norsemen as Montague used a big second half to win over the Norse 59-39. NM trailed the Wildcats by one at the halftime break before the Wildcats controlled the second half. Sam Powell again had 15 points for NM followed by junior Reese McCamant with nine and junior Tony Gordon with 7.

NM continued their complete dominance over Hart as NM raced to a double-digit lead in the first half and went on to defeat Hart 55-40. Junior Ryan Gannon, playing on the NM varsity for the first time, led NM in scoring with a modest 11 points followed by Sam Powell with 10.

Oakridge, with a much-improved team from last season, remained perfect in the early season with a 55-47 victory over the Norsemen. Sam Powell, whose previous career high from last season was 14 points, scored 22 to lead the Norsemen with Tony Gordon chipping in with 11 as NM is currently 2-2 on the season.

NM briefly held the lead at 42-40 in the third quarter, but West Michigan Christian rallied to earn a 65-54 victory over the Norsemen. Junior post player Bernard Smith had a huge game for the winning Warriors with 27 points and 16 rebounds. NM didn’t help themselves in this contest as they were guilty of four technical fouls that resulted in eight uncontested free throws for WMC. The Norse had balanced scoring with Sam Powell netting 13, with Reese McCamant and Tony Gordon each adding 10 points.

NM again saw a third quarter lead go away two days later as they lost to Mason County Central 64-54. Reese McCamant scored a season high 21 points with Sam Powe11 adding 11 as NM concluded the year of 2012 with a 2-4 record.

No longer called Muskegon Heights High School but now known as Muskegon Heights Academy, one thing remained constant: the Tigers still know how to play basketball whatever the name for the school. Now a Class D school with many of their students having transferred to other schools, including their veteran coach Keith Guy who joined the staff at Muskegon High, the Tigers still overwhelmed the Norse 85-38. Heights led 52-13 enroute to a running clock in the second half as the young Norse absorbed by far their most lopsided defeat of the year. Sam Powell drilled three 3-pointers for all nine of his team leading points.

Shelby pulled away in the fourth quarter after leading NM by only four points after three quarters of play to hand NM their fifth straight defeat 63-52. NM can look no further than the disparity in free throws as Shelby was 28-of-36 from the foul line while the Norsemen made 6-of-8. Three NM players were in double figures: Reese McCamant (14), Sam Powell (12) and Zach Rummary 11.

NM again kept in close, but those fourth quarter blahs kept NM from a win as Whitehall held off the Norse 49-47. Trailing 47-44 with less than a minute left, Reese McCamant drilled a 3-pointer to tie the game. Whitehall was fouled, made one-of two free throws only to see Viking center Matt Russell grab the rebound and make one-of-two free throws to clinch the game for Whitehall. NM had one last chance but a long 3-pointer by McCamant hit the back of the rim, and the final score remained at 49-47. Sam Powell finished with 15 points with Zach Rummery adding 13. NM again had troubles at the free throw line: connecting on 8-of-14 while Whitehall went 13-of-17.

After losing several of their games with late rallies by their opponents it was NM’s time to have a big second half. NM overcame a double-digit deficit at halftime to rally for a 67-64 victory over Ravenna to end their six-game losing streak. Will Byl came to the rescue of NM with a career high 17 points, Tony Gordon added 11 while Ryan Gannon was a force on the boards with 11 rebounds.

NM needed a 19-11 scoring run in the fourth quarter to hold off Hart 66-56 for their second straight win in the WMC. After leading 34-21 at halftime, Hart cut the lead to 47-45 heading into the fourth quarter leading up to NM’s deciding late run. Sam Powell led NM with 18 points with Will Byl adding 12.

Saugatuck outscored NM 6-3 in overtime to defeat the Norsemen for the second year in a row with a 59-56 non-conference win. NM led 43-39 after three quarters only to see Saugatuck rally to force overtime. Will Byl led the Norsemen with 12 points, Zach Rummery added 11 and Reese McCamant scored 10 points.

Points were hard to come by in an Oakridge victory over North Muskegon. The first quarter saw each team score but five points as Oakridge edged NM 47-40. The Eagles led 23-20 at half time, 37-30 at the end of the third with both teams scoring 10 points in the game’s final eight minutes. Will Byl with 15 points was the only Norseman in double figures in the low-scoring contest.

It was now the Norsemen’s turn to make a fourth quarter rally only to fall just short in a 58-55 loss to Mason County Central. The Norsemen trailed 28-18 at halftime and cut the Spartan’s lead to two points entering the final quarter. A 3-pointer by Tony Gordon gave the Norse its first lead early into the final quarter. MCC drained a big three with less than two minutes to play and then held off the Norse to earn the victory. NM almost forced a miraculous overtime but a halfcourt shot at the buzzer rolled around the cylinder and dropped off. Sam Powell and Will Byl each scored 15 points for NM.

There was no drama in the second meeting between Shelby and the Norsemen as the Tigers scored early and often in a 71-41 romp over the Norsemen. Shelby led 19-9 after the 1st quarter, 49-35 at the half and then really put a hurt on the Norse in the final quarter with a 22-6 run. Sam Powell’s 11 points was the best a Norsemen could do in the contest.

The Norse for the second time this season were no match for Montague as the Wildcats sweep the season series with a 66-48 win. “Just had too much balanced scoring, rebounding and free-throw shooting by Montague for North Muskegon to come back,” said NM coach Cooke. “I was very happy we were able to cut it to nine points in the fourth,’ added the NM coach who had nothing but praise for the victors. Sam Powell had 20 points to lead the Norse offense while Ryan Gannon had eight rebounds. Montague would end the season as West Michigan Conference champs.

The losing streak reached six as Whitehall dominated the Norsemen 66-47. Sam Powell once again led the Norse with 15 points followed by Tony Gordon with nine and Reese McCamant eight.

NM got back on the winning track as they defeated Ravenna 69-55 as the Norsemen were early into a winning streak against Ravenna that would eventually reach 25 games. The Norse were in control all the way as they enjoyed a 28-22 lead at halftime that NM increased by game’s end. Zach Rummery scored a season high 22 points for NM while Sam Powell added 13 and Reese McCamant 11.

In the last game of a seven-game series Grand Rapids Covenant won six of those games, including a 53-36 win over NM that ended the regular season. The Chargers made short work of the Norsemen early as they had a double-digit lead after one quarter. NM didn’t have any players reach double figures as Zach Rummery and Ryan Gannon were close with nine points. NM ended the regular season with a 5-14 record with four of those wins coming in the WMC.

North Muskegon, for many years after NM no longer had students from Laketon Township, always hovered on the border of being a small Class C school or a large Class D. In 2013 NM had dropped down to Class D and were placed in a district tournament hosted by Fennville High School. NM would play Holland Black River and would win easily 65-43 in the only game ever played between the two schools. NM went on a 21-7 run in the second quarter to pull away from the fledgling Holland area school. Sam Powell led the Norse with 14 points while Adam Edict had a season high 11. Will Byl and Tony Gordon both reached double figures with 10 points.

NM then played Muskegon Heights Academy in the district semi-finals, a Tiger team that destroyed NM in January by 47 points. The winner was the same, but the results were much different as the Norsemen played the Heights much tougher in the second meeting. Height led NM 52-13 at halftime in January. It was only a three-point halftime lead for the Tigers at 32-29 in Fennville. The Tigers would outscore the Norse 34-24 in the second half to end NM’s season at 6-15. Sam Powell ended his NM career with 15 points to pace the Norse.

N Muskegon 60 Musk Catholic 51 Sam Powell 15, Zach Rummery 15

N Muskegon 39 Montague 59 Powell 15, Reese McCamant 9

N Muskegon 55 Hart 40 Ryan Gannon 11, Powell 10

N Muskegon 47 Oakridge 55 Powell 22, Tony Gordon 11

N Muskegon 54 WMC 64 Powell 13, McCamant & Gordon 10

N Muskegon 56 Mason Co 63 McCamant 21, Powell 11

N Muskegon 38 Musk Heights 85 Powell 9

N Muskegon 52 Shelby 63 McCamant 14, Powell 12

N Muskegon 47 Whitehall 49 Powell 15, Rummery 13

N Muskegon 67 Ravenna 64 Will Byl, 17, Gordon 11

N Muskegon 66 Hart 56 Powell 18, Byl 12

N Muskegon 56 Saugatuck 59 Byl 12, Summery 11, McCamant 10

N Muskegon 40 Oakridge 47 Byl 15, Powell 9

N Muskegon 55 Mason Co 58 Powell & Byl 15, Gordon 6

N Muskegon 41 Shelby 71 Powell 11

N Muskegon 48 Montague 66 Powell 20

N Muskegon 47 Whitehall 66 Powell 15, Gordon 9, McCamant 8

N Muskegon 69 Ravenna 55 Rummery 22, Powell 13

N Muskegon 36 GR Cov. Christ. 53 Rummer and Gannon 9

N Muskegon\*65 Holland Black River 43 Powell 14, Adam Edick 11.

N Muskegon\*53 Musk Heights 66 Powell 15

**2013-14 (Coach Jeff Cooke 8-12, Shelby WMC champs)**

Although they lost the game 71 to 63 to Muskegon Catholic, the Norsemen showed their grit in the opening game loss. The Norse got off to an awful start as MCC bolted out to an electric 29-13 lead after one quarter of play. And then it got worse for the Norsemen. The Crusader’s led 47-26 by halftime and the lead ballooned to 25 after three quarters. NM began the final quarter with a 12-1 run followed by another 9-0 run midway through the quarter. Junior guard Mitch Edick scored 13 of his team high 18 points in the final quarter as NM outscored the Crusaders 26-10 and tightened the gap to as little as six points before they ran out of time. Antonio Gordon followed Edict in the scoring department with 16 points.

After a poor start in their opener against Muskegon Catholic, NM made sure that wouldn’t happen in their second game of the season against Hart. NM led 30-14 at halftime against Hart and then went on to an easy 54-30 verdict over the Pirates to even their season record at 1-1. Marco Visconti led NM with 12 points with Ben Gautraud adding 10.

NM and Ludington got together for a basketball game for the first time in 55 years. Your author remembers that last meeting in December of 1959 very well as we lost to the Orioles in overtime. In a low scoring game Ludington did not need overtime to defeat NM as the Orioles held NM to their lowest output of the season in a 46-31 win. NM led at the end of the first quarter 12-11 but the rest of the game belonged to Ludington. Antonio Gordon and Mitch Edick each had seven points for NM.

NM and Oakridge went into overtime with the Norse rallying from a 41-34 deficit at the end of the third quarter for a comeback 60-57 win over Oakridge. NM somehow pulled off the victory despite a woeful 9-of-25 from the free throw line. NM’s comeback was precipitated with three made 3-pointers in the final quarter. With the score tied at 50-all after regulation the Norse outscored the Eagles 10-7 in the overtime session to secure the win. Antonio Gordon’s 16 points led the Norsemen while Ryan Gannon and Ben Gautraud grabbed nine and eight rebounds respectively. The Norse ended 2013 at 2-2 heading into January of 2014.

It was not a good start to 2014 as NM lost their first game in January 57-36 to Mason County Central. Kody Ambrose topped the 1000-point mark for his career to make the home folks on hand in Scottville happy. Mason County led the entire game, leading 28-19 at the half and 40-27 in the third quarter. Antonio Gordon’s 16 points was best for NM.

North Muskegon threw a genuine scare into a Shelby team that entered the contest with NM with a perfect 6-0 record. For more than three quarters it looked like NM was going to pull off the upset as they carried a 35-27 edge over Shelby at halftime. The Tigers came to play in the second half as they outscored the visiting Norsemen 36-23 to earn a come from behind 63-58 win over the upset minded Norsemen team. Ben Gautraud had a game high 20 points while Antonio Gordon finished with 12 points and Mitch Edict added 10 in the loss.

Muskegon Heights had it all their own way with a 62-39 victory over the Norsemen in a non-league matchup between the two local teams. Now known as Muskegon Heights Academy the Tigers made a repeat of their regular season romp over the Norsemen the previous season by going up on the Norse 28-8 after the first quarter was in the books. A jittery NM team suffered through nine turnovers in the first quarter before regaining their composure and playing the Heights even the rest of the game. Antonio Gordon had 11 and Reese McCamant 9 to lead NM.

In a game with a final score out of the 1940s Whitehall edged the Norsemen 38-32. The combined 70 points scored by the two teams was the lowest point total in a NM-Whitehall game since 1949 when Whitehall won over the Norsemen 39-28.

Whitehall was led by Matt Rohen who scored 17 of Whitehall’s 17 points. Matt was three years old when his father, former Whitehall head coach Mike Rohen passed away unexpectedly in 2000. Reese McCamant had 10 points, with nine of those markers coming on three made triples. Ben Gautraud had nine rebounds for the Norsemen.

The Norsemen then welcomed to NM Manistee; a team NM hadn’t played since Manistee was briefly in the West Michigan Conference in the late 1960s. Manistee could only manage but 27 points as the Norsemen were winners 65-27, their most lopsided victory of the season. So inept was Manistee that they only managed eight points in the first half as they trailed NM 36-8 at the break. Mitch Edick led NM with 14 points and Antonio Gordon added nine points and five steals.

Four Norsemen reached double figures as NM raced to an easy 77-53 victory over Ravenna. NM scored 49 points by halftime as they coasted to their fourth victory of the season. Antonio Gordon had 21 points and five assists to lead the Norse. Mitch Edick and Reese McCamant each scored 12 while Brody Scott added 10 as NM’s 77 points would prove to be their high-water mark on the season.

Montague’s Luke VanBoxel scored 33 of Montague’s 60 points in Montague’s 60-53 win over the Norsemen. After a very slow first quarter (7-3 Montague) NM trailed by only three at the half, 26-23 with Montague sneaking ahead in the second half by making 22 free throws on the night. Antonio Gordon’s 15 points topped all Norse scorers. Mitch Edick had 12 and Marco Visconti with 10 also were in double figures for NM.

NM then defeated Hart 41-27 in a game whereby Ryan Gannon scored 10 of his 12 points by making 10 of 12 free throw, Gannon’s high for the season. Reese McCamant chipped in with 11 as the Norsemen won a low scoring contest with Hart 41-27.

Oakridge took NM twice into overtime during the 2013-14 season and lost both games to the Norsemen, the second game a 53-49 Norse victory. NM led 30-25 entering the final quarter only to see the Eagles send the game into overtime when Oakridge made three free throws late in the game. The overtime session belonged to NM 8-4 as NM concluded the series sweep with the Eagles. Mitch Edick led NM with 14 points and Marcos Visconti adding 10. Ryan Gannon continued his fine rebounding work with 11 rebounds.

Mason County handed NM their second loss suffered during the season by the Spartans 56-34. The second contest was very similar to the first encounter with NM scoring 36 points in both losses. Antonio Gordon finished with 10 of NM’s low total of 36 points.

Trailing West Michigan Christian 43-34 heading into the final quarter NM exploded to tally 26 points. Unfortunately for NM rooters, Christian scored 22 to hold off the Norse 65-60. For the second straight year NM could not contain the Warrior’s Bernard Smith who scored 31 points including his 1000th point as a WMC Warrior. Antonio Gordon had a career high 24 to lead the Norse while Marco Visconti finished with nine points. Coach Jeff Cooke got some good production off the bench from Bailey Cooper who scored eight points.

North Muskegon put the clamps on Montague in the fourth quarter as they held the Wildcats to only three points while the Norse netted 17 to earn their first win over Montague in five tries 53-40. Antonio Gordon had 11 points while Marcos Visconti had 10 points and eight rebounds.

For the sixth time during the season NM failed to score 40 points in a game as they lost to Shelby 46-36. The Tigers improved to 14-1 on the season and 10-1 on their way to winning the conference championship. The underdog Norsemen closed to within three points of Shelby in the second half but could not overtake the Tigers. Antonio Gordon led all scorers with 17 points with Reese McCamant netting eight for the Norsemen.

The Norse got off to a great start, but it ended badly for the Norse as Whitehall rallied to defeat the Norse 58-52. NM got off to an unexpected 14-4 lead after the opening quarter only to see the Vikings chip away. NM led 27-20 at the halftime break but it was the third quarter that was the downfall of the Norse as Whitehall went on a 19-6 run. Whitehall then never made a field goal in the final quarter but after being fouled often by the Norsemen, the Vikings were deadly at the free throw line by making 20-of-21 free throws. Antonio Gordon again led the Norse in scoring with 18 points while teammate Mitch Edick added 12.

North Muskegon bounced back to win the final home game of the season and the final home game for veteran head coach Jeff Cooke who would step aside to become a full-time athletic director for his alma mater. The Norse defeated Ravenna 69-47 to earn coach Cooke his 189th victory as the NM head coach, the most wins by a NM coach in program history. Coach Cooke received a great game from Holden Vanderweele who scored nine of his 11 points in the first quarter to give NM a great start. Mitch Edick led the Norse in scoring with 12 points while Reese McCamant had seven steals.

NM had the misfortune to open their district tournament against Fennville, in Fennville. Just as it has been much of their downfall all year NM struggled to score points as their season ended in a low-scoring 48-43 loss to Fennville. The game is the only time the two teams have met in more than 90 years of NM basketball. Antonio Gordon led NM with 18 points and Mitch Edict added nine as the Norsemen season closed with a 7-12 record.

N Muskegon 63 Musk Catholic 71 Mitch Edick 18, Antonio Gordon 16

N Muskegon 54 Hart 30 Marcos Visconti 12, Ben Gautraud 10

N Muskegon 31 Ludington 46 Gordon & Edick 7

N Muskegon 60 Oakridge (ot) 57 Gordon 16

N Muskegon 36 Mason Co 57 Gordon 16

N Muskegon 58 Shelby 63 Gautraud 20, Gordon 12 Edick 10

N Muskegon 39 Musk Heights 62 Gordon 11, McCmant 9

N Muskegon 32 Whitehall 38 McCammant 10

N Muskegon 65 Manistee 27 Edick 14, Gordon 9

N Muskegon 77 Ravenna 53 Gordon 21, Edick & McCamant 12

N Muskegon 41 Hart 27 Ryan Gannon12, McCamant 11

N Muskegon 53 Montague 60 Gordon 15, Edick 12, Visconti 10

N Muskegon 53 Oakridge 49 Edick 14, Visconti 11

N Muskegon 34 Mason Co 56 Gordon 10

N Muskegon 60 WMC 65 Gordon 24, Visconti 9

N Muskegon 53 Montague 40 Gordon 11, Visconti 10

N Muskegon 36 Shelby 46 Gordon 17, McCamant8

N Muskegon 52 Whitehall 58 Gordon 18, Edick 12

N Muskegon 69 Ravenna 47 Edick 14, Holden Vanderweele 11

N Muskegon\* 43 Fennville 48 Gordon 18, Edick 9

**2014-15 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 16-8 District Champs Shelby WMC champs)**

There would be a changing of the guard with a new head coach for the 2014-15 season. Jeff Cooke, who brought NM back to respectability after resurrecting a Norsemen program that hadn’t had a winning season in a dozen season from 1985 until 1997 was replaced. Ironically, the last winning season the Norse experienced before Jeff Cooke’s tenure was in 1985 when the Norse were 12-9 and the head coach was Dave Cooke, Jeff’s legendary father.

Taking over the head coaching duties was no stranger to NM basketball. Chuck Rypstra had coached the Norsemen junior varsity basketball teams for 15 years and was all too familiar with the NM system. It was Rypstra who would have at his disposal in his first year many players coming up from the JV team that posted records of 19-0 and 18-2 over the last two years. Among those players included Erick Bleakley, one of the most versatile athletes in NM history who would star in all three varsity sports at NMHS: football, basketball, and baseball. Bleakley was even a terrific swimmer, but that sport was not offered at NMHS. Erick would later make his niche as an All-American rugby player at the Naval Academy. Other underclassmen who would make an impact are 6’4 Riley Fairfield, as well as incoming junior Joe Osborne and sophomore Vernonell Smith. Complementing these newcomers would be seniors Ben Gautraud, Marco Visconti and Mitch Edick. NM would get off to a rocky start but steadily improved as the season wore on. NM would shock even their most loyal of fans when they won the district tournament at the end of the season, defeating a pair of perennial area powerhouses, Muskegon Heights and West Michigan Christian.

A Muskegon Catholic team, with many of their players having partaken in just three practices after winning days earlier another state football championship, got a winning layup from their star running back Tommy Scott in the game’s final seconds to defeat NM in a thriller 47-46. The game was a see-saw affair as both teams exchanged leads often in the tightly contested contest. Junior Erick Bleakley and returning senior starter Marco Visconti each netted 10 points for the Norsemen.

North Muskegon traveled to Hart for their second game of the season and defeated the poor shooting Pirates 42-28. It was the first win in what would prove be a very successful career for new head coach Chuck Rypstra. Vernonell Smith netted 12 points and Mitch Edict eight thanks to some stellar keeping of the books over the years from coach Rypstra. There was zero coverage of this game in the Muskegon Chronicle. Local sports coverage had fallen by the wayside. In the Sunday sports section of the Muskegon Chronicle there were seven pages of sports coverage, but not one word for our local high schools.

Oakridge used their accuracy at the free throw line to defeat the Norse 68-54. Marco Visconti led NM with 13 points with sophomore Riley Fairfield adding 11.

West Michigan Christian then defeated a young North Muskegon team 53-39. WMC bolted out to an early 18-4 lead that proved to be too insurmountable for the Norse to overcome. None of the NM players reached double figures in scoring but Venonell Smith and Mitch Edick came close with eight points apiece. NM would use the long holiday layoff to garner some more experience from their young sophomores and juniors, and it would pay off as the Norsemen would quickly turn their 1-3 record into a winning record beginning in January of 2015.

Mason County defeated the Norsemen 57-41 in the first gamed played in January of 2015. The Spartans dominance over NM would quickly come to an end as the Norsemen would win 17 of the next 19 contests played between the long-time WMC rivals. Erick Bleakley led NM with 11 points and six rebounds with Mitch Edick in double figures with 10. points.

NM began to turn things positive beginning with a 61-42 win over Holton. The two teams briefly resumed an old rivalry after missing a couple of seasons. The win by the Norsemen would be the sixth win in a row over the Red Devils. Erick Bleakley tossed in 13 points and Riley Fairfield 11.

There was no rivalry in the early portion of the new century tighter than that of North Muskegon and Whitehall. Six games played between the two teams were decided in overtime with Whitehall winning four of those nail-biters. One of two of those overtime wins that went the Norsemen’s way came in 2015 thanks to the heroics of Eric Bleakley. It would be an improbable win for the Blue & Gold. The Vikings led by three points with 13 seconds left in overtime but were called for an intentional foul. Bleakley hit two free throws, and the Norse were allowed to inbound the ball because of the intentional foul. Bleakley took a shot, missed, but then got his own rebound and hit the winning bucket with three seconds left to give NM a 60-59 victory. NM saw a 12-point lead going into the final period dissipate as the Vikings rallied to send the game into the extra session. Ben Gautraud joined a list of several Norsemen who made seven 3-pointers in a single game with all 21 of his game leading points coming on the long bombs. Bleakley, a multi-sport athlete had 14 points, seven rebounds and five assists. Sophomore Riley Fairfield led NM in rebounding with 11 while also chipping in with nine points.

NM, with a 70-61 verdict over Ravenna were amid a 25-game winning streak over the Bulldogs. Erick Bleakley continued his improved play with 18 points and eight rebounds while Riley Fairfield and Joe Osborn added 10 each. NM’s 22-8 second quarter run proved to be the difference in the game.

The Norse continued their winning ways with a 57-42 victory over Montague. Scoring was spread around for the victorious Norsemen with Riley Fairfield 13 leading the way followed by Mitch Edick with 12 and Vernonell Smith with 11.

Following the victory over Montague the Norsemen played a Shelby team that came into the game undefeated. The Tigers stayed undefeated but not before NM gave the Tiger a real run. Trailing for most of the game the Norse clawed back to within one point with 30 seconds to go. Forced to foul, Shelby iced the game with a pair of free throws. Marco Visconti paced NM with 13 points with Bleakley adding eight points and seven rebounds.

NM’s 61-34 win over Hart was the first of a nice five game run that would ensure the Norsemen of a winning record in 2015. Riley Fairfield had a big game with 12 points, eight rebounds and four assists with Joe Osborn’s 14 points leading a balanced NM attack. Marco Visconti added 11 points as NM would improve to 6-5 overall. The record would improve quickly.

In the second of a home and home series with Manistee the Norsemen would go to 2-0 with the Mariners with an easy 56-41 win. Ben Gauraud had a big game for NM with 20 points while Marco Visconti chipped in with 12.

NM’s 70-53 victory in their next contest with Oakridge was a complete reversal of their first game with the Eagles when Oakridge tripped up NM by 14. The young Norsemen team was getting better as the season progressed as the returning regulars from 2014 coupled with new additions to the varsity were beginning to jell. Returning starter from 2014 Ben Gautraud led the way as he scored eight of his team high 15 points when the Norsemen shocked the visiting Eagles by racing out to 29-5 lead after the first quarter. That huge first quarter run gave NM the cushion needed in the victory as Oakridge outscored NM in the final three quarters but not nearly enough to overcome that NM first quarter run. Marco Visconti had 12 points, seven rebounds and four assists as NM would now turn their attention to play another team that defeated NM in their first contest.

The Norsemen trailed Mason County Central 21-15 at halftime and 30-27 after three quarters but then the Norse finished the game with a 20-11 burst in the final quarter to defeat the Spartans 47-41 to avenge an earlier season loss in Scottville. Riley Fairfield’s 14 points led NM as the Norse improved their overall record to 9-5 and 7-3 in the West Michigan Conference.

It had been 30 years since NM and Fruitport had met on the court and NM won much like they did in their last meeting in 1985 with a 58-42 win over the Trojans. NM used a strong first half to lead 29-18 at halftime as the Norsemen scored 24 of their first half points on eight made 3-pointers. Ben Gautraud led NM with 17 points while Riley Fairfield added 15.

Shelby, however, then demonstrated why they were the crème of the crop in the West Michigan Conference as NM was humbled by the Tigers 72-48. The win clinched the WMC title for the Tigers, their third championship in the last four years. Marco Visconti’s 12 points led the Norse.

Although the game didn’t go into overtime like their first encounter, NM’s 55-53 win in the second game was another of many tight contests between North Muskegon and Whitehall in recent years. NM missed free throws down the stretch, but Whitehall couldn’t take advantage of the Norse miscues. Riley Fairfield led NM with 15 points as NM continues their improved play to move to an 11-5 record.

The Norse then won their second in what would prove to be a three-game series with Ravenna 51-23. One would have to go all the way back to 1937, when Ravenna High graduate Lyle McNitt was the NM coach, to see Ravenna score less than 23 points in a game against the Norsemen. There was very little media coverage of this game, but it was reported that Marco Visconti led NM in scoring with 11 points.

The Norse then dropped a heartbreaker to Montague 58-55 when the Wildcats hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer. Riley Fairfield dropped in 20 points and Erick Bleakley 15 to lead the Norse.

NM closed out their regular season with a 56-42 win over Saugatuck with Erick Bleakley scoring 12 points and James Duncan 10.

It was then on to the districts where NM pulled off a couple of surprises.

NM began their district playoffs in a field of teams that included proven powerhouses of the past, West Michigan Christian and Muskegon Heights, teams that combined to win many state titles over the years. NM easily defeated Ravenna 63-39 in their opener, the third time since 2011 that the Norse won the trifecta against the Bulldogs. NM sealed the victory with a commanding 24-10 fourth quarter run led by Erick Bleakley’s 23 points and Marco Visconti’s 16 to earn a chance to play their tournament antagonist over the years; West Michigan Christian. These two combatants had met 19 times in the playoffs with the Warriors winning a stupefying 18 of those contests. Only the Drew Naymick Norsemen of 2003 won a tournament against the Warriors. However, the 20th tournament matchup was different as the Norse upset the Warriors 54-52, making up (partially) all those agonizing defeats of the past and even made amends for an earlier 14-point loss to WMC. However, this young NM team had improved immeasurable over the course of the season, and they were able to pull off the tournament victory due in large part to the hot hand of sophomore Riley Fairifield. The 6’4 Fairfield scored 12 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter, including meshing three of his four attempted 3-pointers. WMC led by one point with five minutes left in the game when Fairfield took over. After a scoring drought when neither team scored for nearly three minutes, Fairfield drained a triple, then added another a minutes later, and then sank three free throws down the stretch to secure the victory and a spot in the district finals against Muskegon Heights.

The Norsemen were given little chance of beating the Heights. The Tigers had won seven consecutive games over the Norse with most of those games not even close. Heights earned a trip to the finals after beating West Michigan Christian and Holland Black River. The Tigers showed no mercy against Black River as they won the game 115-21, the most lopsided victory of many in Muskegon Heights history. But miracles happen. Trailing at all the stops NM moved within striking distance of the Tigers as they trailed 48-45 heading into the final quarter. It was a hectic final quarter as Riley Fairfield scored five quick points with about a minute left to give NM the lead and then Erick Bleakley calmly sank two free throws with nine seconds remaining to make the final score NM 67, Muskegon Heights 63. The future looks good for NM as their two leading scorers in the game were sophomores, Fairfield with 18 and Vernonell Smith with 12.

Unfortunately, with girls’ basketball recently moved to the winter, NM had little time to celebrate or practice for their opponent in the first round of the regional tournament that was played in Beal City.on a Monday. The Norsemen ran into a red-hot Laingsburg team and lost 60-38. NM went stone cold in the third period as they only managed to connect on one field goal as Laingsburg pulled away from NM with a 15-6 run. No Norsemen were in double figures with a pair of underclassmen leading NM as Riley Fairfield and Erick Bleakley each scored nine points.

N Muskegon 46 Musk Catholic 47 Erick Bleakley & Marco Visconti 10

N Muskegon 42 Hart 28 Vernonell Smith 12, Mitch Edick 8

N Muskegon 54 Oakridge 68 Visconti 13, Riley Fairfield 11

N Muskegon 39 WMC 53 Smith 8, Edick 8

N Muskegon 41 Mason Co 57 Bleakley 11, Mitch Edict 10

N Muskegon 61 Holton 42 Bleakley 13, Fairfield 11

N Muskegon 60 Whitehall (ot) 59 Ben Gautraud 21, Bleakley 14

N Muskegon 70 Ravenna 61 Bleakely 18, Fairfield & Joe Osborn 10

N Muskegon 57 Montague 42 Fairfield 13, Edick 12, Smith 12

N Muskegon 45 Shelby 48 Visconti 13, Bleakley 8

N Muskegon 61 Hart 34 Osborn 14, Fairfield 12, Visconti 11

N Muskegon 56 Manistee 41 Gautraud 20, Visconti 12

N Muskegon 70 Oakridge 53 Gaurtraud 15, Visconti 12

N Muskegon 47 Mason Co 41 Fairfield 14

N Muskegon 58 Fruitport 42 Gautraud 17, Fairfield 15

N Muskegon 48 Shelby 72 Visconti 12

N Muskegon 55 Whitehall 53 Fairfield 15

N Muskegon 51 Ravenna 23 Visconti 11

N Muskegon 55 Montague 58 Fairfield 20, Bleakley 14

N Muskegon 56 Saugatuck 42 Bleakley 12, Duncaan 10

N Muskegon\*63 Ravenna 39 Bleakley 23, Visconti 16

N Muskegon\*54 WMC 52 Fairfield 19, Bleakley 13

N Muskegon\* 67 Musk Heights 63 Fairfield 18, Vernonell Smith 12

N Muskegon\*38 Laingsburg 60 Fairfield & Bleakley 9

**2015-16 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 14-7 Shelby – Whitehall Co- WMC champs)**

NM couldn’t have asked for aa better start to open their 2015-16 season with a 72-50 victory over a Muskegon Catholic team who, just like the Norsemen, returned many regulars from their district champions from the previous year. Both teams also featured players who played on their respective school’s football team. NM Juniors Riley Fairifield and Vernonell Smith showed they could play both sports very well as Fairfield had 22 points and Smith 19 to lead the Norsemen to victory. NM’s quarterback Erick Bleakley was also in double figures with 12 points. NM put this game away midway through the second quarter when they went on a 16-2 run at Ray Cioe Gymnasium, the home court of the Crusaders. The Norse footballers had plenty of more time to practice as the Crusader gridders were just days away from celebrating another state championship.

After the Norse improved their record to a perfect 2-0 following an easy 63-46 victory over Hart with Riley Fairfield gunning in 13 points, NM stepped back a step as they lost to a very good Oakridge team 63-46. The Eagles led by 15 points at halftime as the Norse were only to be able to play the Eagles even the rest of the contest. Erick Bleakley led NM with 13 points, followed by Riley Fairfield with 12 and Dalton Fuller added 11.

It did not look good for the Norsemen in their next contest as they trailed their arch nemesis over the years, West Michigan Christian by double digits in the final quarter on the Warriors home court. NM then went to work, and it all began with a steal and a dunk from Vernonell Smith. That ignited a Norse run where they exploded for 12 points over a three-minute span with Riley Fairfield scoring five points and Eric Bleakely the other five markers. Fairfield scored nine of his 16 points in the fourth frame including a layup with 2:04 left to play that gave NM their first lead at 45-44. Bleakley, who scored 14 points in the game, added three free throws down the stretch to seal the win for NMHS 48-47.

Junior Riley Fairfield joined the 30-point club with 33 of NM’s 54 points in a 59-50 come-from-behind win over Mason County Central. Fairfield scored 14 of his points in the fourth quarter as NM overcame the Spartans third quarter lead by outscoring MCC by 11 points in the fourth to ice the win.

NM defeated Shelby for the first time in seven outings but the win didn’t come easily. Riley Fairfield scored the game-winning basket with just three seconds left in the game to give NM a 54-53 victory over Shelby. Fairfield had another huge game for the Norsemen with 24 points with Erick Bleakley adding 16.

As if the recent games fought between NM and Whitehall couldn’t get any tighter the two teams went into overtime for the seventh time since 2006 with Whitehall edging NM 73-71. It appeared the Norsemen were headed for victory at the new Whitehall gymnasium as they took an 11-point lead into the fourth quarter. Whitehall then outscored NM 22-11 in the fourth quarter as they received a lot of help from NM as the Norse were only able to make but 1-of-6 free throws in the final eight minutes. The Viking’s Lucas Schumm hit a layup with 4.8 seconds left to give the Vikings a perfect 5-0 record early into the West Michigan Conference schedule. NM had four players in double figures led by Riley Fairfield who had 15 points, five rebounds, five steals and four blocked shots. Erick Bleakley finished with 14, Vernonell Smith 13 and Dalton Fuller 11 points.

Muskegon Heights, perhaps still smarting after NM ended the Tigers season a year earlier in the playoffs, held the Norse to a season low with a 51-33 win. NM suffered a big blow in the game when Erick Bleakley, averaging 14 points per game, suffered from back spasms in the pregame warmups and was able to play very little in the game. Heights got off to a big start and had a commanding 39-20 advantage at the end of the third quarter. NM showed life as they went on a 11-1 run early into the fourth quarter to trim the Tigers lead to 40-32. Riley Fairfield had 10 of NM’s 31 points.

The Norsemen couldn’t sulk long about their loss to the Tigers as they were back in action the next night. NM rebounded nicely to dispose of Ravenna 71-39. Riley Fairfield scored 21 and Vernonell Smith 19 as NM improves to 6-3 overall and 4-2 in WMC action.

Montague scored 31 points with a furious comeback in the final period but in the end the Norsemen prevailed 66-54. Joe Osborn led the Norse with 15 points while freshman TJ McKenzie and Riley Fairfield both scored 14.

The Norsemen defeated Hart in another lopsided victory over the Pirates 70-31. The win improved their record to 8-3 on the season and 6-2 in WMC play. The Norse jumped out to a 13-5 lead after the first quarter and by the time the third quarter buzzer had sounded the Norse were in firm control at 49-25 as Coach Chuck Rypstra could now go to his bench. Before the reserves flooded the floor Erick Bleakley played long enough to score a season high 23 points, while Riley Fairfield added 17 points. Vernonell Smith reached double figures with 10 points to go along with seven rebounds and seven steals in a good all-around effort. To say that Hart was in a slump would be an understatement. Hart has now gone nearly four years without a win in the WMC.

A poor shooting night doomed the Norsemen in a 61-44 loss to Oakridge. “You’re not going to win against Oakridge scoring 44” said Norse coach Rypstra following the game. “That’s a low output for us, credit them for their defense.” NM shot only 25 per cent from the field in the loss to the Eagles. NM hung around throughout the first half as both teams struggled from the field as the host Eagles only led NM 23-21. Oakridge then started the second half on fire as they hit 4-of-5 from beyond the arc to expand their lead to 50-35 entering the fourth quarter. Erick Bleakley was the only Norsemen in double figures with 15.

The Norsemen had to go two overtimes to defeat Mason County Central 74-66. Erick Bleakley hit a clutch 3-pointer in the closing seconds of regulation to force overtime. Each team scored but two points in the first overtime, but NM opened it up in the second overtime to win by eight points. This game was a reversal of a game four years earlier that went into double overtime in a game that was won by the Spartans. Venonell Smith had a monster game for the Norse with a season high in points (23) and rebounds (16). Erick Bleakley had another strong game with 21 points.

The Norse then won a non-league game 69-64 over Saugatuck as Riley Fairfield scored 25 points and grabbed eight rebounds for NM. Saugatuck entered the game with an excellent record of 10-2 and were led by four-sport star Blake Dunn. A football, basketball, and still to this day a state record holder in track for both hurdles events, Dunn was also a ‘pretty fair’ baseball player. After starring in baseball and track for Saugatuck High Dunn would play for Western Michigan University in the spring and the Muskegon Clippers in the summer where he was coached by former NM basketball and baseball coach Walt Gawkowski. In 2024 Blake Dunn became a major leaguer when he was called up to play for the Cincinnati Reds. Dunn equaled Fairfield for high point honors with 25 points in the game, while Vernonell Smith added 12 points and Erick Bleakley chipped in with 11.

Riley Fairfield outdid himself the very next night as he scored a career high 36 points to lead NM to a 67-52 victory over Fruitport. NM jumped out to a 36-35 halftime lead and never looked back. This was the 24th, and as of this date the last game between Fruitport and NM in a series that dates to NM’s first season of basketball in 1932-33. NM dominated the rivalry winning 20 of the 24 games.

Shelby came from being six points down at the half by rallying in the third quarter outscoring NM 13-5 over the last six minutes to give Shelby a 38-33 lead going into the fourth quarter. Forced to foul late in the game Shelby came through at the free throw line by making 13-of-15 free throws in the final quarter to make the final score look much more lopsided at 59-45. Shelby improved to 12-2 on the season with one of those defeats to the Norsemen earlier in the season. Riley Fairfield led NM in scoring with 19 points followed by Erick Bleakley with 10.

NM helped Rick Zoulek’s Shelby Tigers in their next game by defeating first-place Whitehall 66-61. The loss by Whitehall to the Norsemen dropped Whitehall into a first-place tie with Shelby, both with 10-2 records while NM is 8-4 in league play. Riley Fairfield led NM with 19 while Vernonell Smith added 15 and Erick Beakley 10.

NM continued their winning streak against Ravenna with a convincing 56-43 victory over the Bulldogs. Erick Bleakley matched his career high with 23 points and 13 rebounds to pace the Norsemen. Riley Fairfield added 14 points and grabbed seven rebounds.

It appeared NM and Montague were headed into overtime after NM tied the game at 55-55 on a made basket by Riley Fairfield with nine seconds left in the game. However, Abraham Erickson nailed a long 3-pointer at the buzzer to give Montague a 58-55 victory over NM. Fairfield led NM with 20 points with Erick Bleakley netting 14.

Hesperia would prove to be no match for the Norsemen as NM nearly broke the scoreboard with a 93-59 trouncing of the Panthers. These two teams would meet seven times from 2016 to 2025, and NM would outscore Hesperia 663-265. The scoring was spread out evenly for the Norse led by Vernonell Smith with 17, Riley Fairfield 16, Erick Bleakley 15, and Thomas Montgomery came off the bench to score in double figures with 12 points.

Muskegon Heights, a proven perennial power, and North Muskegon, a team that has never advanced to the final four met in the district opener with the Tigers edging the Norsemen 60-56. The Heights improved their record to 17-4 while NM’s season came to an end at 14-7. It looked after the first half as this game was going like their first meeting in January when the Heights defeated NM by 18 as the Tigers led 32-23 at the halftime break. NM came out firing in the third quarter to tie up the game at 40-40 entering the final stanza as Riley Fairfield scored eight of his game high 25 points in the quarter. A 3-pointer by Dalton Fuller with 2:50 left gave NM a 50-47 lead but the Tigers answered just seconds later with a 3-poiinter of their own. Down the stretch the Norse shot themselves in the foot with their free throws, missing seven free throws in the fourth quarter alone. The Tigers hit a big triple with 1:30 left to give Heights a 55-52 lead. A layup and then made free throws by the Tigers was enough to end NM season but not before the Blue & Gold gave it a great effort. Fairfield had 12 rebounds to go with his 25 points while Bleakley ended his fine career with 12 points and four assists.

N Muskegon 72 Musk Catholic 50 Riley Fairfield 22, V. Smith 19

N Muskegon 63 Hart 46 Fairfield 23, Dalton Fuller 11

N Muskegon 60 Oakridge 74 Erick Bleakley 13, Fairfield 12, Dalton Fuller 11

N Muskegon 48 WMC 47 Fairfield 16, Bleakley 14

N Muskegon 59 Mason Co 50 Fairfield 33

N Muskegon 54 Shelby 53 Fairfield 24

N Muskegon 71 Whitehall (ot) 73 Fairfield 15, Bleakley 14, Smith 13,

N Muskegon 33 Musk Heights 51 Fairfield 10

N Muskegon 71 Ravenna 39 Fairfield 21, Smith 19

N Muskegon 66 Montague 54 Joe Osborn 15, TJ McKenzie, Fairfield 14

N Muskegon 70 Hart 31 Bleakley 23, Fairfield 17, Smith 10

N Muskegon 44 Oakridge 61 Bleakley 15

N Muskegon 74 Mason Co (2 ot) 66 Smith 23, Bleakley 21

N Muskegon 69 Saugatuck 64 Fairfield 25, Smith 12, Bleakley 11

N Muskegon 67 Fruitport 52 Fairfield 36

N Muskegon 45 Shelby 59 Fairfield 19, Bleakley 10

N Muskegon 66 Whitehall 61 Fairfield 19, Smith 15, Bleakley 10

N Muskegon 56 Ravenna 43 Bleakley 23, Fairfield 14

N Muskegon 55 Montague 58 Fairfield 20, Bleakley 14

N Muskegon 93 Hesperia 59 Smith 17, Fairfield 16, Bleakley 15

N Muskegon\*56 Musk Heights 60 Fairfield 25

**2016-17 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 15-8 Whitehall WMC champs)**

The Norsemen were coming of a successful 14-7 season with high expectation for the coming season. The Norse returned three regulars from the preceding season including Riley Fairfield, a two-time All WMC pick who averaged better than 18 points per game. Also returning for the Norse was Vernonell Smith, who was one of the top three scorers from the previous season. TJ McKenzie saw plenty of action as a freshman and would only continue to get better as a sophomore while Dalton Fuller was a part of the rotation. Thomas Montgomery played in spurts during the 2015-16 season and would give the Norsemen help with scoring and in particular rebounding. However, it took NM time to jell, and it wouldn’t be until near mid-season when the Norse would live up to their expectations.

Riley Fairfield took up where he left off from last season as the senior scored 27 points to lead the Norse to a 60-45 opening game victory over Muskegon Catholic. Once again MCC had several (five) of their 11 players dress that played on their state championship football team (again). MCC kept the game close at halftime as they trailed NM 23-17 at halftime. But then, Fairfield scored 11 of his 27 points in the third quarter as NM outscored the Crusaders 23-8 in the third quarter to pull away. Thomas Montgomery had a nice opener for NM with 14 points while grabbing eight rebounds. The win proved painful for the Norse and a possible explanation for their slow start of the season as TJ McKenzie suffered a broken wrist in the game and would miss the next six weeks. The Crusaders were led by freshman Cameron Martinez who would later transfer to Muskegon where he would set rushing records in football that may last for many years.

NM in their next game got a start for the ages as they scored the game’s first 18 points before Oakridge could score a point in NM’s 44-29 victory over the Eagles. Oakridge outscored the Norsemen the rest of the contest but not nearly enough to threaten the big Norse lead. Riley Fairfield had 16 points to lead NM in the low-scoring contest. Oakridge 29 points was the Eagles lowest total scored against NM in 47 years back when NM defeated Oakridge 45-27 in 1970.

NM then played perhaps their poorest game of the 2016-17 season when they lost in their next game to Mason County Central 53-35. This is one game whereby NM coach Chuck Rypstra probably burned the game tape the next day. None of the Norsemen were in double figures with Riley Fairfield and Vernonell Smith sharing scoring honors with a modest eight points apiece.

NM couldn’t wait fast enough to see 2016 come to an end and look forward to better things in a couple weeks following the holiday layoff. NM lost 53-48 to West Michigan Christian after leading WMC 38-36 after the third quarter. The Warriors were hot from out court as they tallied 10 3-pointers in the game. Riley Fairfield led all scorers in the contest with 20 points and Vernonell Smith finished with 16. Later in the season NM would make amends and defeat both Mason County Central and WMC in the rematches.

NM started the 2017 year with a solid 52-38 victory over Shelby. The Norse held Shelby to six points in the fourth quarter as three Norsemen scored in double figures led by two-time (and soon to make it three) all WMC performer Riley Fairfield with 16 points. Vernonell Smith had 16 and Thomas Montgomery 10 as NM is now on the winning side of the ledger with a 3-2 overall record. Following the win NM Coach Rypstra had plenty of praise for Fairfield: “He (Riley Fairfield) does everything for us. Plays solid defense, good 3-point shooter, and an all-around team leader for us,” said Rypstra.

The euphoria of the big win over Shelby was short-lived as NM just three days later lost to Whitehall 50-44. NM saw a fourth quarter lead go up in smoke as the Vikings used a 10-0 run to pull ahead of the Norsemen. Dalton Fuller led the Norse with 15 points and grabbed five rebounds.

NM rebounded from their loss to Whitehall by pounding Saugatuck 65-47 as Riley Fairfield dropped 30 points on the hosts. Vernonell Smith added 12 points while Thomas Montgomery controlled the boards for NM with 11 rebounds.

If an earlier loss to Mason County Central was NM’s poorest performance of the year than NM’s 67-44 loss to Montague would rate a close second. NM hung around throughout the first half as they trailed the Wildcats 32-26 at the halftime break, but Montague controlled the second half to drop NM to an even .500 record on the season at 4-4. Riley Fairfield again led Norse scorers with 16 points.

The Norsemen had no trouble in an easy 61-36 victory over Hart. The once proud Pirates had fallen on hard times in recent years. Earlier in the season Hart won their first victory in five years in the WMC with a win over Ravenna. Riley Fairfield had a double-double for NM with 21 points and 10 rebounds. Vernonell Smith chipped in with 18 points with Thomas Montgomery again strong on the board with 10 rebounds.

The Norse lost to an always talented Muskegon Heights team 62-47 with Venonell Smith with 12 and Riley Fairfield with 10 the only NM players in double figures.

Following the non-league loss to Muskegon Heights NM would turn the corner and have a very good second half of the season, beginning with a 46-34 win over Oakridge. The Eagles had high hopes for a good season but were hurt with injuries, including an injury to last year’s leading score Brady Lutrell. Held to only 29 points in their first meeting the Norsemen held Oakridge to 34 in the rematch as several players contributed to the Norse win. Football star TK McKenzie finished the night with 10 points, five assists and four steals.

NM’s 71-64 win vindicated their improvement from earlier in the season as they made amends for an earlier poor performance against Mason County Central to post a 71-64 win over the Spartans in the rematch. Riley Fairfield notched 27 points and got help from Thomas Montgomery and Vernonell Smith who added 14 points apiece. Dalton Fuller added eight as NM improved to 7-5 on the season.

NM made it a clean season sweep with Shelby with a 55-41victory over a once proud Shelby team that had begun a precipice decline from their many previous years of winning basketball. The win dropped the once proud Tigers to 2-11 on the season while NM jumps up to 8-5. NM had balanced scoring with TJ McKenzie and Dalton Fuller scoring 11 points apiece while Riley Fairfield added nine.

The Norse defeated Ravenna 50-33 with some solid defense, especially in the fourth quarter as the Bulldogs scored only one point to NM’s 15. Riley Fairfield’s 15 points was tops in the game.

Whitehall would go undefeated in West Michigan Conference play, but they received their biggest challenge during the season against NM. In the eighth game between the two rivals that would not be decided until they played in overtime, Whitehall needed a last second basket from Brandon Rake in overtime to nip an upset minded NM team 45-43. Whitehall led by 14 points at halftime, but the Norsemen would not fold. NM began the third quarter by going on an 11-0 run to trim the deficit to one point. Riley Fairfield drilled a 3-pointer with six seconds left in regulation to force the overtime.

It was de ja vu when NM faced Ravenna in their second contest against one another just days apart. In a statistical oddity the score in the second game was the same score as the first with NM winning 50-33. Riley Fairfield led NM with 17 points with Thomas Montgomery adding 10 as Thomas filled up the stat sheet with six rebounds, five steals, and four assists.

A poor third quarter by NM wiped out a 33-23 halftime lead as NM fell to Montague 52-49. Montague outscored the Norse 16-5 in the third quarter to earn the win. NM earlier lost to Montague by 23 points, a clear sign that NM had shown remarkable improvement as the season progressed. Dalton Fuller, Bret Huff and Thomas Montgomery scored 10 points.

In the second lowest scoring game between the two teams since 1951, NM defeated Hart 43-32 in the final West Michigan Conference game of the season. NM would finish their WMC campaign with a 9-5 record with Hart posting a 4-10 record, four more wins then they totaled in the previous four seasons. Vernonell Smith paced NM with 16 points with Riley Fairfield chipping in with 11.

In the only meeting between the two schools in program history, North Muskegon defeated Kalamazoo Phoenix 77-57 as Riley Fairfield scored 22 points. TJ McKenzie scored 15 and Vernonell Smith 10.

North Muskegon’s 49-46 win over Ludington must rank as one of the most improbable of the more than 900 victories earned in Norse history. Ludington traveled to NM with an imposing record of 18 wins against one defeat. Ludington would advance all the way to the Class B state championship game before losing to New Haven for the title. Ludington did erase a 10-point halftime deficit to tie the game as the fourth quarter began. TJ McKenzie hit a free throw with 10 seconds left to give the Norse a three-point lead. Ludington had several chances to score in the final moments, but their normal sharp shooters drew blanks and NM won for the first time in seven tries against the Orioles. Nine different Norsemen made a 3-pointer in the upset with Riley Fairfield’s 14 points leading the Norsemen followed by TJ McKenzie with 11.

NM, who lost to West Michigan Christian earlier in the season atoned for that loss in a big way as they swamped the Warriors 66-42 in the opening game of the MHSAA playoffs. Riley Fairfield had a game-high 21 points for NM with Dalton Fuller adding 10 points as NM earned a trip to the district semi-finals to play Ravenna for the third time in less than a month.

NM made it a clean sweep on the season with Ravenna with a 63-49 win over the Bulldogs. Ravenna made a game out of it as they were tied at 22-22 at halftime before NM outscored the Bulldogs 18-8 to take a 40-30 lead heading into the final quarter. NM sealed the deal with a 23-19 fourth quarter to win 63-49. TJ McKenzie led NM with 14 points, Vernonell Smith 12 and Dalton Fuller 10 to set up a district title match with powerful Muskegon Height.

Muskegon Heights, who along with the Norsemen handed Ludington one of their two regular season losses, used a big second quarter to win the district and end the Norsemen season 64-47 in the district final at Kent City. The Tigers 19-5 second quarter run was too much for the Norse to overcome as their season ends at 15-8. The big run gave the Tigers a 30-18 halftime lead, overcoming a slim NM 13-11 lead at the end of the first stanza. Vernonell Smith had 17 points that included a crowd-pleasing dunk while sophomore TJ McKenzie scored 11. The Tigers held NM’s leading scorer Riley Fairfield to eight points. The Heights season would come to an end with a one-point loss in the regional final to Grand Rapids Covenant Christian, a team who made it to the state championship game.

N Muskegon 60 Musk Catholic 45 Riley Fairfield 17, Thomas Montgomery 14

N Muskegon 44 Oakridge 29 Fairfield 16

N Muskegon 35 Mason Co 53 Fairfield & Vernonell Smith 8

N Muskegon 48 WMC 53 Fairfield 20, Smith 16

N Muskegon 52 Shelby 38 Fairfield 16, Smith 13, Montgomery 10

N Muskegon 44 Whitehall 50 Dalton Fuller 15

N Muskegon 65 Saugatuck 47 Fairfield 30, Smith 12

N Muskegon 44 Montague 67 Fairfield 16

N Muskegon 61 Hart 36 Fairfield 21, Smith 18

N Muskegon 47 Musk Heights 62 Fairfield 10, Smith 12

N Muskegon 46 Oakridge 34 Fairfield 10, TJ McKenzie 10

N Muskegon 71 Mason Co 64 Fairfield 27, Smith & Montgomery 14

N Muskegon 55 Shelby 41 McKenzie & Fuller 11, Fairfield 9

N Muskegon 50 Ravenna 33 Fairfield 15

N Muskegon 43 Whitehall (ot) 45 Fairfield 14

N Muskegon 50 Ravenna 33 Fairfield 17, Montgomery 10

N Muskegon 49 Montague 52 Brett Huff, Montgomery & Fuller 10

N Muskegon 43 Hart 32 Smith 16, Fairfield 11

N Muskegon 77 Kazoo Phoenix 58 Fairfield 22, McKenzie 15, Smith 10

N Muskegon 49 Ludington 46 Fairfield 14, McKenzie 11

N Muskegon\*66 WMC 42 Fairfield 21, Fuller 10

N Muskegon\*63 Ravenna 49 McKenzie 14, Smith 12, Fuller 10

N Muskegon\*47 Musk Heights 64 Smith 17, McKenzie 11, Fairfield 8

**2017-18 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 20-4 NM WMC champs, District Champs)**

NM finished 2017-18 with an outstanding record of 20-4, their best record in 15 years. Junior TJ McKenzie would return for the 2017-18 season as Coach Chuck Rypstra would welcome several promising underclassmen to the roster who would contribute heavily to their success. Joining McKenzie in the rotation would be 6’6 Jesse Cooke, the son of long time NM coach Jeff Cooke. De’Shary Warren would prove to be an adept point guard and others, including John Hayhurst and Eric Rypstra, the son of the current coach would give NM much-needed depth that was lacking over the years. This would be a banner year for the Norsemen, winning their first WMC title since 2003 and their first district tournament since 2015.

The Norse would hand Muskegon Catholic a decisive 63-33 defeat to begin the season. It would be the third of eight straight wins over the Crusaders with NM outscoring MCC-507-255 during the run which is current through the 2024 season. TJ McKenzie hit a 3-pointer two minutes into the game and added 14 points in the second half as NM rolled to an easy victory. McKenzie finished with 27 points while Jesse Cooke netted 14 and De’Shary Warren 10.

TJ McKenzie had another big performance as he scored 21 points in NM’s 63-43 win over Oakridge. The well-balanced Norsemen received 14 points from John Hayhurst and 10 from sophomore Eric Rypstra as NM begins the season at 2-0.

NM then won a resounding victory over Mason County Central 78-44, the widest margin of victory for NM over the Spartans in program history. For the first time in seven years NM had two players score more than 20 points in a game with TJ McKenzie netting 27 and Jesse Cooke 21.

NM stayed perfect on the season with a 59-51 win over Shelby This was a tightly contested game as the score was tied at halftime and at the end of the third period before the Norse pulled away in the final quarter. Jesse Cooke led NM with 15 points and nine rebounds. TJ McKenzie added 12 points and used his quick hands to pilfer eight steals. Eric Rypstra was also in double figures with 10 points.

NM played their annual game with West Michigan Christian to end 2017 and lost their first game of the season 46-40 in a low scoring game to the Warriors. The game was tight until the final quarter as the two teams were tied 19-19 at halftime with the Warriors holding a slim three-point lead going into the final quarter. TJ McKenzie led NM with 10 points.

For only the first time in eight games between NM and Whitehall was there a game decided by more than six points with three of the games decided in overtime. It was the Norsemen who posted the lopsided victory 53-31 over Whitehall. NM used a big second half to down the Vikings as the Norse led 18-17 at halftime. TJ McKenzie tallied 20 points and Jesse Cooke 12 to lead the Norsemen to their fourth victory in the WMC without a loss.

NM had lost 11 of the 12 games played between the Norsemen and Muskegon Heights, many of those losses lopsided wins for the Tigers. There was no massive win for the Tigers in this game as the Heights just squeaked by the Norse 58-56. NM had a a chance to send the game into overtime as a Norse player was fouled with six seconds left shooting a 3-pointer. The Norseman was only able to hit one of his three free throws; the Tigers grabbed the intentionally missed third attempt and held on for the victory. TJ McKenzie led the Norse with 17 points, eight rebounds, five steals, three assists and three blocked shots to fill out the stat sheet. John Hayhurst added 15 points and Eric Rypstra 12 in a game played in front of a packed house at the NM gym.

Although NM had lost a couple of non-conference games, NM stayed perfect at 5-0 on the WMC with a 54-36 win over Ravenna. TJ McKenzie had another big night for the winners with a game-high 18 points with point guard De’Shary Warren adding 10 points. Jesse Cooke contributed eight points and seven rebounds for the Norse.

NM led Montague by nine points at halftime but had to hang onto beat the Wildcats 58-52 as Montague cut the lead down to one point heading into the fourth quarter. NM sealed the win by making some clutch free throws down the stretch. TJ McKenzie led the Norse once again with 18 points, followed by De’Shary Warren with 12 and Eric Rypstra 11 as NM stays perfect at 6-0 in league play.

Hart briefly surprised the Norse by jumping out to an early 9-2 lead and led 11-8 at the end of the first quarter. The Norse then got their act together and went on a 21-2 run in the second quarter to take control of the game as they went on to win handedly 67-29. TJ McKenzie led NM in scoring with 17 while De’Shaary Warren had a nice all-around game with 15 points, seven assists and six steals. John Hayhurst chipped in with 10 points and eight rebounds.

After a convincing 58-39 win over Oakridge that kept the Norse perfect in the WMC at 8-0, NM can set their eyes on winning their first conference championship since 2003.The Norse got out of the gates fast at Oakridge as they outscored the Eagles by 14 points in the opening quarter that set the tone for the entire game. Oakridge made a brief run at the Norse in the third quarter but a 3-pointer by the Norsemen’s Eric Ryspstra sent NM into the fourth quarter with a comfortable 45-32 lead. TJ McKenzie kept up his consistent play with 17 points to lead the Norsemen. De’Shary Warren had eight points and four assists while the bulk of the rebounding work came from Jesse Cooke (9) and John Hayhurst with six boards.

TJ McKenzie equaled a school record by making eight 3-pointers in NM’s comeback 69-58 win over Mason County Central. McKenzie also became the 27th NM player to surpass 30 points in a game with his 32 total points. All of McKenzie’s points were needed as NM trailed 37-30 in the third quarter before the Norse erupted to go on a 19-2 run. John Hayhurst chipped in with 10 points for NM as they stay perfect at 9-0 in conference play.

It's never a given that one can beat a Rick Zoulek coached Shelby team, so the Norse are only too happy to complete their season sweep of Shelby with a 56-44 win. TJ McKenzie once again led NM with 21 points while John Hayhurst added 14 points and seven rebounds. The win sets up a huge next game with Whitehall with the winner likely to win the WMC championship.

For the first time in 15 years, the Norsemen has clinched at least a share of the West Michigan Conference championship with a come from behind 48-41 victory over Whitehall. NM is now 11-0 in conference play while Whitehall falls to 8-3. Going into the final quarter the Norsemen trailed the Vikings 38-33, and it was time to go to work. The determined Norsemen then went on to outscore Whitehall 15-3 in the final eight minutes to complete the comeback victory. TJ McKenzie who missed practice with a foot injury struggled with his shooting in the first half but came through big time as he scored the first six points of the final quarter. After McKenzie had tied the score sophomore Erik Rypstra put the Norse ahead for good with a long 3-pointer with 1:54 left to play. McKenzie would go on to score five more points in the quarter to ice the game. After a slow start TJ finished with 20 points with Jesse Cooke adding 13 and Rypstra eight.

After several tension filled games in conference play NM played a non-conference game against Saugatuck and came away a winner 61-49. The Norse got off to a good start and kept their lead all the way. Junior TJ McKenzie’s 19 points paced the Norse while sophomore Erik Rypstra added 10 points. The well-balanced NM team also got nine points and eight rebounds from John Hayhurst and seven points and a team leading nine rebounds from Jesse Cooke.

NM clinched the conference championship with a 53-23 thumping of Ravenna to send the large NM crowd home happy. NM had a commanding 25-11 lead at halftime that ballooned to 43-14 following a 18-3 third quarter. TK McKenzie, except for his 32-point outburst against Mason County Central has displayed amazing consistency by scoring between 17 and 21 points in 10 straight games, scored an even 20 in this game. Jesse Cooke tallied 15 for the WMC champs.

The goal of going undefeated the entire season was spoiled by Montague in the next to the last conference game of the season. Montague barely edged the Norse 49-48 as Montague used some sharp 3-point shooting to attain the victory. NM had a chance to salvage the victory, but a 30-foot shot at the buzzer failed to connect. TJ McKenzie with 23 points nearly scored half of NM’s points.

Hesperia was no match for NM as the Norse won easily 52-35 over the Panthers. NM jumped out to an early 18-5 lead and were never threatened. TJ McKenzie again scored in the twenties with a game leading 21 points with Eric Ryspstra and John Hayhiurst each contributing eight points.

The Norsemen closed out their conference play with a 59-45 victory over Hart to finish 13-1 and on top of the standings in the West Michigan Conference. Hart gave NM a battle for the first half as they trailed only 28-26 at the break before NM took control in the second half. TJ McKenzie’s 24 points again topped all scorers with De’Shary Warren adding nine points. Jesse Cooke pulled down 10 rebounds in the contest.

The regular season ended in a perfect matchup of conference champions, Ludington winners of the Lakes 8, and NM the winner of the West Michigan Conference. NM made the WMC proud as they defeated the 2017 Class B runner-up’s 55-43, the first win ever for a North Muskegon team at Ludington. It was the second victory in a row for the Norsemen over Ludington. NM was led, naturally, by TJ McKenzie with 24 points. John Hayhurst had a perfect night for the game as he never missed a shot in garnering his 14 points. Hayhurst was 5-for5 shooting from the field and a perfect 4-for-4 at the free throw line. NM heads into the MHSAA playoffs with a marvelous 17-3 record.

The Norsemen finished strong in their playoff opener to win their opening round Class C district game 62-45 over Holton. The Red Devils made the Norsemen work for the victory as the Norse needed a 14-point advantage in the final quarter to ice the game. For the first time in 16 games TJ McKenzie didn’t have to carry the brunt of the scoring load as it was Jesse Cooke topping Norse scorers with 15 points while grabbing 10 rebounds. TJ and De’Shary Warren each tallied 12 for NM.

For the fifth time in their rivalry NM has defeated Ravenna three times in a single season. NM now advances to the Class C district final thanks to a 63-55 win over the Bulldogs. NM won their first two games handedly but the Bulldogs, spurred on by their home crowd, made NM work hard for the victory. It was pretty much the TJ McKenzie show as the junior scored a career high 39 points, 22 in the second half, including 15 of NM’s 16 fourth quarter points. “He played pretty well, didn’t he,” joshed NM coach Chuck Rypstra following the game. “He just decided to take over.” McKenzie also had six steals and seven rebounds.

With still no shot clock in effect in Michigan High School basketball Kent City, who began the game with a perfect 21-0 record, played patient basketball but it was the Norsemen who came out on top in the low-scoring contest 37-33. The victory gave NM their first district title since 2015 and now moves to the regionals in Beal City. Junior De’Sahry Warren said after the game that the Norsemen weren’t fazed by the Kent City slow-it-down offense. “Coach told us before the game that the first team to score 40 points was going to win.” As it turned out 37 points was all that was needed for the victory, two points less than TJ McKenzie scored in NM’s win over Kent City. McKenzie was limited to 12 points, but he got plenty of help from his teammates to claim the district title. Jesse Cooke had 10 points, and five blocked shots and Cooke broke a 32-32 tie when he skied for a putback score with three minutes to play. Warren hit one of two free throws to give NM a 35-32 lead. Kent City then connected on one 1-of-2 free throws to cut the lead to 35-33 with 16 seconds left. Kent City than fouled Warren and the junior point guard calmly drilled both free throws for the final four-point edge.

The long road trip on a Monday night to Beal City saw NM’s season end with a 59-43 loss to Sanford Meridian, a team NM defeated to win the regional title in 2003. NM had their poorest shooting performance of the season as they hit on only 3 of 24 from 3-point range. It was even worse at the free throw line as Sanford-Meridian outscored the Norsemen from the charity stripe 23-5. TJ McKenzie, who averaged more than 20 points per game on the season scored 22 of NM’s 43 points with John Hayhurst adding 12 points.

With 11 players being underclassmen, NM would be heard from again in 2019.

N Muskegon 63 Musk Catholic 33 TJ McKenzie 27, Jesse Cooke 14

N Muskegon 63 Oakridge 43 McKenzie 21, John Hayhurst 14

N Muskegon 78 Mason Co 44 McKenzie 27, Cooke 21

N Muskegon 58 Shelby 51 Cooke 15, McKenzie 12, Eric Rypstra 10

N Muskegon 40 WMC 46 McKenzie 10

N Muskegon 52 Whitehall 31 McKenzie 20, Cooke 12

N Muskegon 56 Musk Heights 58 McKenzie 17, Hayhurst 15, Rypstra 12

N Muskegon 54 Ravenna 36 McKenzie 18, De’Shary Warren 10

N Muskegon 58 Montague 52 McKenzie 18, Warren 12, Rypstra 11

N Muskegon 67 Hart 29 McKenzie 17, Warren 15, Hayhurst 10

N Muskegon 58 Oakridge 39 McKenzie 17, Warren 8

N Muskegon 69 Mason Co 58 McKenzie 32, Hayhurst 10

N Muskegon 56 Shelby 44 McKenzie 21, Hayhurst 14

N Muskegon 48 Whitehall 41 McKenzie 20, Cooke 13, Rypstra 8

N Muskegon 61 Saugatuck 49 McKenzie 19, Rypstra 10

N Muskegon 52 Ravenna 23 McKenzie 20, Cooke 15

N Muskegon 48 Montague 49 McKenzie 23

N Muskegon 50 Hesperia 20 McKenzie 21, Rypstra & Hayhurst 8

N Muskegon 59 Hart 45 McKenzie 24, Warren 9

N Muskegon 55 Ludington 43 McKenzie 24, Hayhurst 14

N Muskegon\*62 Holton 45 Cooke 15, McKenzie & Warren 12

N Muskegon\* 63 Ravenna 55 McKenzie 39

N Muskegon\* 37 Kent City 33 McKenzie 12, Cooke 10, Warren 9

N Muskegon\* 43 Saford-Meridian 59 McKenzie 22, Hayhurst 12

**2018-19 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 20-2 NM WMC champs)**

The 2018-19 season promised to be very good year for the Norsemen as they returned 7-of-8 of their top players from their WMC championship team from the previous season. NM was not only a good offensive team, but their defense was the best in recent history. The Norsemen allowed their opponents an average of only 40 points per game. One would have to go back to the very early 1950s to find a team that allowed fewer points per game than the 2019 Norsemen. However, under coach Chuck Rypstra that would be surpassed in the not-too-distant future. Offensively, the Norse returned high scoring TJ McKenzie who would surpass the 1000-point barrier midway through the season. A big front line of 6’6 Jesse Cooke and 6’4 John Hayhurst would make their presence known down low while returning backcourt starters included De’Shary Warren and junior Eric Rypstra.

The Norse showed in their first game that this NM team was going to be tough to score on with a 70-21 romp over Hesperia. By the time the first half had ended there would be a running clock due to the mercy rule as NM led by 35 points 45-10. With NM returning 11 players it would not be a problem for NM’s deep bench to keep scoring points. TJ McKenzie led NM with 18 points followed by Eric Rypstra with 11 and John Hayhurst with nine.

NM made quick work of Oakridge in their second game of the season. NM used an overwhelming second quarter to lead by 28 points at halftime and would go on to win 65-34 over the Eagles. Coach Chuck Rypstra was pleased with NM’s performance. “We played pretty well together, shooting it pretty well. I mean, making threes, just playing really well at the beginning.”

The Norsemen continued to roll as they overwhelmed Muskegon Catholic 59-35. NM again jumped out early against their opponent with a 36-16 halftime lead. Returning point guard De’Shary Warren led NM with 22 points followed by TJ McKenzie with 16. John Hayhurst was a force on the backboards as he grabbed 13 rebounds. Although the outcome probably wouldn’t have changed, the game was the opener for Muskegon Catholic.

Last season’s 78-44 win over Mason County Central was the most lopsided victory in the rivalry for the two schools that dated back to the 1930s only to be topped a year later when NM romped over the Spartans 75-31. This game was over early forcing a running clock for much of the second half as NM led 45-16 at halftime and 66-26 at the end of the third quarter. Several Norse got into the scorebook with TJ McKenzie’s modest 13 points the leader for the Norsemen as points were spread among many NM players. Jesse Cooke was in double figures with 12 points and six rebounds as the starters played limited minutes.

Once again, the Norsemen put their opponent away early in NM’s 68-31win over Shelby. The Norsemen busted out to a 27-8 lead after one quarter and led 45-16 at halftime with NM once again forcing a running clock for much of the second half. TJ McKenzie with 34 points, surpassed the 30-point mark for the third time in his career. John Hayhurst had 12 points and 13 rebounds in another strong outing.

Although the Norse didn’t receive their usual strong start to a game, NM had a strong second half to defeat Whitehall 53-35, the sixth game in a row to start the season where NM held their opponent under 40 points. One would have to go back 72 years to 1946 when NM held their first six opponents to less that 40 points in each game. NM led 26-22 at halftime but then pulled away in the second half as TJ McKenzie led the Norse with 24 points.

NM and Ravenna would meet in the next game with both teams boasting of perfect 6-0 records. Ravenna had lost 22 straight games to the Norsemen and were primed to end the streak. For only the briefest of time did it appear the Bulldogs might end the streak as they opened the first quarter by hitting 4-of-6 3-pointers to take a 19-17 lead after the first quarter had ended. The Norsemen then clamped down on defense and outscored Ravenna 15-5 in the second quarter to take the lead for good at halftime 32-24. NM then went on a 7-0 run to open the third quarter and then held off the Bulldogs the rest of the way. “Coming into this game we talked about handling the pressure and playing defense.” NM coach Chuck Rypstra commented after the game. “They’re a real good team and we gave up the most points (of the season) tonight, but I think we really made them work for the 51 they did get.” added Rypstra. Playing in front of a packed house in the NM gymnasium TJ McKenzie led NM with 20 points as several Norsemen contributed throughout the game. De’Shary Warren tallied 14 points and Eric Rypstra eight. John Hayhurst grabbed 12 rebounds; Jesse Cooke had four blocked shots while Mack Young served his role well with his solid defensive play.

If there were any doubts if the Norse were not going to have one of their best seasons in program history, those doubts were put to rest following NM’s stunning 71-43 victory over Muskegon Heights. The Tigers had won 12 of the 13 previous meetings against the Norse. NM made it clear in the first half that the Tigers would not go 13-of-14 as NM jumped out to a 45-22 halftime lead that they stretched to 53-38 heading into the final stanza. TJ McKenzie and Eric Rypstra paced the balanced NM attack with 17 points apiece. De’Shary Warren chipped in with 13 points while John Hayhurst grabbed 13 rebounds.

For the second year in a row Montague played the role of a spoiler as they handed what would prove to be the only loss incurred by the Norsemen during the regular season. Montague would use a 16-7 fourth quarter run to defeat NM 47-42, holding the Norsemen to their lowest scoring production of the season. NM led at the end of the third quarter 35-31 before Montague put the clamps on the Norse in the final period. TJ McKenzie’s 22 points led NM with John Hayhurst adding nine points and six rebounds.

NM shrugged off their only loss of the season with a dominating 68-25 win over Hart. This wasn’t a Hart team that went nearly five years to earn their first win in the WMC as they began the contest with NM with a fine 7-3 record. NM let it be known to Hart early that this wasn’t going to be their night as the Norse took a commanding 37-12 lead at the halftime break. The 25 points scored by the Pirates was their lowest offensive output vs. NM in 55 years when they lost to NM 68-24 in 1964. Five years earlier in 1959 NM held the Pirates to but 21 points in a 53-21 NM victory. (Your author had to sneak that in as that was my senior year) TJ McKenzie’s 16 points led NM while Eric Rypstra and Jesse Cook each finished with nine.

Oakridge played NM much tougher in their second meeting as the Norsemen needed a 14-7 fourth quarter advantage to ensure a 58-48 victory over the Eagles. The Norse took a comfortable 36-28 lead at halftime only to see the Eagles cut the deficit to 44-41 entering the final period. TJ McKenzie, closing in on 1000 career points, netted 20 for the Norse while John Hayhurst added 14 points and 10 rebounds for the 10-1 Norsemen.

TJ McKenzie became the sixth Norsemen in program history to score more than 1000 career points in NM’s 69-42 win over West Michigan Christian. McKenzie’s 23 points led NM to their widest margin of victory over WMC in their long rivalry. Eric Rypstra added 15 points and De’Shary Warren 11 points as NM continued to roll.

Over the long rivalry between Mason County Central the series had been dominated by Scottville/Mason County Central as they had won 84 times to NM’s 49 up to the 2016-17 season. Since then, the Norsemen have dominated the Spartans to close the overall series gap to 86-67 as NM would win 16 of the next 17 games. NM won their second game of the season 58-38 over MCC behind 21 points by TJ McKenzie. Eric Rypstra continued his steady play with 13 points as NM improved to 11-1 on the year and 8-1 in the WMC.

Weather wreaked havoc for nearly a full week in late January and early February postponing many games, including NM’s game with Shelby that was moved to the final game of the season.

NM’s next game would be a non-league contest with Ludington. After Ludington won the first six games in a brief series that was spread out over the years dating back to the mid 1950s, NM would win the final three games that concluded with a 54-47 win over the Orioles. TJ McKenzie and Eric Rypstra would again score 12 and 13 points respectively.

North Muskegon than put a stranglehold on winning their second straight WMC championship with a 57-45 victory over a good Ravenna squad. NM led 25-17 at the halftime break but Ravenna came roaring back in the third period to tie the game at 38-38 heading into the final quarter. NM did not get rattled and outscored the Bulldogs by 12 points in the quarter to virtually sew up the conference title. TJ McKenzie’s 25 points and 10 rebounds led the Norse with Jesse Cooke contributing eight points and eight rebounds.

Cooke then had a career high 18 points while grabbing nine rebounds as NM atoned for their only loss of the season with a 58-44 win over Montague. NM took control right away with a 13-6 first quarter advantage to take a lead they would not surrender the rest of the game. TJ McKenzie followed Cooke with 15 points.

It took only one game for Jesse Cooke to extend his career high as he shared high scoring honors with TJ McKenzie with 19 points in NM’s 77-42 win over Hart. NM racked up 50 points in the first half to remove any doubt who was going to come out on top in this game.

The Norsemen then handed Whitehall their biggest loss to the Norse since 1954 as NM overwhelmed the Vikings 81-53. The hot-shooting Norsemen made 14 3-pointers in the win led by Eric Rypstra’s 22 points. TJ McKenzie had 14 points and De’Shary Warren 14 to go along with eight assists while Jesse Cooke controlled the backboards with 19 rebounds.

It was another game with a running clock as NM routed Saugatuck 68-33. NM led 38-10 at halftime and cruised to an easy victory. TJ McKenzie had 17 while defensive stopper Mack Young had a season high of nine points for the Norse.

A win over Shelby has seldom been easy for NM. The Tigers came into their game with the Norse with a woeful 2-17 record and winless at 0-13 in the WMC. The Tigers kept the game close as NM led by only 25-24 at the halftime break before going on a 12-3 run in the third quarter to give NM some breathing room. De’Shary Warren paced NM with 13 points six steals and five assists. Jesse Cooked added 12 points while Shelby held NM’s TJ McKenzie to under double digit figures for the first time all season with nine points.

For the second year in a row, and the sixth time in recent history, NM defeated Ravenna three times in a single season with a 67-49 victory in the opening game of the MHSAA playoffs. NM turned a close game at halftime where they led 29-25 into a runaway in the second half with a 38-point explosion in the final two quarters. The outburst was sparked by TJ McKenzie who scored nine of his game-high 26 points in the third quarter. Jesse Cooke scored 16 points with his final two points coming in the game’s final minute of action when he received an alley-oop pass from Eric Rypstra and finished with a thundering dunk.

NM picked a bad time to have their poorest shooting night of the season in their season ending 60-49 loss to Grand Rapids North Pointe Christina. NM ‘settled’ for three pointers but made only 3-of- 27 from behind the arc giving credence to the long-time axiom that one ‘lives and dies with the 3-point shot’. NM stayed within range of North Pointe as they trailed 40-36 entering the fourth quarter. However, NM continued their shooting woes in the final quarter and were forced to foul that extended the North Pointe lead to a game ending 11-point advantage. JT McKenzie would end his brilliant career at NMHS with 17 points. Junior guard Eric Rypstra finished with 11 and John Hayhurst 10.

N Muskegon 70 Hesperia 21 TJ McKenzie 18, Eric Rypstra 11

N Muskegon 65 Oakridge 34 McKenzie 21

N Muskegon 59 Musk Catholic 35 De’Shary Warren 22, McKenzie 16

N Muskegon 75 Mason Co 31 McKenzie 13, Jesse Cooke 12

N Muskegon 68 Shelby 31 McKenzie 34, John Hayhurst 12

N Muskegon 53 Whitehall 35 McKenzie 24

N Muskegon 61 Ravenna 51 McKenzie 20, Warren 14, Rypstra 8, **Win 800**

N Muskegon 71 Musk Heights 43 McKenzie & Rypstra 17, Warren 13

N Muskegon 42 Montague 47 McKenzie 22, Cooke 9

N Muskegon 68 Hart 25 McKenzie 16, Rypstra & Cooke 9

N Muskegon 58 Oakridge 48 McKenzie 20, Hayhurst 14

N Muskegon 69 WMC 42 McKenzie 23, Rypstra 15, Warren 11

N Muskegon 58 Mason Co 38 McKenzie 21, Rypstra 13

N Muskegon 54 Ludington 47 McKenzie 21, Rypstra 13

N Muskegon 57 Ravenna 45 McKenzie 25, Cooke 8

N Muskegon 58 Montague 44 Cooke 18, McKenzie 15

N Muskegon 77 Hart 42 Cooke & McKenzie 19

N Muskegon 81 Whitehall 53 Rypstra 22, McKenzie 14, Warren 11

N Muskegon 68 Saugatuck 33 McKenzie 17, Mack Young 9

N Muskegon 46 Shelby 36 Warren 13, Cooke 12, McKenzie 9

N Muskegon\*67 Ravenna 49 McKenzie 26, Cooke 16

N Muskegon\* 49 North Pointe Christ. 60 McKenzie 17, Rypstra 11, Hayhurst 10

**2019-20 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 14-6 Ravenna WMC champs)**

Surely great expectations couldn’t be expected of the Norsemen after losing many of the players through graduation who made two consecutive WMC championships possible. John Hayhurst would be one of two regulars from the previous season’s 20-2 squad returning. The other regular, Eric Rypstra fractured his ankle during the football season and would miss several games before he would return. Several newcomers would now join the Norse, nearly always a recipe for failure. However, NM was a pleasant surprise in the 2019-20 season as they would post a sparkling 14-6 record.

NM began the season with their usual opening game opponent in Muskegon Catholic and NM crushed the host Crusaders 64-28. NM got off to a great start as first year senior Trevor Schulz, who didn’t play basketball in his junior season, came off the bench to score all 15 points of his points in the first half to help give NM a 39-16 lead at the halftime break. “With Trevor, it’s really a unique story,” said NM coach Chuck Rypstra. “He actually didn’t play last year, but we’ve been playing with him forever, so we know what he can do. He can shoot the ball and he’s really long and lanky, so he sticks with defenders. It looked natural to him out there. He was shooting the lights out,” said Rypstra. With plenty of new faces in the lineup NM also got some good play from newcomers like point guard Jack Dobb with nine points and three assists. With the absence of Eric Rypstra, who will miss several games in the season due to a football injury, John Hayhurst would be the only returning regular. Hayhurst took charge and led NM with 21 points and 13 rebounds.

The Norse next defeated Mason County Central 63-51 after trailing the Spartans at halftime and 38-36 heading into the fourth quarter. The final quarter belonged to the Norsemen as they made a big fourth quarter run and iced the game with some good free throw shooting. Three-year starter John Hayhurst led NM with 17 points and 11 rebounds while Jack Dobb and Trevor Schulz both added 14 points. Yet another fresh face to the NM lineup this season, Joe Tarrant, scored all his nine points in the deciding fourth quarter.

Yet another newcomer to NM basketball, Braeden Fleming with 12 points led NM to a 46-25 victory over a once proud Shelby team who went winless the previous year in the WMC. Jack Dobb added seven points, five assists and three steals as NM would end the 2019 year with a perfect 3-0 record.

After a long layoff for the holidays that lasted nearly three-weeks, NM returned to action with a clash with Whitehall. NM spotted the Vikings a 16-7 lead after the first quarter and then began chipping away at the Vikings’ lead but would fall one-point short in a low-scoring 42-41 loss to Whitehall. The game was tied at 39-39 with 1:39 remaining. The Vikings hit a late bucket and a free throw to extend their lead to three. The Norse scored a two-pointer, when they needed a three, with three second left in the game for their first loss of the season and first in conference play. John Hayhurst scored well more than half of NM’s points with 24 points while also grabbing 13 rebounds.

After losing 25 games in a row to the Norsemen and returning many of their starters from their previous season, Ravenna broke the long losing streak to NM with a 50-42 victory. The Norse dug themselves into a big hole early trailing 29-11 at the half. The Norsemen came alive in the third quarter to outpoint the host Bulldogs 18-9, but the damage had already been completed much earlier. Trevor Schulz scored 12, while John Hayhurst and Jack Dobb scored in double figures with 10 points apiece. The Bulldogs had their best start in years as they began the season with a 7-0 record after their win over the Norsemen.

Just one year removed from suffering their worse defeat to NM in the long rivalry between the two local schools, West Michigan Christian bounced back to throttle the Norse 55-38. Sophomore sensation Kellen Mitchell totaled 36, just two points less than the Norsemen’s entire total to lead the Warriors win. Just as they did last week, NM let their opponent jump out to a big lead as NM found themselves looking at a 26-9 deficit at the end of the first quarter. That was the difference in the game as both teams played even the final three quarters. Trevor Schulz led NM with 10 points while John Hayhurst had eight points and 12 rebounds.

NM and Montague have played nearly 200 games as of this writing (2024) with many of the games going right down to the wire. That was not the case this year as NM handed Montague their worse loss since the two rivals first met in 1932, 76-37. Perhaps the Norse were fired up knowing that it was Montague who handed NM their only losses in winning the last two WMC championships. NM welcomed back to the lineup veteran guard Eric Rypstra, a three-year starter who missed the first few NM games with a foot injury. Eric scored 12 points in his return with Trevor Schulz leading the Norse scorers with 16 points. Brennan McManus also made his presence felt in the game with eight points, four steals and four assists.

Hart was again no match for the Norsemen as NM won easily 65-28. The Norsemen led comfortably at halftime 40-16 and stretched the lead even further in the second half. Eric Rypstra has regained his form after his injury and led NM with 17 points. NM had a balanced attack as four Norsemen were in double figures; Trevor Schulz added 12 points while John Hayhurst and Joe Tarrant scored 11 apiece. The other starter Jack Dobb, although not in double figures, made sure many of his mates were as he dished off for nine assists and had six steals.

A bad second quarter doomed the Norsemen in their 52-29 loss to Oakridge. The Eagles pounded the Norsemen 31-17 by halftime as NM had to play catchup the rest of the way but came up well short. John Hayhurst led NM in the loss with 13 points and nine rebounds.

NM won their second game in two years over Muskegon Heights (69-43) with almost identical winning scores. The Norse got a huge game from John Hayhurst who scored a career high 26 points and 14 rebounds. Eric Rypstra had 18 points five rebounds and five assists while Brennen McManus chipped in with 12 points as NM was beginning a nice winning streak.

After trailing 26-23 at halftime NM took the lead for good with a 16-10 third quarter run and then went on to a 57-49 victory over Mason County Central. John Hayhurst contributed 15 points and nine rebounds to lead the Norse. Joe Tarrant added 13 points while Eric Rypstra chipped in with nine points, five rebounds and four assists as the Norse improved to 7-4 on the season.

It had been 84 years when Shelby scored fewer than the 13 points they scored in their 51-13 loss to NM in their second matchup during the season. NM beat Shelby 33-12 in 1936, back in the days when teams would have a jump ball at midcourt following a made basket. So dominant were the Norse in this game that they went on a 23-0 run in the second quarter. Perhaps, if not for the running clock Shelby might have scored more than their great-grandfathers scored in the 1930s. Trevor Schulz had 16 points to lead the Norse while John Hayhurst in his limited minutes recorded nine points and 10 rebounds.

It was another low scoring contest between NM and Whitehall in their second game of the season, but it was NM the winner in this game 45-40. NM trailed 34-33 after three quarters but controlled the final quarter 12-6 to earn the win. Eric Rypstra continued his strong play with 18 game leading points while John Hayhurst tossed in nine as NM won their fourth straight to improve to 9-4 overall and 7-3 in conference play.

NM was again stingy in points allowed as Saugatuck was only able to tally 24 points as NM completed their 13-game series over the years with Saugatuck with a 44-24 victory. Although it is likely the two teams will meet up in the future, as of 2024 NM leads Saugatuck 10-3 in the series. Saugatuck scored only five points in the entire first half as NM bolted out to a 21-3 first quarter lead. In the second quarter neither team could find the range as NM was able to score only 4 points, but that was still two more than Saugatuck scored. John Hayhurst led NM with nine points, six boards and six steals. Jack Dobb and Trevor Schultz were next in line in scoring for NM with six points.

Ravenna, a team that until this season had lost 25 in a row to the Norsemen, is now 15-0 on the season following a narrow 54-52 win over NM. The game was close all the way and was tied at the end of the third quarter as Eric Rypstra scored nine of his game high 20 points. A 3-pointer by Trevor Schulz made the score 53-52 in favor of the Bulldogs with still 1:14 remaining. Over the final 74 seconds only a single point was scored on a Ravenna free throw as a good look by NM to tie the game missed its mark as Ravenna all but clinched the WMC title with a 11-0 conference record. Jack Dobb with 12 points, followed Rypstra in the scoring department for the losing Norse.

The Montague-North Muskegon game was atypical as most of the games played in the 2019-20 season. Low scoring with defenses dominating the action. NM outlasted Montague 49-36 to sweep the season series with the Wildcats. The game was tight at halftime at 20-18 as the Norsemen broke the game open in the third quarter with a 16-7 advantage. Eric Rypstra had a season high 22 points to lead NM. Far back with seven points was Jack Dobb with seven.

NM improved to 12-5 overall with an easy 68-47 win over the struggling Hart Pirates. Hart has won four games on the season, all against non-conference opposition as the Pirates are 0-13 in league action. NM led all the way with John Hayhurst’s 18 points and 10 rebounds pacing the Norse. Brennen McManus added 16 points while Trevor Schulz had eight points and four steals.

NM then played Orchard View for the first time in 35 years and came away the victor 55-51. It was a perfect matchup between two red hot teams. NM had won seven of their last eight games while the Cardinals had won their last six. NM had a big run in the third quarter, scoring 10 straight points before the host Cardinals could counter to go up 46-36 entering the fourth quarter. The Cardinals high scoring Ke’Ontae Barnes hit an off-balance bank shot to narrow the Norse lead to 51-48 with 3:45 to play. NM then hit four clutch free throws while in the bonus and got a nice layup by 6’6 Noah Stewart, who a few years later was wearing a Maize & Blue uniform for the NCAA national football champs. That pushed NM’s advantage to 57-51 and NM held on for the win. Eric Rypstra was the big gun for NM as he made four 3-pointers on his way to 20 points. The coaches’ son also grabbed nine rebounds and had three steals. Trevor Schulz contributed 12 points while John Hayhurst had nine points and did his usual workmanlike job on the boards with 11 rebounds.

NM then held Oakridge below 30 points as NM closed their regular season with a 42-29 conference victory over the Eagles, making amends for an earlier loss to Oakridge. The win was number 14 for NM against five defeats heading into what would be a very short playoff, especially for the Norsemen. The game was tight in the first half as NM pulled away in the second half led by Eric Rypstra who finished with 19 points and 11 rebounds. John Hayhurst pitched in with 13 points and 17 rebounds.

It was payback time for Ravenna, who had seen North Muskegon win seven straight games against the Bulldogs in the playoffs. NM was hopeful for once again eliminating the Bulldogs as they felt they played well against Ravenna just a few games back when they only lost by two points. However, in front of a packed house in Ravenna the Bulldogs defeated NM to complete their first regular season undefeated. Ravenna led all the way as NM’s season ended with another successful record of 14-6. Eric Rypstra ended his outstanding career for NM with 11 points. The Norse will lose nine seniors to graduation. “I’ve really coached these guys since third grade,’ said coach Rypstra following the game about the senior class which included his son Eric. “It’s going to be a tough banquet. But this group did a lot of stuff together and it’s a good group. This isn’t the end for them, because it’s just one part of their lives together.” Word’s well-spoken by the NM mentor.

NM season was finished, but so were all the teams, not only in the state of Michigan but in the entire nation as Covid 19 reared its ugly head. Just a handful of days after their game with Ravenna there would be no more games in any sports for a long period of time. The next few months would include very bizarre days in the world of sports. Although in my current home state of Florida sports resumed the following Fall, that was not the case in the State of Michigan.

N Muskegon 64 Musk Catholic 28 John Hayhurst 21, Trevor Schulz 15

N Muskegon 63 Mason Co 51 Hayhurst 17, Schulz and Jack Dobb 14

N Muskegon 46 Shelby 25 Braeden Fleming 12, Dobb 7

N Muskegon 41 Whitehall 42 Hayhurst 24

N Muskegon 42 Ravenna 50 Schulz 12, Hayhurst & Dobb 10

N Muskegon 38 WMC 55 Schulz 12, Hayhurst 8

N Muskegon 76 Montague 37 Schulz 16, Eric Rypstra 12

N Muskegon 65 Hart 28 Rypstra 17, Schulz 12

N Muskegon 39 Oakridge 52 Hayhurst 13, Schulz 7

N Muskegon 69 Musk Heights 43 Hayhurst 26, Rypstra 18 B McManus 12

N Muskegon 57 Mason Co 49 Hayhurst 15, Joe Tarrant 13, Rypstra 9

N Muskegon 51 Shelby 13 Schulz 16, Hayhurst 9

N Muskegon 45 Whitehall 40 Rypstra 18, Hayhurst 9

N Muskegon 44 Saugatuck 24 Hayhurst 9, Schulz and Dobb 6

N Muskegon 52 Ravenna 54 Rypstra 10, Dobb 12

N Muskegon 49 Montague 36 Rypstra 22, Dobb 7

N Muskegon 68 Hart 47 Hayhurst 18, McManus 16

N Muskegon 59 Orchard View 55 Rypstra 20, Schulz 12

N Muskegon 42 Oakridge 29 Rypstra 19, Hayhurst 13

N Muskegon\*41 Ravenna 59 Rypstra 11

**2020-21 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 10-9 Whitehall WMC champs)**

What a bizarre sports season for the State of Michigan in 2020-21. After sports in Michigan and even the entire world came to a crashing halt in March of 2020 with the Covid 19 pandemic, it would be months before any sense of normalcy would return. Michigan was especially hit hard as the governor was more than cautious for resuming sports at anywhere near a sense of normalcy. The Norsemen basketball team was anxiously awaiting to get the green light to return to action, but that didn’t come until February of 2021when NM played their first game in nearly a year with Ravenna. Meanwhile, down in Florida my Ponte Vedra High School team was playing their 23rd game of the season with virtually no limitations. Although fans were ‘encouraged’ to use safe distancing, wear masks, etc., the games in Florida were played just as they were in the past. Players in Michigan wore masks, as did the fans, and attendance was limited. Thankfully, play resumed in Michigan and as many games as possible were crammed into a two-month schedule. There was no March madness, but April madness. Although North Muskegon had trouble scoring points with a young team, they came on strong and found a way to win.

The Norsemen’s first game of the season was on February 11, 2021, as coaches and ADs feverishly attempted to put together some semblance of a schedule. NM’s opener was against a Ravenna team that was undefeated in regular season play in 2020 and defeated NM in all three games played, including eliminating NM from the playoffs. Coach Chuck Rypstra’s 2021 squad had nearly a complete turnover of players as nine of his players from 2020 had graduated. The Bulldogs used a big third quarter when they outscored NM 23-9 that proved to be the difference as Ravenna won 59-49. Brennen McManus led the Norse with 15 points, Will Gallo added 14 points and Marcellus Rouse posted a double-double with 10 points and 11 rebounds.

Montague held NM to a skimpy 30 points in posting a 43-30 win over the Norsemen. Montague completely dominated NM early by jumping out to a 22-4 lead. NM did chip away, but the early damage proved fatal to NM. Brennan McManus with 16 points, scored more than half of NM’s points.

NM averted a third straight setback with a comeback 46-40 victory over Hart. The Norse trailed 23-14 at halftime but heated up in the third quarter with a 22-12 run to take a 36-35 lead into the final quarter. Brennan McManus scored 17 points for the Norse while his younger brother Troy chipped in with nine.

NM and Ravenna didn’t have to wait long for their next meeting between the two squads and the results were nearly identical as their first meeting, a 10-point win for the Bulldogs. Only the point totals were different as the Bulldogs won 56-46. Sophomore Troy McManus led NM with 19 points while Will Gallo added seven points and seven rebounds.

The following day NM lost a close decision to West Michigan Christian 55-49. NM was led by the McManus brothers, Brennen with 13 and Troy with 10 points.

Three sport star sophomore Denny Belmonte nailed a shot from half court at the buzzer to give NM a miracle 53-52 victory over Oakridge. The Eagles had taken the lead at 52-50 with 2.6 seconds left on a pair of free throws before Belmonte’s desperation bomb defeated the Eagles as the NM players swarmed Belmonte shortly after his heroics. Troy McManus with 14 and Brennen McManus with 13 led NM scorers.

NM then made it two victories in a row with a 57-48 victory over a winless Mason County Central team. The Norsemen were consistent as they led at all the stops enroute to their third win of the season against four defeats. Brennen McManus led all scorers with 21 points while a pair of sophomores also stood out for NM. Troy McManus added 12 points and four steals while Denny Belmonte recorded seven assists.

NM came our firing in their 61-54 win over Shelby as they nailed nine three-pointers in the first half to build an early lead over the Tigers. Brennen McManus had a huge game for NM with 27 points followed by his brother Troy with 11 as NM evens their season record at 4-4.

NM and Montague then played in the lowest combined score in 71 years between the two teams as Montague nipped NM 31-29. Not since NM edged Montague 24-23 back in 1950 did the two teams combine for fewer points than their first matchup in 2021. In a real oddity, Montague won the game despite not scoring a single point in the entire fourth quarter. Troy McManus had 10 points to lead NM.

The Norse needed a 21-8 run in the final quarter to defeat a pesky Holton team 47-40. NM trailed at all the stops except the most important quarter to even their record at 5-5. Leading the charge for NM was Troy McManus who had 16 points and the go-ahead three in the final quarter to give the Norse their first lead. Brennan McManus scored 12 points and Denny Belmonte 9.

NM, despite a very young team, showed their potential as they nearly upset undefeated Whitehall. NM kept nipping at Whitehall’s heels all night before losing 57-53 as Whitehall moved to a perfect 10-0 in conference play. Troy McManus had 12 points and four assists and Will Gallo eight points and six rebounds to lead the gallant Norsemen.

The next game with Shelby was one of those games the Norsemen would like to soon forget as Shelby snapped a nine-game losing streak to the Norsemen with a 20-point victory, 52-32. None of the cold-shooting Norsemen were in double figures although Will Gallo was close with nine.

NM completed their sweep over a Mason County team that went winless in WMC action 53-29. NM was in command all the way against a team with only one win during the season, leading 46-17 entering the final quarter. Brennen McManus netted 21 points to lead the Norsemen. Troy McManus and Rob Eckheart followed with eight points apiece for the Norse.

NM only played 14 regular season games as opposed to a possible 20 in the pre-pandemic era. The final game of the regular season saw Oakridge atone for an earlier loss to NM by edging the Norsemen 57-46. NM fell behind early as they were only able to score 14 points in the first half. Troy McManus with 17 points and Will Gallo with 12 led NM in scoring as they closed the regular season 6-8 and 5-7 in conference play.

With a record two games below .500 it was doubtful if NM would have a winning season with the playoffs looming ahead. The Norsemen would have to pull off a near miracle and must advance as far as the regional final to finish with a winning record.

NM opened the district against an unknown opponent in Morley Stanwood. In the first meeting in history between the two schools NM defeated Morley Stanwood 56-52. Only a three pointer at the buzzer by the losers kept the game close as NM earned the rights to once again play Ravenna in a district semi-final. The McManus Brothers, Brennen and Troy, each scored 14 for the winning NM squad.

After NM had a 25-game winning streak broken by Ravenna last season, the Bulldogs would win five straight against NM, including a pair of victories earlier in the 2021 season. NM denied a second Bulldog 3-peat as NM stunned the Bulldogs 65-55; the most points tallied by the Norsemen all season to advance to the district finals. NM trailed at halftime 29-27 but took the lead for good in the third quarter. Denny Belmonte scored a season high 16 points to lead the Norse while Troy McManus had a double-double, finishing with 16 points and 11 rebounds. Brennan Pannuci also was in double figures for the Norse with a season high 10 points.

NM was paired up for the second time in the season with a Holton team with a 15-5 record and winners of the Central State Activities conference. Holton would finish at 15-6 with two of those losses to the Norsemen who improved to 9-8 on the season. Defense was the key as they held Holton to 20 while scoring 36. The combined 56 points was even less than the earlier 31-29 win over Montague and again, the lowest combined points dating back to the 24-23 NM win over Montague in 1950; witnessed by your author who was in third grade. Brennen McManus had 24 and Will Gallo 10 in the low-scoring clash.

The district win advanced NM to the Class C regional where they would face Ithaca, a football powerhouse. Fortunately for NM Ithaca was not as good in basketball as they were in football as NM won 63-60 to improve to 10-8 on the season and ensure themselves of an improbable winning season. With the crowd at Fennville spread out and every fan, player, coach, and referee wearing a mask, they would see the game go right down to the wire. NM enjoyed a big lead at halftime of 39-24 but Ithaca outscored the Norse 26-11 in the third quarter to pull even. It was a see-saw battle that saw NM go on a 6-0 run only to see Ithaca battle back. It was 59-58 when a Will Gallo bucket gave NM a three-point lead at 61-58 with 1:58 remaining. Ithaca scored to cut the lead to one. With 20.5 seconds left in the game, Will Gallo went to the line and calmly made both free throws that made the final score 63-60. In the only meeting to date between the two teams the McManus brothers scored two-thirds of NM’s points: Troy with 22 and Brennen with 18.

NM’s Cinderella season came to a crushing halt at the hands of a Grand Rapids Covenant Christian squad that ended NM’s season at 10-9. It was the first time NM had made it all the way to the regional finals since 2003. NM struggled from the field against Covenant making only 14 of 43 shots and never threatened the Chargers after trailing 14-8 at the end of the first quarter. Troy McManus led NM with nine points.

NM loses eight seniors, but coach Rypstra will return some talented underclassmen, with even more talent lurking back in middle school that bodes for a good future for NM basketball.

N Muskegon 49 Ravenna 59 Brennan McManus 15, Will Gallo 14

N Muskegon 30 Montague 43 B McManus 16

N Muskegon 46 Hart 40 B McManus 17, Troy McManus 9

N Muskegon 46 Ravenna 56 T McManus 19, Gallo 7

N Muskegon 49 WMC 55 N McManus 13, T McManus 10

N Muskegon 53 Oakridge 52 T McManus 14, B McManus 13

N Muskegon 57 Mason Co 48 B McManus 21, T McManus 12

N Muskegon 61 Shelby 54 B McManus 27, T McManus 11

N Muskegon 29 Montague 31 T. McManus 10

N Muskegon 47 Holton 40 T. McManus 16, M McManus 12,

N Muskegon 53 Whitehall 57 T McManus 12, Gallo 8

N Muskegon 32 Shelby 52 Gallo 9

N Muskegon 53 Mason Co 29 B McManus 21, T McManus & Rob Eckeart 8

N Muskegon 46 Oakridge 57 T McManus 17, Gallo 12

N Muskegon\* 56 Morley Stanwood 52 T McManus & B McManus 14

N Muskegon\* 65 Ravenna 55 Belmonet 15, T McManus 13, Brennan Pannuci 10

N Muskegon\* 36 Holton 20 B McManus 14, Gallo 10

N Muskegon\* 63 Ithaca 60 T McManus 22, B McManus 18

N Muskegon\*38 GR Cov. Christ. 70 T McManus 9

**2021-22 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 15-9 Whitehall WMC champ**

The 2021-22 Norsemen didn’t set the world on fire with their offense, but they were stingy from permitting their opponents lighting up the scoreboard. Only twice did a rival put up more than 60 points in a game vs. the Norsemen. NM held their opponents to an average of but 45 points per game. The Norse would finish with a more than respectable record of 15-9 and would earn some more hardware for the trophy case with a district championship.

NM made quick work of Muskegon Catholic in their traditional opener as NM jumped out to a 17-5 first quarter lead and then cruised to a 63-23 win over the Crusaders. Troy McManus scored a game high 18 points, grabbed eight rebounds and had three assists to lead the charge. Jason Bogue and Sam Gallo were in double figures with nine. Sophomore Ben Meyers was everywhere with four points, three rebounds, three assists and two steals and helped hold MCC to a low point total of 23 points.

NM would score a season low 34 points in a 40-34 loss at Shelby. Both teams had trouble scoring points as the score was only 14-14 at halftime. A 5-0 spurt by Shelby gave the host Tigers a lead that could not be caught as NM falls to 1-1 on the season. Troy McManus was easily the NM leader with 18 points and 10 rebounds as no other Norsemen scored more than five points.

The Norse let a possible victory get away from them as Whitehall overcame a 14-point NM lead to rally and down the Norse 55-51. It was NM on top 36-22 at halftime, but the host Vikings went on a 15-4 third quarter run following the break to cut the Norse lead down to 40-37. Whitehall, the defending WMC champs, kept the momentum and outscored the Norse 18-11 in the final quarter. Four underclassmen led the Norse with junior Troy McManus leading the way with 18 points, followed by Brandon Rypstra, Sam Gallo and freshman James Young who each scored eight points.

The Norsemen are still searching to score more points, but their defense is doing just fine as they limited West Michigan Christian to just 29 points in a 44-29 victory. The 29 points was easily the fewest points scored by the Warriors in the 73 meetings thus far in their rivalry. Again, leading NM’s attack was junior guard Troy McManus. The left-handed shooting McManus had 11 points and eight rebounds. James Young added eight points, and Jason Bogue grabbed seven rebounds.

Playing in their first game in the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame Classic since the inaugural back in 2003, NM represented themselves well but fell short to Orchard View 61-53. OV kept themselves in front of NM with some deadly out court shooting as they connected on 12 3-pointers as well as hitting on 10-of-12 free throws in the last quarter to keep NM at bay. Just as they did in their earlier loss to Whitehall, NM let a lead get away from them as OV caught fire in the fourth quarter to outscore NM 24-10 in the comeback win. “Close game throughout, difference was from 3-point range,” said NM head coach Chuck Rypstra following the game. “Plus, they made almost all their free throws down the stretch.” Jason Bogue’s modest 10 points led the Norsemen with Troy McManus close behind with nine points.

NM then started the New Year of 2022 on a nice winning streak with the first win a 56-41 victory over Ravenna. “We surprised them as we played a great game, reminisced coach Rypstra years later. NM got great balance in the victory with Troy McManus scoring 15, James Young 14, and Brandon Rypstra 10 as NM protected their lead down the stretch by making 8-9 free throws.

It took a comeback and then a run in overtime for North Muskegon to defeat Montague 53-48. NM trailed by five entering the fourth quarter, but a 14-9 scoring run sent the game into overtime. Troy McManus made a big bucket in overtime on his way in totaling a game high 18 points to lead the Norse while James Young scored 10. James Young’s older brother Champ chipped in with eight and Brandon Rypstra seven as NM improved to 4-3.

NM then won their 28th in a row over Hart with another defensive gem in defeating the Pirates 52-24. After a closely fought opening quarter NM outscored the Pirates 19-6 in the second eight minutes of the contest to take a commanding 28-12 lead into the halftime break. The second half was pretty much the same as coach Rypstra was able to insert many of his backups in the fray. Troy McManus led the balanced NM offense with 11 points, while also filling up the stat sheet with eight rebounds, four steals and three assists. The Young brothers had seven points apiece as NM improves to 5-3.

It was another comeback, the second in the last three games for the Norsemen in their 52-47 win at home vs. Oakridge. Trailing 37-30 entering the final quarter NM went on a huge run to go up by 10 points. However, the Eagles had a rally of their own to tie the game with 2:30 left to play. NM then pulled away with some clutch free throw shooting while Oakridge missed numerous 3-point attempts that led to NM walking off the court victorious. Troy McManus posted a double-double with 14 points and 11 rebounds. Brandon Rypstra made his head coach Chuck Rypstra happy with 10 points and four rebounds.

Overtime games treated NM well in 2022 as NM defeated Mason County Central 58-56 in the extra session to earn their fifth straight victory. After NM had a couple of comeback victories, the Spartans nearly flipped the script as the Spartans once trailed the Norsemen by as many as 11 points. NM led 28-17 at the half, thanks to a desperation half-court shot at the buzzer by Quinn Kersman. The Spartans, with their highly successful former coach Tim Genson returning to once again take over the head coaching duties for the Spartans, MCC scored 20 points to NM’s 10 to grab a one-point edge going into the final quarter. After both teams traded baskets, Brandon Rypstra hit a corner 3-pointer to send the Norse ahead where they would hold on for the victory. Husky football lineman Sam Gallo paced the Norsemen with 13 points, Rypstra added 11 and James Young tallied nine. High scoring Troy McManus was held to five points but helped in the win with seven rebounds and five assists.

After losing two games in a row to NM, the Muskegon Heights Tigers, a perennial power over the years, handed NM a 48-43 loss. The loss also stopped NM’s modest winning streak at five games. The game was close from start to finish. NM had an opportunity to tie or take the lead with a 3-pointer with 25 seconds left in the game, but the Tigers came up with a steal and held on for the victory. With points at a premium in the defensive contest Troy McManus managed to tally 13 points and Sam Gallo 10.

NM made the long bus ride to Manistee on a school night well worth the drive as they defeated the Chippewas 56-50. After a tight first half with NM leading 20-17, the visiting Norsemen exploded in the third quarter to outscore the hosts by 16 points to take a commanding 19-point lead into the fourth quarter. Troy McManus led NM with 16 points, with the rest of the points well spread out among several Norsemen.

NM atoned for an earlier loss to Shelby by winning the second contest vs. the Tigers 57-51. NM led 26-22 at halftime and never gave up the lead but they had to withstand a couple of Shelby runs that tightened the gap. At one point NM led 48-30 before Shelby made a run that fell seven points short. Troy McManus had a season high to date of 20 points to lead the Norsemen as the remaining points were well spread around. James Young tossed in eight points, Ben Gallo and Ben Meyers netted six. The win improved NM’s record to 9-4 overall and 6-2 in the conference, putting them in second place in the race for the WMC title.

Led by an extraordinary young freshman, Whitehall was able to defeat North Muskegon 69-61 to remain in first place in the West Michigan Conference. Camden Thompson was just beginning to terrorize his opponents in three sports but perhaps basketball might be his best sport. The freshman scored 32 points while grabbing 18 rebounds to almost single-handedly beat the Norsemen. Thompsons grandfather, Ron Farmer, was a two-year starting center for NMHS in 1957 and 58. Maybe having to face Thompson was a partial reason why NM and Whitehall did not play each other in the next three years after a major merger was initiated in the WMC. NM was led in scoring once again by junior guard Troy McManus who scored 19 points while Sam Gallo and James Young had 12 and nine points respectively.

Ravenna lost an earlier game to NM by 15 points but turned the tables on the Norse in their second game by defeating the Norse 59-53. The game was a shootout between Ravenna’s Kyle Beebe and NM’s Troy McManus. Beebe had 28 for the host Bulldogs while McManus had a season high 25 in a losing cause. Ravenna led at all the stops to improve their league record to 8-2 while NM falls to 6-2 in the WMC.

NM was mired in a little slump as they fell to Montague in a low-scoring game 48-40. NM coach Rypstra lamented about his team’s shooting woes: “It just wasn’t our night from a shooting standpoint. Montague made a decisive run in the third quarter, and we kept working but couldn’t get the ball through the hoop enough times,” said the disconsolate coach. Troy McManus had 14 of NM’s 40 points with no other Norsemen scoring more than six.

Who better for NM to play to break a little three game slump than Hart? After all, NM had defeated the Pirates in 28 straight games. Make that now 29, the longest winning streak against any opponent in NM annals. NM jumped out to an early 19-5 lead after the first quarter was in the books and were never threatened by the Pirates. “We got good contributions from everyone,” said NM coach Rypstra in NM’s 62-32 win over Hart. The Norse had four players in double figures and received some good play from those who didn’t. Brandon Ryspstra led all NM scorers with 15 points, while Troy McManus, James Young and Troy McManus all had 12 points apiece. Ben Meyers added three steals and five assists while Sam Gallo grabbed 8 rebounds. Hart had been moored seemingly forever with poor teams on the male side, but thankfully for those disheartened Pirates fans, things were about to get better in Hart country.

NM’s ‘winning streak’ ended at one while Oakridge won their 6th in a row with a 59-49 win over NM. A big third quarter when the Eagles outscored NM 19-10 proved to be the downfall of the Norse. James Young and 19 and Sam Gallo 11 to pace NM.

Jason Bogue had a career high 20 points to lead NM to a 53-37 road victory over Mason County Central. NM led by a single point 36-35 going into the fourth quarter but the final period was all North Muskegon as they outscored the hosts 17-2. Sam Gallo was also in double figures with 10 points while Troy McManus, James Young, and Brandon Rysptra all had seven markers as NM improved to 11-8.

NM traveled to face a new opponent for the first time in program history and came away with a dramatic 51-50 victory over Wyoming Potters House Christian. Trailing Potters House 50-48 with only seconds remaining, Troy McManus sank a go-ahead 3-pointer with 12 seconds left for the win. Potters House attempted a couple of possible game winning shots, but both were off the mark and NM concluded their regular season with a 12-8 record. It was a comeback victory all the way for the Norsemen as they trailed 30-21 at the half and need a 13-5 run in the fourth quarter to come all the way back for the win. McManus finished with a game high 15 points, while Rypstra and James Young added 11 and 10.

After losing an unfathomable 17 post season playoff games in a row to West Michigan Christian, NM has now won three playoff games in a row following their opening 56-48 district win over the host Warriors. The Norse rode the hot hand of Troy McManus to victory as the junior scored 24 points, one shy of his season high. The Norse also got some good inside play from Jason Bogue who used his 6’5 frame to score 13 points. The win sets up a district semi-final between NM and Shelby who split their two games during the regular season.

Troy McManus continued his hot shooting with 20 points as NM led from start to finish to defeat Shelby 50-40. NM helped their own cause by connecting on 17 of 21 free throw attempts to win the game and the season series over the Tigers. NM held the Tigers to but 40 points and forced 17 turnovers. Jason Bogue was also in double figures for NM with 11 points as NM earns a berth in the Class C district finals hosted by West Michigan Christian.

NM used both a good start and good defense in defeating Holton 48-33 to win the Class C district championship. NM jumped out to a 13-5 lead at the end of the first quarter and doubled their lead to 28-14 at halftime. NM continued their steady play to pad their lead in the third quarter and cruised to their 10th straight win over Holton and the sixth time they had defeated the Red Devils in the playoffs without suffering a loss. Troy McManus continued his steady play with 15 points while Jason Bogue was in double figures for his third consecutive game with 14 points and six rebounds.

NM and their fellow West Michigan Conference foe Ravenna had to travel to Carson City to play one another in the first game of the regional. Both teams split their games in the regular season with the rubber game going to Ravenna 43-40 in a low-scoring clash. NM led 19-13 in the first half and, after being outscored 15-10 in the third quarter still took a slim 29-28 lead into the final quarter. Some may find this hard to believe but Ravenna shot 12 of 18 from the free throw line while the Norsemen never went to the line all night. “It was their attacking in transition, which led to the free throws, said NM head coach Rypstra. “We fought hard, but had a few too many turnovers, and missed shots.” NM ended the season at 15-9 but with several players returning the following year, the record would get even better.

N Muskegon 63 Musk Catholic 23 Troy McManus 18, Jason Bogue & Sam Gallo 10

N Muskegon 34 Shelby 40 McManus 18

N Muskegon 51 Whitehall 55 McManus 18, Brandon Rypstra, Gallo & Young 8

N Muskegon 44 WMC 29 McManus 11, James Young 8

N Muskegon 53 Orchard View 61 Bogue 10, McManus 9

N Muskegon 56 Ravenna 41 McManus 15, J Young 14. Rypstra 10

N Muskegon 53 Montague (ot) 48 McManus 18, J Young 10, Champ Young 8

N Muskegon 52 Hart 24 McManus 11, The Young brothers 7

N Muskegon 52 Oakridge 47 McManus 14, Rypstra 10

N Muskegon 58 Mason Co (ot) 56 Gallo 13, Rypstra 11, J Young 9

N Muskegon 43 Musk Heights 48 McManus 13, Gallo 10

N Muskegon 56 Manistee 40 McManus 16

N Muskegon 57 Shelby 51 McManus 20

N Muskegon 61 Whitehall 69 McManus 19, Gallo 12, J Young 9

N Muskegon 53 Ravenna 58 McManus 25, Bogue 9

N Muskegon 40 Montague 48 McManus 14

N Muskegon 62 Hart 32 Rypstra 15, McManus 12, Bogue &Young 12

N Muskegon 49 Oakridge 59 J Young 12, Gallo 11, Bogue 8

N Muskegon 53 Mason Co 37 Bogue 20, Gallo 10

N Muskegon 51 Potters House 50 McManus 15, Rypstra 11, Young 10

N Muskegon \* 56 WMC 48 McManus 24, Bogue 13

N Muskegon\* 50 Shelby 40 McManus 20, Bogue 11

N Muskegon\* 48 Holton 33 McManus 15, Bogue 14

N Muskegon\* 40 Ravenna 43 Rypstra 10, McManus 8, J Young 7

**2022-23 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 19-5 Hart WMC Rivers champ= Whitehall Lakes)**

There was a major change in the venerable West Michigan Conference that one can view as good or bad. For this author I go with the bad part as the Norsemen would now face much weaker opposition. Instead of playing Whitehall, a team the Norse had faced in every year since 1936, a period of 86 years, the Norse would now schedule weak sisters that were now in the Rivers portion of the divided WMC such as Holton and Hesperia. NM defeated the two schools by a combined score of 263-95, an average of 42 points per contest. There was one plus addition to the schedule that did please your author – Fremont. The meeting in this season would be the first between the two long-time rivals in 40 years. Whether it was a NM patient offense, good defense or weak opposition, NM allowed only 40 points per game. This was the lowest points allowed per game since the WMC champs of 1950-51 held their opponents to 38.5 ppg.

One would have to go back 82 years to find an opponent who scored less than the 11 points Muskegon Catholic scored against the Norsemen in NM’s 52-11 opening game defeat of Muskegon Catholic. In February of 1940 the Norsemen defeated Scottville 31-10, that’s even before your author was born. So tough was the NM defense – or how bad was the MCC offense – NM led 12-2 at the end of the first quarter and 17-4 at halftime. MCC’s ‘best’ quarter was the third when they scored four points as NM led 46-8 heading into the final quarter with a running clock in effect the rest of the game. Sophomore James Young turned in a double-double for the Norse with 16 points and 11 rebounds. Junior Jaxon Lisinski had 12 points on four made 3-pointers with senior Troy McManus added nine points and five assists.

Mason County Central then defeated NM in the Norse gymnasium 51-44, the first win for the Spartans contested at the NM gymnasium since 2014. NM trailed by only a point (35-34) heading into the final quarter but were outscored by the boys from Scottville 16-12 in the final eight minutes. Chase Young led NM with 13 points followed by Troy McManus who chipped in with 12.

The Norsemen bounced back to throttle West Michigan Christian 76-45, easily the most one-sided win by a NM team over the Warriors in the 72 games played between the two teams in program history. NM was hot from the outside in the early going as they connected on six 3-pointers in the first half that helped propel the Norse to a commanding 43-26 lead at halftime. James Young had 22 points to lead the Norse followed by Troy McManus with 17. Also in double figures for the balanced NM attack was senior Sam Gallo with 12 points and junior Lamarkis Graham who put up 11 points.

Hesperia was no match for NM as they thumped the lowly Panthers 60-15 in the first conference game between the two teams. NM only allowed Hesperia eight points in the first half, but it didn’t get any better for the Panthers in the second half as they only scored seven in the final two quarters.

James Young led NM with 11 points, five rebounds, five steals and five assists as coach Chuck Rypstra was able to empty his bench early in the rout. Troy McManus added nine, Sam Gallo eight, Brandon Rypstra eight and Jaxon Lisinski seven as NM improved to 3-1 while Hesperia was still looking for their first win.

There was a changing of the guard in Oceana County as Hart would now be the kingpins of the county as Shelby had dropped down a notch (or two) in talent. NM had no trouble in defeating Shelby in their first meeting of the season with an easy 66-41 victory over the once proud Tigers. NM jumped out to an early 19-8 lead at the end of the opening quarter and coasted to victory the rest of the way. Brandon Rypstra had his outside shot working as he made 4-of-5 shots from behind the 3-point arc to account for a team leading 16 points. Also, in double figures for NM were Lamarkis Graham with 13 and Sam Gallo with 10. Only a 18-9 run by Shelby against the NM bench players made the score even remotely respectable.

North Muskegon and Orchard View again met up for the second consecutive year in the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame Classic but this time it was the Norsemen coming out of the game victorious 59-28 over Orchard View. Troy McManus led NM with 20 points, five rebounds, four assists and three steals. Sam Gallo had a strong performance with 15 points and 10 rebounds as NM completed the 2022 year with a very good 5-1 record.

After losing 29 straight games to North Muskegon the Hart Pirates handedly downed the Norsemen 61-44 to move to a perfect 8-0 on the season. Hart’s Parker Hovey netted 26 points for the Pirates who were off to their best start in many decades. Sam Gallo’s 13 points led the Norse while James Young netted 11 and Troy McManus 10 as NM dropped their second game of the season, both losses occurring in the WMC.

Once again NM was stingy with their defense as they held Montague to only 34 points in a 49-34 win over the Wildcats. It would be the only game played during the season with Montague who are currently in the Lakes Division of the WMC. “Shots were not falling tonight, credit to NM’s defense,” said Montague coach Dave Osborne. Troy Mc Manus was one player who did see several of his shots go in the bucket as he scored 20 points. James Young added nine points and Sam Gallo chipped in with eight rebounds as the Norse came away with another low-scoring victory, 42-36. NM had to overcome a one-point deficit heading into the final quarter but canned just enough free throws in the game’s final eight minutes to come away with a victory. Troy McManus had a dozen points to lead NM with Sam Gallo adding nine.

For the third time this season NM held an opponent to under 20 points in a game. You would have to go back to 1943 to find a season when NM held three opponents to under 20 per game. That 1943 team however, was comprised of many of NM’s undefeated, untied, and unscored upon football team that was used to shutting down opponents. NM shut down a hapless Holton team, 58-14 to earn their 8th victory of the season. So dominant were the Norsemen that they outscored Holton 29-4 in the third quarter before there was mercifully a running clock in the fourth quarter. Although limited in minutes played, three Norse players reached double figures: Sam Gallo with 13, Jaxon Lisinski 12, and Troy McManus 10.

Troy McManus dominated NM’s 64-35 win over Ravenna on both ends of the floor. The senior had 24 points, five steals and four assists in leading his team to victory. Joining McManus in double figures were James Young with 12 points and Jaxon Lisinski with 11. The win was tempered with the news that one of NM’s starters, coach Rypstra’s son Brandon was going to have season-ending knee surgery.

NM then earned a rare win in their series with Muskegon Heights as the Norse edged the Tigers 57-54. Trailing 30-27 at the halftime break, NM used a big third quarter to procure the win with a 16-9 advantage over the host Tigers. Jaxon Lisinski hit a big 3-pointer with three minutes to go that gave NM a little breathing room vs. the Heights. Four players scored in double figures for the Norse: Sam Gallo (13), Troy McManus and James Young (12) and Lisinski (11).

NM won their 6th straight victory as they held on to win a low-scoring 43-40 victory over Oakridge. The third quarter found both teams having trouble finding points as both teams combined to score but six points in the period with NM on top 33-29. Troy McManus and Lamarkis Graham led NM with 10 points. Three-sport standout Denny Belmonte added nine for the Norsemen.

Both NM and Mason County Central entered their game with winning records, NM at 11-2 and the Spartans at 10-3. It was the Norsemen who came out on top, and rather easily at that, with a 58-40 win. Troy McManus scored 19 to lead the Norsemen while Jaxon Lisinski added 14.

NM then paid a visit of the unknown when they traveled to Grand Rapids to take on West Michigan Aviation, a charter school located in the Furniture City. The Aviators came out flying, while the Norsemen were grounded with poor shooting as West Michigan jumped out to an 18-6 first quarter lead and the Norse could never catch up. “We did not show up in the first quarter,” said NM coach Rypstra. Lamarkis Graham had his best showing on the season with 18 points on 8-of-11 shooting. Troy McManus tossed in 15 points and dished out seven assists for NM while Sam Gallo scored 12 points and hauled down nine rebounds. It was one of only three games all season whereby an opponent scored 60 or more points against NM.

NM then scored 94 points in a 94-38 rout of a totally outmatched Hesperia team: the most points scored by NM in a game in 29 years. Ironically, there were only two other games during that 29 years span where NM scored 90 or more points in a game, both against Hesperia. NM scored 55 points in the second half making your author more than curious if there was a running clock in the second half. Every player suited up for the Norse scored, including a recent call-up from the JV team, freshman Adam Dugener who scored nine points. Dugener showed off his playmaking skills with five assists. Sophomore three sport standout TJ Byard was able to hit double figures with 11 points. Troy McManus connected on six 3-pointers to lead all scorers with a career high 28 points followed by Lamarkis Graham with 13. In more than 90 years of NM basketball it was the most one-sided win over an opponent in program history.

It was not the prettiest of games, but the Norsemen came away with a 49-39 victory over Ravenna to improve their record to a stellar 14-3. Ravenna, losers by 29 points in their first game with NM, kept the score much closer in the second encounter but a big third quarter gave NM a safe cushion as they held off the host Bulldogs. Troy McManus led NM with 14 points, the only Norsemen in double figures. Jaxon Lisinski had nine points while Ben Meyers had seven assists and three steals.

NM had little problem in defeating Shelby 62-39 as three Norsemen were in double figures, including a freshman who according to a new 5th quarter ruling started in 2022 could play both on the JV and varsity if one didn’t play more than three quarters in the JV game. Adam Dugener scored 10 points enroute to what promises to be one of NM’s all-time best roundballers before his career is over at NMHS. Troy McManus had 14 and Jaxon Lisinski 11 in limited minutes before giving way to Dugener and more bench players.

After NM defeated Shelby to improve their record, the table was set for the key matchup of the season in the Rivers Division of the WMC. NM was 15-3 and Hart was a perfect 17-0, their best record in school history.

The start of the game was as good as advertised until Hart’s 6’5 point guard Parker Hovey took over. The Hope college bound senior sparked a 10-0 run by Hart early into the start of the third period that turned a 28-28 tie into a 10-point Hart lead from which NM was never able to recover. Junior sharpshooter Jaxon Lisnski kept NM in the game with 20 points, 18 of those tallied coming on six made 3-pointers. Hovey was the difference in this contest as he recorded a triple-double with 32 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists. The win clinches the WMC rivers division conference title for the Pirates as they move to a perfect 18-0 on the season while the Norse drop to a still impressive 15-4. The two wins during the season over NM were the only two victories for the Pirates against NM in the past 33 games.

During the early days NM’s number one rival was the Fremont Packers. The two schools faced each other in football and basketball on a regular basis from the 1930s until 1966. NMs 66-41 victory over Fremont was only the 5th meeting between the two foes since 1966. In 66 total meetings between the Norsemen and the Packers the 66-41 win by NM was the most one-sided victory in the long series. Troy McManus bounced back from a season low five-point outing in NM’s loss to Hart by scoring 24 points, 14 in the third quarter to lead NM to victory. Carsen Moat and freshman Adam Dugener had eight points apiece for the Norse.

Holton didn’t fare much better against NM in their second meeting as they did in the first as NM prevailed 41-28 over the Red Devils in the final game of the regular season. Lamarkis Graham led NM with 19 points and Sam Gallo 11 as NM ends the regular season with an outstanding record of 17-4 heading into the tournament.

NM opened the playoffs with a commanding 69-43 victory over Ravenna, their third win on the season over the Bulldogs. Troy McManus scored 25 points in the tournament game played in Holton as NM made 10 3-pointers in the win. Ravenna started the game putting NM in a 5-0 hole as they hit two technical foul free throws and a 3-pointer. After that the game belonged to the Norsemen as they bounced back to lead 22-17 after the first quarter and kept adding to their lead until the final buzzer. McManus was the only NM player in double figures but there was a lot of balance for the Norsemen. Lamarkis Graham added nine, Adam Dugener and Sam Gallo eight and Denny Belmonte had seven points as NM advances to play Kent City for the district title.

NM made a statement early as they roared out to a 32-10 halftime lead and cruised to their third straight Class C district title with a 61-34 victory over Kent City. Although NM’s leading scorer on the season Troy McManus was held in check, his teammates came through in a big way. The foursome of Lamrkis Graham (16), Jaxon Lsiniski (14) and Sam Gallo and Adam Dugener with 10 apiece scored 50 of NM’s 61 points to send the Norse to the Class C regional in Kent City.

NM then faced Pewamo-Westphalia in what would begin an epic rivalry in both football and basketball for the next three seasons. P-W’s one-man gang of Jamison Ecklund proved to be too much for NM as the Pirates edged NM in a tight battle 49-46. Junior Jaxon Lisiniski scored 15 of his game high 19 points in the first half as the two teams played dead even at 25-25 at halftime. The 6’5 Ecklund scored 16 of his 29 points in the first half with the second half being a see-saw affair. NM had a two-point lead with two minutes remaining at 44-42 but a three-point play by Ecklund gave P-W a lead they would not give up as NM’s season ended at 19-5. Troy McManus ended his career with seven points. Denny Belmonte and Adam Dugener were next in line in scoring with six points apiece.

N Muskegon 52 Musk Catholic 11 James Young 16, Jaxson Lisinski 12

N Muskegon 44 Mason Co 51 Chase Young 13, McManus 12

N Muskegon 76 WMC 45 J Young 22, McManus 17, Sam Gallo 12

N Muskegon 60 Hesperia 15 J Young 11, McManus & Gallo 9

N Muskegon 66 Shelby 41 Brandon Rypstra 16, Lamarkis Graham 13

N Muskegon 59 Orchard View 28 McManus 20, Gallo 15

N Muskegon 44 Hart 61 Gallo 13, J Young 11, McManus 10

N Muskegon 49 Montague 34 McManus 20, J Young 9

N Muskegon 42 Potters House 36 McManus 12, Gallo 9

N Muskegon 58 Holton 14 Gallo 13, Lisinski 12, McManus 10

N Muskegon 64 Ravenna 35 McManus 24, J Young 12, Lisinski 11

N Muskegon 57 Musk Heights 54 Gallo 13, Young and McManus 12

N Muskegon 43 Oakridge 40 McManus & Graham 10

N Muskegon 58 Mason Co 40 McManus 19, Lasinski 14

N Muskegon 55 W Mich. Av 63 Graham 18. McManus 15, Gallo 12

N Muskegon 94 Hesperia 38 McManus 28, Graham 13, TJ Byard 11

N Muskegon 49 Ravenna 39 McManus 14, Lisinski 9

N Muskegon 62 Shelby 29 McManus 14, Lisinski 11, Adam Dugener 10

N Muskegon 51 Hart 67 Lisiniski 20, Graham & Gallo 11

N Muskegon 66 Fremont 41 McManus 25, Carsen Moat & Dugener 8

N Muskegon 51 Holton 28 Graham 19, Gallo 11

N Muskegon\*68 Ravenna 43 McManus 25, Graham 8

N Muskegon\*61 Kent City 34 Graham 16, Lisinski 14, Gallo. Dugener 10

N Muskegon\*46 Pewamo-West 49 Lasinski 19, McManus 7

**2023–24 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 24–1 NM --WMC Rivers champ, Whitehall Lakes)**

NM would race through the 2023-24 season by winning their first 24 games, the first undefeated regular season in NM history. Coach Chuck Rypstra would welcome back five players who all played major minutes in the previous season, including a late call up from the junior varsity team who would finish the 2023-24 season as NM’s top scorer as a sophomore. Adam Dugener would lead NM in scoring with 360 points, an average of more than 14 points per game. The Norse would feature a front line comprised of Jaxson Lisinski, Lamarkis Graham and TJ Byard, all standing about 6’4 on height. Also returning was 6’2 junior James Young, a starter since his freshman season. This fivesome would command most of the minutes with guard Landen Grimm seeing a great deal of playing time. The one drawback to NM’s season, that was no-fault of their own, was an extremely soft schedule that forced them to play some very poor teams that were recently added to the West Michigan Conference. One notable omission from the schedule for the last two seasons was former long-time rival Whitehall, an opponent NM faced more than 160 times since 1932. Whitehall was placed in the Lakes Division of the WMC, and although NM did have a handful of crossover games in the WMC, Whitehall was not included that left WMC fans starved to see how these teams would have fared as they each breezed through their regular season undefeated.

NM had no trouble in handing Muskegon Catholic their 8th straight loss vs. the Norsemen with a 74-30 rout of the Crusaders. NM jumped out to a big 24-11 lead after the first quarter and breezed to a win in their traditional season opener with MCC. NM showed early that they had several weapons their opponents would have to deal with in the upcoming season. Lemarkis Graham led the balanced Norse attack with 18 points. Sophomore guard Adam Dugener, who had an older brother play for Muskegon Catholic, added 16 points and four assists. Junior James Young was in double figures with 11 points while Jaxon Lisinski had nine points and five assists.

The Norse then opened the Rivers Division of the West Michigan Conference with a 62-47 decision over Ravenna. All five starters contributed to the NM victory, a starting five that would be consistent all season long for coach Chuck Rypstra’s Norsemen. James Young posted a double-double with 12 points and 10 rebounds. Adan Dugener also had 12 points and Lemarkis Graham chipped in with 11 points and eight rebounds. The final two players on the starting five also contributed with Jason Lisinski scoring nine points and TJ Byard filled up the stat sheet with seven points, five rebounds, two steals and two blocks.

The Norsemen lost eight of the first nine games ever played against Manistee in a rivalry that dates to the 1930s. However, the tables have turned in recent vintage as the Norse with their 52-47 win over Manistee have now won the last four in the short 13 game series. The Chippewas/er now the Mariners made the long trek to NM with a perfect 3-0 record and gave NM one of their toughest games of the season. NM’s 18-6 run in the second quarter was the difference in the contest and were never threatened until very late when Manistee made a late run that came up short. Jaxon Lisinski led NM with 12 points while Adam Dugener and Lamarkis Graham each netted 10.

NM made their annual journey to Scottville a success as they won their fourth straight game of the season 60-50 over Mason County Central. The game was never a runaway as the Norse had a slim 29-25 lead at halftime against the Spartans. Only a 14-7 NM fourth quarter run made the game more comfortable for the winning Norsemen. Sophomore Adam Dugener led three NM players in double figures with 16 points. Jaxon Lisinski contributed 13 and Lamarkis Graham 12.

Adam Dugener, who had yet another older brother who played for West Michigan Christian, tormented his brother’s alma mater with 21 points in NM’s 51-44 win over the Warriors. Although NM led 29-18 the Warriors came storming back to tie the game at 36-all with seven minutes remaining before NM pulled away. Lamarkis Graham added 17 points and grabbed 6 rebounds while TJ Byard had a strong performance with eight points, five rebounds, three steals and three assists.

NM then continued their complete domination in recent years with Hesperia with a 65-17 whipping of the outclassed Panthers. Several Norsemen contributed to the onslaught as coach Chuck Rypstra was able to empty his bench early. Adam Dugener and reserve Talan Thompson each scored 11 points, Lamarkis Graham scored 10 points with five steals while James Young added nine rebounds and five assists as NM stays perfect at 6-0.

NM would go into the New Year of 2024 with a 7-0 record following a convincing 77-42 victory over Shelby. After a tight first quarter NM exploded with a 26-6 second quarter to break the game wide open. Jaxon Lisinski led NM with 19 points while NM’s steady sophomore guard Adam Dugener added 15. Lamarkis Graham chipped in with 10 points and had a near double-double with nine rebounds.

After losing to West Michigan Aviation Academy in their first ever meeting in Grand Rapids last season, NM returned the favor with a comfortable 55-33 win over the low-flying Aviators. Jaxon Lisinski and Adam Dugener paced NM scorers with 16 points apiece. Close behind in scoring was Lamarkis Graham with 15 points while TJ Byard played his usual steady role with eight rebounds, four assists and three steals.

Perhaps Hart couldn’t stand success as NM had no trouble in disposing of a Hart team that finished last season with a perfect regular season record of 22-0. NM more than doubled up on the Pirates with a 72-34 spanking of the Pirates. NM had the 3-pointers on target during the game, especially Lamarkis Graham and Jaxon Lisinski who combined for 7 of NM’s 14 three pointers. Graham finished with a season high 27 points and Lisinski 20. Adam Dugener had nine points and five assists.

Holton fell to the Norsemen in NM’s next contest, losing by 56 points in a one-sided 79-23 Norse victory. The starting five of James Lasinski (16), James Young, Adam Dugener and TJ Byard had 10 points apiece while Lamarkis Graham was one point shy of double-digit figures with nine.

NM made it 11 in a row to start the season with a 60-51 win over Ravenna. The Norse got huge games from Adam Dugener (19), Lamarkis Graham (18) and TJ Byard (15) to stay perfect on the season and the Rivers Division of the WMC.

NM journeyed to Grand Rapids and defeated Potters House Christian 61-35 in a non-league contest, the third win in as many games in the short series with Potters House. Balanced scoring, a trademark for the entire season for the Norsemen was again in effect in this contest. Jason Lisinski led NM with 14 points, closely followed by James Young and Adam Dugener with 13 points and Lemarkis Graham with 12. Young’s 11 rebounds gave him a double double.

It has always been a competitive series between Fremont and North Muskegon, a pair of old-time rivals that played one another every year but two from 1935 through 1966. With NM’s 53-39 win over the Packers, NM leads the series 34-32. It did not look promising early for the Norsemen as they fell behind 15-4 after the first quarter before the Norse buckled down to earn the win. Lamarkis Graham tallied 14 points, grabbed seven rebounds and made four steals for the victors. Adam Dugener had his usual well-rounded game with 13 points six rebounds, five assists and four steals. Jaxon Lisinski with 11 points and James Young with nine added to the well-balanced NM attack.

James Young had a season high 20 points and eight rebounds to lead NM to their 14th straight win on the season with a 65-47 win over Oakridge. With Oakridge now being in another division of the WMC, the two longtime rivals would only meet once during the season. Young had plenty of help from his teammates as Lemarkis Graham added 14 points as did Jaxon Lisinski. Adam Dugener had 11 points with TJ Byard scoring six points with five rebounds and three blocked shots.

It surely looked like NM was about to see their perfect season come to an end as they trailed Montague for most of the game but managed to use some last second magic to pull one out of their hat. NM scored four points in the game’s final seconds to come away with the win. After a NM bucket tied the score with just a few ticks left on the clock Lamarkis Graham stole the Wildcats inbounds pass, was fouled and sank two free throws to give the Norse a 47-45 win. Graham finished with 15 points; James Young added 13 points and Adam Dugener tallied 10 in the low-scoring contest.

NM bolted out to an early 15-point lead after the first quarter and then cruised to a 58-40 win over Mason County Central. Reserve guard Landen Grimm had a memorable game with 13 points, 12 of those markers coming on four made 3-pointers. James Young contributed 12 points and a team-high eight rebounds and four assists while Jaxon Lisinski was in double figures with 11 points.

It was another rout against Hesperia as NM walloped the outclassed Panthers 74-32 to earn their 17th straight win and all but clinched the rivers division of the WMC at a perfect 9-0. Jaxon Lisinski led NM with 15 points, followed by Lamarkis Graham with 14, while Adam Dugener and Landen Grimm each chipped in with 12.

Although NM had admittedly a soft schedule with two games each against outmanned opponents in a very weak Rivers division, the Norse would face their strongest opponent during the regular season with a game at Grand Rapids Covenant Christian. NM trailed the host Chargers 30-24 at halftime but came out of the halftime break on fire by outscoring Covenant 23-7 in the third quarter. Covenant made a run at the Norse in the game’s final moments, but NM made their free throws and enough timely baskets to hold off Covenant to earn a 62-54 victory. Adam Dugener was the man of the hour for Norse as the sophomore displayed the skills that could put him amongst some of the best to ever suit up for the Blue & Gold. Dugener was the best player on the floor with 26 points. Also helping in the victory was Jaxon Lisinski with13 points while Lamarkis Graham added 10.

White Cloud entered their game with NM with an excellent record of 15-2 and posed a possible threat to ending NM’s impressive winning streak. However, one of their two losses was to Shelby, a team with only three wins at the time. White Cloud kept within range of the Norse for three quarters but a 19-8 scoring edge for NM in the final quarter led to a 57-38 win for the Blue & Gold. Adam Dugener continued his fine play with 18 points to lead the Norse while James Young chipped in with 10 points, eight assists, six assists and four steals.

NM then then stayed perfect at 20-0 with a 57-35 victory over Shelby. Getting better every time out, Adam Dugener led NM with 18 points, five rebounds and four assists. Lamarkis Graham added 15 points and Jaxon Lisinski 14. The once proud Shelby Tigers, for years the scourge of the West Michigan Conference fall to 3-15 on the season. The Tigers would win only two games in the WMC, both against lowly Holton.

So dominant was NM in the Rivers Division of the WMC that Hart would end up in second place in the division. NM manhandled the Pirates 71-47 enroute to another easy victory in the very weak Rivers Division as Adan Dugnener once again led all NM scorers with 26 points. “North Muskegon has a bevy of guys that can put the ball in the hole.” said Hart coach Nick Bronsema following the game. Four Norsemen were in double figures. Following Dugener in double digits for NM were Lamarkis Graham (13), Jaxon Lisinski (!2) and TJ Byard with 10 points.

NM completed their regular season with yet another rout of an overmatched team, an 83-36 win over a very poor Holton team that failed to even win a game in the Rivers Division of the WMC. It was no contest with sharp shooting Jaxon Lisinski leading the way with a career high 23 points. Lamarkis Graham scored 18 while Adam Dugener chipped in with 16 points as the subs played most of the second half for NM.

NM would then play in a very favorable district against teams NM had soundly defeated during the regular season. NM’s opener was against Shelby and, as expected, the Tigers were not up for the challenge against a much stronger NM team that entered the MHSAA playoffs rated number 2 in the state in Division 3 (Think Class C for you old timers). After a tight first quarter where NM led by only one at 15-14 the Norse then settled things quickly in the second period by taking a 34-21 lead at halftime. Jaxon Lisinski scored 18 points for the balanced Norsemen followed by Adam Dugeners with 17 and Lamarkis Graham with 12.

NM then made it four district titles in a row with a 54-39 win over White Cloud, their second victory in just a few shorts days over the Indians. White Cloud kept in range of pulling off the upset but a 21-12 Norse advantage in the final quarter provided enough separation to secure the victory. Lamarkis Graham led NM with 20 points while Adam Dugener was the other NM player in double figures with 10.

With a perfect 24-0 record NM then had the misfortune of playing their first game in the regional against Pewamo-Westphalis on P-W’s home court. In a game that screamed for a shot clock for high school basketball the Pirates played patient basketball against NM’s zone defense that surely frustrated the NM players. With the Norsemen refusing to leave their zone defense they had been using all year to compile a 24-0 record P-W often took a minute or more off the clock to make sure they got off a good shot on every possession. Pewamo-Westphalia took a 31-24 lead heading into the fourth quarter, a seven-point lead that with the current tempo of the game felt like a 20-point margin. NM clawed back and outscored P-W 12-5 in the final quarter to force overtime. The Pirates had the last possession in overtime with the score tied at 40-all. Kash Poel hoisted an off-balanced desperation 3-pointer as time expired that somehow fell through the hoop to end NM’s season at 24-1. Adam Dugener’s 15 points led NM in a losing cause while Jaxon Lisinski and Lamarkis Graham scored 12 and seven points respectively.

The loss to Pewamo-Westphalia would be the final game for seniors Jaxon Lisinski and Lemarkis Graham who would join veteran coach Gene Gifford’s Muskegon Community College Jayhawks at the next level. Also leaving the Norse was three-year starting guard James Young, who would transfer to Muskegon High School to play football. Young’s favorite receiver during the football season at NM, three-sport standout TJ Byard would return for the 2024-25 season as would NM’s best player in 2023-24, rising junior Adam Dugener. In a very mysterious schedule when the MHSAA permitted teams to play 22 games during the regular season, basketball fans were left with the empty feeling on why both undefeated teams in each division, Whitehall and North Muskegon never played one another to truly decide an overall WMC champion. The Vikings and Norsemen both experienced an untimely early exit in the playoffs with Whitehall shockingly losing the first game in the tournament to Spring Lake.

N Muskegon 74 Musk Catholic 30 LaMarkis Graham 16, Adam Dugener 16

N Muskegon 62 Ravenna 47 James Young & Dugener 12, Graham 11

N Muskegon 52 Manistee 47 Jaxon Lisinski 12, Dugener, Graham 10

N Muskegon 60 Mason Co 50 Dugener 16, Lisinski 13, Graham 12

N Muskegon 51 WMC 44 Dugener 21, Graham 17, TJ Byard 8

N Muskegon 65 Hesperia 17 Dugener & Talan Thompson 11, Graham 10

N Muskegon 77 Shelby 42 Lisiniski 19, Dugener 15, Graham 10

N Muskegon 55 W Mich. Av 33 Lisinski & Dugener 16, Graham 15

N Muskegon 72 Hart 34 Graham 27, Lisinski 20, Dugener 9

N Muskegon 79 Holton 23 Lasinski 16, Young, Dugener, Byard 10

N Muskegon 60 Ravenna 51 Dugener 19, Graham 18, Byard 15

N Muskegon 61 Potters House 35 Lasinski 14, Young & Dugener 13

N Muskegon 53 Fremont 39 Graham 14, Dugener 13, Kisinski 11

N Muskegon 65 Oakridge 47 Young 20, Graham & Lisinski 14, Dugener 11

N Muskegon 47 Montague 45 Graham 15, Young 13, Dugener

N Muskegon 58 Mason Co 40 Landen Grimm 13, Young 12, Lisisnki 11

N Muskegon 74 Hesperia 32 Lisinski 15, Graham 14, Dugener & Grimm 12

N Muskegon 62 GR Cov. Christ. 54 Dugener 26, Lisinski 13, Graham 10

N Muskegon 57 White Cloud 38 Dugener 18, Young 10, Byard 8

N Muskegon 57 Shelby 35 Dugener 18, Graham 15, Lisinski 14

N Muskegon 74 Hart 43 Dugener 26. Graham 13, Lisinski 12

N Muskegon 83 Holton 36 Lisinski 26, Graham 18, Dugener 16

N Muskegon\*65 Shelby 29 Lisinski 18, Dugener 17, Graham 12

N Muskegon\*54 White Cloud 39 Graham 20, Dugener 10

N Muskegon 40 Pewamo-West. 43 Dugener 15, Lasinski 12

**2024-25 (Coach Chuck Rypstra, 23-2 NM --WMC Rivers champ, Whitehall Lakes)**

With only Adam Dugener and TJ Byard, the only starters returning for the upcoming season, surely no one could realistically expect the Norsemen to have another run in 2024-24? However, stepping in to replace the departing seniors, and one junior who left the program as a transfer, seniors Chuck Meyers, Jaden Villapando, and Landen Grimm, along with junior Braylen Burrell and freshmen David Markiewicz joined Adam and TJ to lead the Norsemen to another amazing season.

NM began the 2024-25 season with a dubious start as the Norsemen saw host Mason County Central score the games first 11 points. It was then Adam Dugener time as he almost single-handedly brought the Norsemen back from the dead as he scored 18 od his 24 points in the first half to close the gap at halftime with the Norse trailing by only a single point. Mason County then went into a box and one to prevent Dugener from going ballistic, but the rest of the Norsemen stepped up to pull away in the second half to claim their first win of the season 47-39. Jaden Villapando tossed in nine points for the victors while Chuck Meyers was a force on the boards with nine.

The Norse then made the long journey up North to Benzonia, Michigan to participate in the Will Lynch classic sponsored by Benzie Central High School. After playing Menominee High just three weeks prior to capture a regional title in football, the Norse played the Maroons in basketball. It was the first time in the 92 years of NM basketball the Norse would play a UP team in the roundball sport. And, for the second time in three weeks NM would defeat Menominee 49 to 37. This was not the same caliber of a Menominee team that won a State Class B championship in 1967 nor as talented as a Maroon team just two years earlier had advanced to the State Division 3 championship. Adam Dugener filled up the stat sheet with 14 points, nine rebounds and seven assists. Braylen Burrell was also in double figures in the low scoring contest with 13 points.

NM then advanced to the championship game on the Benzie Central court in front of a sparse crowd on a late Saturday afternoon in Benzonia. The Norsemen would then play Lapeer, a division 1 school from the East side of the state. Lapeer produced a pair of starting quarterbacks for MSU in the 1950s in Pat Wilson and his brother Tom, who became good friends with your author from his days in Traverse City. Lapeer could have used the Wilson brothers, especially Pat who was a starting guard on the Spartans 1957 final four team as they were no match for the Norsemen. When Adam Dugener left the game with 2:34 left in the contest the NM junior guard has scored 24 points, just two less than the entire Lapeer team. NM would finish with 52 points to but 34 for Lapeer as NM begins the 2024-25 season with three straight victories.

Maybe it was the Norse finally getting into basketball shape as the Norse, who had several football players on their roster, had their best offensive output of the season in a 67-42 rout of Fremont. It was the 67th game played between the two rivals, and the win gives the Norsemen a 34-33 edge over the Packers in a rivalry that dates back into the 1930s. High scoring Adam Dugener scored 13 points, but he had plenty of help from his teammates. Braylen Burrell scored a game high 20 points while Landen Grimm netted 13, and TJ Byard had 11 points. After a close game at half with NM leading 31-24, the Norsemen put this contest securely away with a 20-2 run in the third quarter.

The Norse continued their undefeated season and their dominance over a once proud Shelby team with an easy 61-31 romp over the winless on the season Tigers. Adam Dugener popped in 21 points while grabbing 10 rebounds for the victors. So dominant was the victory that at the end of the third quarter the Norsemen enjoyed a whopping 45-16 advantage over Shelby. Braylen Burrell was also in double figures for the Norse with 13 points. Yet another milestone was achieved for the Norse as it was the 900th victory in the 92nd season of NM basketball.

Adam Dugener put on a show in NM’s 72-32 pounding of Hart. The junior guard joined the 30-point club as he became the 28th Norse cager in program history to top the 30-point mark and he did it in a big way with 39 markers, 21 of those points coming in the second quarter. After missing his first two 3-point attempts the Norse sharpshooter would then mesh a program tying eight long toms enroute to his 39 points. If not for a running clock and NM coach Chuck Rypstra using subs for all but one minute of the final quarter, Dugener would surely have broken the 40-point barrier. The 39 points equals the NM record for points scored in a game by a Norse player against Hart now shared with NM legend Drew Naymick.

NM moved to 7-0 with a dominating 65-22 thrashing of a very weak Montague team. It was the most lopsided win over Montague in the 190 meetings between the two long-time rivals. Montague’s 22 points was the fewest points scored over NM in 81 years. Oddly enough, Montague’s 18 points in 1944 were two points more than the Norse were able to muster in that contest played during the midst of WWII. The Norse left no doubt as to who was going to be victorious in this game as they burst out to an early 11-0 lead and never looked back. The Norse created many steals that led to easy baskets with Adam Dugener pilfering errant Montague passes eight times enroute to a game high 25 points. Braylen Burrell continued his fine shooting with a career high 19 points.

NM was then faced with their first big test of the season, and they came through in flying colors with a dramatic 61-49 win over Ludington. Unlike NM’s overtime loss to the Orioles (62-60) in the 1958-59 season, the Norse outscored the host Birds 15-3 in the extra session to secure their 8th straight victory of the current season. Adam Dugener, although posting a rare 0-6 from three-point country, was content to utilize his driving skills to attack the basket and finished with a game high 30 points. Braylen Burrell chipped in with 14 points, 12 of his tallies coming on three-pointers. The Norse got a big boost from rapidly improving 6-4 freshman David Markiewicz who had eight points and was a force on defense with three blocked shots.

NM then cruised as expected with a resounding 74-22 victory over an outclassed Holton team. The 54-point win was the second most lopsided win in NM history and the 13th straight conquest of the Red Devils. NM, after taking a 40-8 lead at halftime forced a running clock for much of the second half as coach Rypstra was able to empty his bench. Adam Dugener in limited minutes still was able to notch 20 points for the Norse while Braylen Burrell and Landen Grimm hit double figures with 10 points each.

NM then traveled to Oakridge where NM anticipated a hard-fought contest with the Eagles. And indeed, it was --- for 16 minutes, as Oakridge led the visiting Norsemen 28-25 at halftime. However, the second half was all NM as the Norse overwhelmed Oakridge in the second half 44-20 to earn their 10th straight win on the season. After scoring an average of less than 50 points in their first three games, with many of the NM players coming off a long football season, the NM offense has shown vast improvement by scoring 60 or more points in seven consecutive games. Adam Dugener again topped all scorers with 21 tallies with TJ Byard and Landen Grimm each chipping in with 10 points.

With their star player Adam Dugener sitting on the bench after being struck with the flu bug, his NM teammates took up the slack and raced out to an early 21-5 lead enroute to a 69-34 win over Ravenna. Braylen Burrell was deadly from the outside for NM as he knocked down 3 quick three pointers during the run and would finish with a game high 22 points, despite sitting on the bench during the final quarter while the subs took over. Dugener, who entered the game with two minutes left in the opening quarter, did score 11points but notched a double double as he also recorded 10 assists in limited minutes. TJ Byard had a monster game for the Norse with 10 rebounds, eight assists, four blocked shots and four steals as the 3-sport start ignited the NM tempo with his hurry up play. Ten Norsemen scored in the contest as the Norse won their 11th straight contest.

To no one’s surprise the Norsemen rolled over Hesperia 73-31 to earn their 36th straight regular season victory without tasting defeat, far and away a program record. Sharp shooting Braylen Burrell led the Norse with 20 points with Adam Dugener continuing his exceptional play with 19 tallies and pilfered 11 steals. The quick handed Dugener was just one steal from equaling the program record of 12 set by Dante Hutcherson back in 1987. TJ Byard played his usual steady all-around game with 16 points, five rebounds, four assists, and four steals. The game was played in Hesperia even though heavy snow in West Michigan had cancelled school for three consecutive days.

The Norse all but clinched the Rivers Division of the WMC with a 65-52 victory over Mason County Central, the only team that had any chance of dethroning NM. Adam Dugener set a school record with nine three-pointers as the junior sniper poured in 38 points, just one shy of his career high. Three Norsemen each scored six points led by TJ Byard who also stuffed the stat sheet with eight rebounds, four assists, three blocks and an equal number of steals as NM goes to 13-0 on the season.

In a series that was dominated in the early years by Hart, the recent years have been controlled by the Norse as they have now won 33 of the last 35 meetings with the Pirates following their 56-45 road win. NM’s worst fears nearly occurred with just seconds left to play in the opening quarter when Adam Dugener was sprawled on the court writhing in pain. Just a few minutes later after being assisted off the court Dugener surprisingly returned to action without a limp. The junior would finish with 20 points to lead NM to their 14th straight victory on the season over a feisty Hart team who lost earlier in the season to the Norse by 40 points. Braylen Burrell added 13 points for NM while TJ Byard had his usual fine all-around game with 7 points, 8 rebounds and a like number of assists.

TJ Byard celebrated his earlier signing during the day to play football at Lawrence Tech by scoring a career high 16 points to lead the Norse to their 15th consecutive victory, a 47-34 win over Manistee. Byard also led the Norse in rebounds with eight as NM won for their fifth straight tight against Manistee. Adam Dugener was in double figures with 11 points while dishing off six assists.

The Norsemen pulled away in the fourth quarter in defeating West Michigan Christian 59-39. Adam Dugener hit the 30-game plateau for the fourth time during the season with 30 tallies to lead NM to their fifth straight win over their one-time nemesis. Braylen Burrell added 11 points while rapidly improving frosh David Maekiewicz had nine points and six rebounds as NM moves to a perfect 16-0 on the season.

As it has been so often said, good things must come to an end. NM’s incredible streak of winning 40 games in a row came to a crushing end with a 58-35 loss to perennial powerhouse Grand Rapids Covenant Christian. “Covenant shot the ball extremely well and played great defense,” said North Muskegon coach Chuck Rypstra. “We had a poor shooting night, but mostly because of their ball pressure. They beat us pretty good today.  We will learn from this as we move forward. I think we are pretty good, but they humbled us today.” Adam Dugener led NM with 16 points while TJ Byard added nine, accounting for 25 of NM’s 35 points.

The Norse quickly recovered from their first loss of the season, and they did it in a big way. NM handed Shelby their worst loss in their long rivalry as they pounded the Tigers 74-30. The Blue and Gold shared the wealth led by Adam Dugener’s 18 points, six assists and four steals. Landen Grimm added 11, Jaden Villapando 10 while TJ Byard did his normal yeoman like work with nine points, six rebounds and five assists.

NM defeated Holton by 52 points in an earlier game this season that would rank as the second largest win in program history. Not anymore. In their second meeting the Norse destroyed a hapless Holton team by 54 points and only a running clock for most of the second half prevented even a more lopsided win. Adam Dugener paced the rout with 19 points with Landen Grimm and Chuck Meyers also in double figures with 10. So decisive was the win that the Norse led Holton at the half 37-3.

It was déjà vu for the Norsemen in their recent history with Hesperia. The last three contests between these two squads have resulted in near identical final scores. For the second time in the past two seasons NM defeated the Panthers 74-32 and nearly made at a three peat as they thumped Hesperia 73-31 earlier in the season. This game was over quickly as NM bolted out to a 41-8 lead at halftime. Adam Dugener was ‘kind’ to the visitors as he scored 21 points in less than three quarters of action as subs played much of the game. Braylen Phillips tossed in 17 while reserve Brodie Frees had a season high 11 points.

The Norsemen closed their regular season with 20 victories against but one setback, but Ravenna didn’t make it easy for NM. The Norse took a slim 25-21 lead into the fourth quarter before they pulled away. Adam Dugener led NM with 15 points with Braylen Burrell close behind with 13. The game was a far cry from NM’s earlier contest with the visiting Bulldogs when the Norse won by 35 points.

Adam Dugener scored more than half of NM’s points as NM held off West Michigan Christian as the Norse opened the playoffs with a 54-44 victory. Playing the districts at Grand Rapids North Point Christian, the Warriors didn’t make it easy for the Norse as they rallied to force a tie at 26-26 at halftime. A big 18-6 advantage in the third quarter gave NM some breathing room to earn their second win on the season over WMC.

The Norse earned their first win over Grandville Calvin Christian in four meetings to earn their fourth straight district title. Adam Dugener netted 25 points in the 59-43 victory as the junior became the third Norsemen in school history to score 500 points or more in a season. TJ Byard was all over the stat sheet for the Norse with 10 points, six assists and six steals while committing no turnovers. Never counted on to score a bunch of points, Jaden Villapando was a real pest in the contest with his defense, rebounding and hustle.

The Norsemen advanced to the D3 Regional finals with a commanding 72-32 victory over Ravenna in a playoff game held in Kent City. The Bulldogs hung around in the first half as they trailed NM by eight 27-19 but the second half was all North Muskegon as they outscored Ravenna 49-13.  It was the second most lopsided defeat over Ravenna in the 151st meeting between the two schools in a rivalry that dates to 1932. Junior Adam Dugener once again led the Norse with 20 points and six steals, but it was far from a one-man show. Braylen Phillips drilled in 19 points while TJ Byard, who plays at only one speed --- fast --- filled up the stat sheet with 11 points, 8 rebounds, 5 assists, 3 steals, one block shot and zero turnovers. Coach Chuck Rypstra got some excellent help from his bench as 6'5 freshman David Markiewicz had five points and five rebounds while Landen Grimm was a pest vs. the Bulldogs with five steals and four assists.

A NM milestone was reached in this game as the win was the 190th of coach Chuck Rypstra’s career at NM, one more than Jeff Cooke.

For the third consecutive season the Norsemen’s season came to an end with a loss to Pewamo-Westphalia 46-39. The Norse dug themselves in a hole by falling behind 31-16 at the half. The gritty Norse battled back in the second half and closed the gap to five points late in the game, but it was not enough to overcome that lopsided first half deficit. Despite an all-out attempt to stop Adam Dugener, the brilliant NM guard still managed to pour in 23 points in the loss. Dugener, who is closing in on joining six other former Norsemen in the 1000-point club, scored 546 points for the season, the second highest single season point scorer in Norse history.  Dugener, who has the quick and skillful hands of a 1940s safecracker, now has 980 points career points.

During the four years the graduating seniors have been a part of Norsemen basketball, NM has posted a record of 81 wins and 17 losses, with an unreal mark of 47-3 the past two campaigns. Dugener, Burrell and Markiewicz headline the returning Norsemen for the following season that will attempt to continue the amazing success the Norsemen have enjoyed of late.

N Muskegon 47 Mason Co 37 Adam Dugener 24, Jaden Villapando 9

N Muskegon 49 Menominee 37 Dugener 14, Braylen Burrell

N Muskegon 52 Lapeer 34 Dugener 24, Burrell 9, TJ Byard 6

N Muskegon 67, Fremont 42 Burrell 20, Landen Grimm 13, Dugener 12, Byard 11

N Muskegon 61, Shelby 31 Dugener 21, Burrell 13, WIN # 900

N Muskegon 72, Hart 32 Dugener 39, Grimm and Burrell 9

N Muskegon 65, Montague 22 Dugener 25, Burell 19

N Muskegon 61, Ludington 49 Dugener 30, Burell 14, David Markiewicz 8

N Muskegon 74, Holton 22 Dugener 20, Burrell & Grimm 10

N Muskegon 70, Oakridge 48 Dugener 21, Byard & Grimm 10

NMuskegon 69, Ravenna 34 Burrell 22, Dugener 10, Byard 10 Reb, 8 steals

NMuskegon 73, Hesperia 31 Burrell 20, Dugener 19 (11 assists), Byard 16

NMuskegon 65 Mason Co 52 Dugener 38, school record 9 3’s

NMuskegon 56, Hart 45 Dugener 20, Burrell 13, Byard 8 assts, 8 rebounds

N Muskegon 47, Manistee 34 Byard 16, Dugener 11

N Muskegon 59, WMC 39 Dugener 30, Burrell 11, Markiewicz 9

N Muskegon, 35 GR Cov. Christ. 58 Dugener 16, Byard 9

N Muskegon 70, Shelby 30 Dugener 18, Grimm 11, Villapando 10

N Muskegon 67, Holton 13 Dugener 19, Grimm & Meyers 10

N Muskegon 74, Hesperia 32 Dugener 21, Burell 17, B. Frees 11

N Muskegon 41, Ravenna 31 Dugener 15, Burrell 13

N Muskegon 54, WMC 44 Dugener 28, Burrell 10

N Muskegon 59 Grandville Cal. 43 Dugener 25, Byard 10

N Muskegon 72, Ravenna 32 Dugener 20, Burrell 19, Byard 11

N Muskegon 39, Pewamo-West. 46 Dugener 23, Byard 8 reb.