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On the cover: Reeths-Puffer grad. Mark Hughes playing for the University of Michigan basketball team during its 1989 championship season.

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Former Reeths-Puffer, U-M star **MARK HUGHES** remembers **MARCH MADNESS in MICHIGAN**

By Steve Gunn
LocalSportsJournal.com

Mark Hughes' amazing basketball odyssey has taken him a very long way from his roots in Muskegon.

He's been a college national champion, an NBA player, a college and professional coach, a pro scout and director of player personnel, and currently serves as assistant general manager of the Los Angeles Clippers.



He's played for or worked with some legendary names in the game, including Chuck Daly, Isiah Thomas, Phil Jackson and Jerry West.

But his greatest basketball memories will always involve March Madness in Michigan.

Hughes vividly recalls his senior year in high school, when he led the Reeths-Puffer varsity basketball team to the longest state tournament run in program history, and his senior year of college, when he was co-captain and starting center for the University of Michigan squad that won the 1989 NCAA tournament championship.

But this year brought more than just memories for Hughes.

He recently returned to Ann Arbor, where just about everyone from that 1989 team gathered on the weekend of Jan. 23-24 to mark the 30th anniversary of their improbable championship run.



Former teammates like Glen Rice, Terry Mills, Loy Vaught and Sean Higgins all came for the weekend, and Hughes loved every moment of it.

He was particularly pleased that Coach Steve Fisher, who was fired at U-M under controversial circumstances seven years after that national championship, agreed to return to the school for the

first time.

The highlight of the weekend came at halftime of the Michigan-Michigan State game at U-M's Crisler Arena, when the team was introduced to a loud ovation from the sellout crowd.

"What a weekend we just had," Hughes, 52, recently told Local Sports Journal. "It was outstanding. Getting Coach Fisher back in Ann Arbor, and the ovation he received at the game, was awesome. It took a little cajoling to get him to come.

"Thirty years - are you kidding me? It's amazing how time has flown by."

Recalling the NCAA title run

Hughes still talks excitedly about that amazing championship run, which began on a bizarre note with the sudden departure of the Wolverines' longtime coach, Bill Frieder.

Just before the tournament began, Frieder announced that he would be leaving U-M after the season to become the basketball coach at Arizona State University. That didn't sit well with legend-



Above, Mark Hughes, co-captain of the 1989 national champion Michigan basketball team, is introduced to the Crisler Arena crowd at a game in February. At right, Hughes goes in for a dunk against Wisconsin in 1989. Photo/U-M Bentley Historical Library



ary Michigan football Coach Bo Schembechler, who was also the school's athletic director at the time, which made him Frieder's boss.

Schembechler abruptly dismissed Frieder after his announcement, and told the world that a "Michigan man" - who turned out to be Fisher, one of Frieder's assistants - would coach the team in the tournament.

Most observers felt the Wolverines, who finished a disappointing third place in the Big Ten that year, would be quickly eliminated from the tournament, which so much turmoil going on, and a brand new head coach suddenly in charge.

But they couldn't have been more wrong.

The Wolverines got very hot when the tournament began, reel-

ing off victories over Xavier 92-87, South Alabama 91-82, North Carolina 92-87, Virginia 102-65, and conference rival Illinois 83-81 to reach the national championship game against Seton Hall in Seattle.

That game, played in front of a huge national television audience, was a nail-biter, going two overtimes before Michigan's Rumeal Robinson hit a pair of free throws with seconds left to give U-M an 80-79 victory and the national title that nobody expected them to win.

"We were good, but we lost some games that season," Hughes said. "We lost to Indiana, Illinois twice, and we finished third in the Big Ten. We set goals every year at Michigan, to win the Big Ten and a national championship, and my freshman year we won a Big Ten title, but that was the only one we won."

"Then to suddenly accomplish a goal like that is a feeling you can't describe, after all the hard work, blood, sweat and tears, travel, and losses to battle back from. When that final buzzer sounded, it was unbelievable."

"Winning that national title is my best sports memory, for sure."

So how did a team that underachieved all season, then lost its coach just days before the NCAA tournament began, manage to suddenly pull it all together and go all the way?

Hughes credits Fisher, who "took adversity and turned into a chip on our shoulders. He said nobody expected us to do anything, so let's go out there and show them."



Hughes poses during the 1989 championship season at Michigan.
Photo/U-M

Hughes also gives a lot of credit to Schembechler, who gathered the basketball team together at Crisler Arena after dismissing Frieder and gave the players and coaches one of his fiery football-style talks.

While Frieder had been more of a laid-back "players coach," Schembechler always had a passionate, no-nonsense approach, and that was what the basketball team needed at that moment, according to Hughes.

"We got the call that we had to meet at Chrysler, and we had no idea what it was about," Hughes said. "So we get there and walk in and Bo was there. He told us that our coach was going to become the coach at Arizona State, and that a Michigan man was going to coach our

team.

"He asked Coach Fisher if he was ready to coach this team, and he said yes. He told Sean Higgins that he had heard talk about him wanting to transfer, and said he had the papers ready on his desk, and asked him if he wanted out of here, and he said no."

"He told us we had to start playing for the name on the front of the jersey, not on the back. He told us we had to start worrying about winning basketball games, and not how many shots we took. He went on and on about how we were Michigan men, and we had a lot of potential, but we had not played up to it."

"Mind you, this was right before we were going to have just one practice and then hit the road for our first tournament game. We never had anyone give us a talk like that before. He was very commanding and inspiring. That guy really motivated us to go out and play."

A lot of Muskegon-area fans got a huge thrill from watching the Wolverines' championship run, and the role Hughes played in it.



Hughes high-fives R-P teammate Quinn Barry.

One of them was Quinn Barry, who was Hughes' teammate on the Reeths-Puffer varsity squad, as well as a close friend.

Barry, a student at Central Michigan University at the time, drove down to Ann Arbor after the national championship game to stay with Hughes for a few days and enjoy the celebration. He was there for a huge pep rally, and watched as Hughes lived up to his reputation of being not only a great player and leader, but also a very nice guy.

"Talk about an unbelievable experience," said Barry, who still remains in regular contact with Hughes. "After that pep rally was over, there were about 5,000 people in the parking lot wanting autographs. Everybody else went inside, and Mark was the only guy who stayed outside signing autographs, until the last person was gone."

Remembering Reeths-Puffer's run

Hughes' success as a basketball player really didn't surprise anyone, because he grew up in a family of talented athletes.

His father Sam Hughes was a star athlete at North Muskegon High School, while his older brothers Sam (class of 1978) and Tim (class of 1983) were both standout basketball players at Reeths-Puffer.

"My dad held the held state high jump record for years," Hughes proudly stated. "He was clearly the best athlete in the family."

Hughes got to play one season with his brother Tim, who was a senior when Mark was a sophomore and was called up to varsity.

"I thought that team was one of the most talented, as well, and had a chance to be really good," Hughes said. "Unfortunately my brother hurt his ankle during districts, and I think we lost to Muskegon Catholic that year."

By the time Hughes was a senior, he was a towering and dominant post presence who was considered the best player in the area, and one of the best in Michigan.

He lived up to all the hype in 1984-85, when the 6-8 All-State center led the Rockets to their greatest basketball season ever. He was joined on that team by a lot of great role players whose names might ring a bell for older Reeths-Puffer fans - guys like Barry, Tim Schuppe, Toby Pallett, Andre Johnson and Adrian Cotton.

"We thought we would be pretty good," Hughes said. "My junior year we had a pretty good team, but we always got tripped up. But we thought with the guys we had coming back the next year, plus Andre Johnson (a transfer from Muskegon Catholic), we had speed, shooting and size. We thought we had a legitimate chance to win a state title."

The Rockets, under longtime Coach Dan Wright, nearly pulled

it off.

They won the championship in the old Seaway Conference, plowed their way to district and regional titles, and won a state quarterfinal game. That was, and remains, the longest tournament run in the history of Reeths-Puffer basketball.

The Rockets barely missed out on their chance for state glory, losing a 44-42 heartbreaker to Flint Beecher in the Class B state semifinals at Michigan's Crisler Arena, which was about to become Hughes' new basketball home. Beecher went on to win the title and finish with a perfect 27-0 record.

"It's still painful, I'm not going to lie," he said. "Once we got out of regionals, I remember thinking, this is it, we're on the big stage for the first time, and we were excited about it. Unfortunately we didn't quite get it done.

"(Beecher) had one sophomore kid on their team who had the game of his life. He scored like 16 points, which was something we certainly didn't expect. And we had some guys who just didn't put the ball in the basket the way they had all season.

"When you look at it, we lost to Flint Beecher by two points, and they went on to win it. If we would have beaten them we would have won it."

Hughes recalls a decision the team made the day before that

fateful game, which he thinks might have played a role in the outcome.

"I remember Coach Wright asking us if we wanted to go down to Ann Arbor early and stay the night in a hotel before the game, or if we wanted to just go down there the morning of the game," Hughes said.

"I wanted to go down early. It sounded like a lot of fun, and Michigan was one of the schools on my list. But a couple of guys said we should just go the day of the game, so we ended up not doing it.

"I think that may have had something to do it. It was a long bus ride down there for us, and we weren't used to that."

Barry, who was the starting point guard for the 84-85 Rockets, said Hughes was the main force on a team filled with talented players.



An old clip of Hughes putting up a shot for R-P in the 84-85 season.

"If Mark had the ball we almost always got a great shot, even if he didn't shoot it," said Barry, who has been an educator and basketball coach for years in Michigan's Central Lake school district. "He commanded a lot of respect from defenses, so if he drew a lot of coverage, he would throw the ball out for an outside shot. He was a great passer."

Barry said Hughes also led by being a genuine friend to his teammates, and helping to create a strong sense of unity among the players.

"Looking back, he wasn't just like that with the team, he was like that in school," Barry said. "Every kid loved Mark Hughes. If a little elementary kid wanted an autograph, he never let him down. He always gave people his time. And he's still the same guy today that we all grew up with. That's probably why he's so easy to stay in contact with. He's never too busy to take a phone call."

Even with all the success he's had throughout the basketball world, Hughes still thinks high school hoops at Reeths-Puffer may have been the most fun of all.

"I was playing with my best friends, the guys I grew up with,"



Hughes, center, back in the day with his parents, Sam and Wilda Hughes.

he said. "We played together in elementary and junior high, and suddenly we were in high school, we had some success, and we were in the newspaper and being interviewed on the radio. Those were my guys.

"Even though you go off and do so many other things in life, it all started at Reeths-Puffer."

Beyond the court

Of course basketball did not end for Hughes after high school and college.

Several players from the 1989 Michigan basketball team went on to have nice NBA careers, including Rice, Vaught and Mills, and Hughes had the same goal.

He made the Detroit Pistons' roster in 1990-91, when their two-year reign as NBA champions ended with a loss to Chicago in the Eastern Conference finals. He played with Detroit greats like Isaiah Thomas, Joe Dumars, Bill Laimbeer and Dennis Rodman, and was coached by the legendary Chuck Daly.

Hughes was cut after his one season with the Pistons, then spent several years playing overseas in Italy and France. He finally returned home, earned a roster spot with the Toronto Raptors in 1996, but did not see court time and was eventually released.

Hughes then returned to West Michigan to play for the Grand Rapids Hoops of the Continental Basketball Association in 1995. He served as player-coach for the Hoops for a few seasons, before finally retiring and concentrating on coaching in 1999.

Hughes said he was more than ready to retire as a player by then.

"It really wasn't that hard," he said. "When you play pro sports it's a grind, especially on the body, after three surgeries and all the bumps and bruises. I just remember thinking the summer before my last season, working to get ready to play, that this would be it for me."

Hughes returned to the NBA as an assistant coach for the Orlando Magic under Doc Rivers in 2002-03 and 2003-04, then reunited with Coach Steve Fisher as an assistant coach at San Diego State University for two seasons, in 2004-05 and 2005-06.

He spent the 2006-07 season as an assistant coach with the Sacramento Kings, before he got the chance to enter the NBA front office world as the director of west coast scouting for the New York Knicks, between 2007 and 2011.

He was promoted to director of pro personnel with the Knicks in 2011, and remained in that job until 2017. During that time he got to work with Phil Jackson, who won an amazing six NBA titles as coach of the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers, before becoming president of the Knicks.

In August, 2017 Hughes became one of two assistant general managers for the LA Clippers. He was reunited with Doc Rivers, the

head coach of the team.

As an assistant GM, Hughes spends a lot of time on the road, scouting college players in preparation for the NBA draft every year. He's also involved in all of the player personnel decisions made by the team, including last year's decision to trade franchise player Blake Griffin to the Detroit Pistons.

"It was just a situation where the Pistons were calling and really wanted a star," Hughes said. "We were not looking to move this guy. He had been a staple here, and we didn't take that lightly."

"But the Pistons put together quite a package for him, and it was something we really couldn't turn down. It's been a win-win for both teams. Blake is having a great season, and we're very happy with the haul we got from them."

Hughes says he's been learning a ton about running an NBA team from the experts in the front office, including Clippers President of Basketball Operations Lawrence Frank (a former Pistons coach), and NBA Hall of Famer Jerry West, who recently joined the team as a consultant.

Hughes said his goal is to become an NBA general manager, but in the meantime "I want to help this franchise win a championship. It's my number one goal. I know what winning a championship is like from a collegiate perspective, but I would love to win a ring in the NBA."

When he's not working, Hughes lives with his wife Ronna in Hermosa Beach, California near Los Angeles. They are going through the empty-nest phase, as their three children head out on their own as adults.

Their oldest son, Mark Jr., lives in Oakland. Their daughter Madelyn recently graduated from San Diego State University, and their youngest son, Jackson, is just breaking into college basketball at Irvine Valley College. He suffered a concussion earlier this season and has been red-shirted for his freshman year.

"He doesn't have great size, but he's athletic and smart," Hughes said about his son. "He loves the game and I would love to see him get to play as long as he can. If he can stay healthy, he should have a



Hughes representing the NBA at a youth camp. Photo courtesy of LA Clippers

choice of (four-year) colleges play for."

Hughes says he has always made an effort to get back to Muskegon every year, but that's become more difficult as he's moved further away.

He still makes a point of seeing his parents, Sam and Wilda Hughes, as often as possible, including that recent weekend in Ann Arbor, but sometimes it's easier for them to visit him.

"My brother Tim just moved to Phoenix, and my sister Karen is in Atlanta now, but my parents still live in that same house where we grew up in Muskegon, 185 Cora," he said.

"Muskegon is my home and where my heart is at. I love getting back when I can."

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16 straight district championships!



Muskegon Coach Keith Guy has won a trophy every year of his career.

By Steve Gunn
LocalSportsJournal.com

District championships are only the first step on the path to state high school basketball titles, but coaches still love to win them. It means their team is at least the best in its neck of the woods, and there's something to be said for that.



Some coaches never win a district title. Some win quite a few, if they stick around long enough and maintain good programs.

But Muskegon's Keith Guy might be in a class of his own in that category, because his teams have won district championships every year of his long varsity career.

That's right - every single year.

Guy's Muskegon boys basketball team beat Reeths-Puffer 64-54 in early March to capture its seventh straight district championship. That means Guy has won districts every year he's been at Muskegon.

But his streak goes back a lot further than that. Guy previously coached at Muskegon Heights, where his Tigers won nine straight district titles, between 2004 and 2012.

That means Guy's teams have hoisted a district championship trophy every year for the past 16. If that's not a state record, it has to be close.

"I have no idea, to be honest," said Guy, when asked if any other coach he's heard of has ever won 16 straight district titles. "I guess I've just been blessed and fortunate.

"We've been doing it so long, some people take it for granted, but I don't. Every year it gets sweeter and sweeter for me. Some teams never win a district."

Guy grew up in Muskegon Heights and played basketball at his hometown high school under legendary coach Lee Gilbert, who won two state titles during a long career.

He has always made it clear that his primary goal is to win state championships, and his teams have frequently made impressive runs. His Big Reds pulled it off in 2013-14, posting an undefeated record and cruising to the Class A state title. His 2012-13 and 2015-16 Muskegon squads made it to the state quarterfinals.

At Muskegon Heights, Guys' Tigers advanced to the Class B

state finals in 2005 and 2011.

As Guy told LSJ a few years ago, "I've been chasing that (state championship) dream since I was in high school and we lost to Saginaw Buena Vista in the semifinals. That's always been a goal of mine, and I'm greedy. I want to continue to get there and win."

But state titles aside, Guy has a strong appreciation of what it means to win districts and be the best in the area, year after year.

It's evidence that an elite program remains in good shape, with no big drop off in performance. That's hard to maintain, with different groups of players coming and going every year, and local rivals all gunning for you every season.

"It's hard to get to the top, and even harder to stay on top," Guy said. "Every night everyone is expecting perfection from you, but sometimes you're not able to give your best, and you can lose. That's what makes this so special, to sustain that level of success, when you know if you let your guard down somebody may knock you off."

"That's what makes this so special, to sustain that level of success, when you know if you let your guard down somebody may knock you off." - Coach Keith Guy

Guy says one of the compelling parts of his job is taking a new group of players every year and molding them into a team that can keep the district title streak

going - and perhaps go a lot farther.

"Each group has its own identity and its own strengths and weaknesses," he said. "We have to figure out what those are, try to build on the strengths, and get the best out of the group. That's the fun part of coaching - the different challenges that each year brings."

One key to success, according to Guy, is putting in a lot of long hours.

"It's a lot harder than people think," he said. "We don't just roll the balls out. It takes a lot of hard work by the kids, and a lot of work by the assistant coaches with skill development. It doesn't just happen."

"We put a lot of time in. It can be a 24-hour job, and it's a year-round thing. Kids want to be in the gym, I like to be in the gym, and it's a way for kids to not only work on their craft, but stay out of trouble."

HESPERIA'S BIG VICTORY

The great thing about districts: One more chance to get that elusive first win

By Nate Thompson
LocalSportsJournal.com

All season long, Hesperia boys varsity basketball coach Doug Bolles kept telling everyone how proud he was of his players, because they never, ever quit, regardless of how tough things became.



Doug Bolles

And it was a very tough regular season for the Panthers.

Loss after loss piled up. The team was constantly short-handed, often playing exhausted with only six or seven guys, and one time had to finish a game with four. Hesperia also lacked offensive punch, reaching the 40-point mark only twice during the regular season.

The Panthers limped to the end of their schedule with a 0-19 record, then headed for districts for what most people thought would be a quick, merciful end to their season.

But Bolles was right all along. His players really never did give up. They displayed that in dramatic fashion in districts by overcoming a big first-quarter deficit and rallying to shock White Cloud 41-38 in the semifinals at Hart High School and gain their first win of the season.

That earned the Panthers a berth in the district championship game against Hart, which they lost by a sizable margin.

While a district trophy would have been an incredible postmark to a very challenging season, the fact is that the 2018-19 Panthers made sure they would not go down as a winless team.

That's something that Bolles will always be proud of, particularly since he decided to step aside as Hesperia's basketball coach after this season.

"It was a big relief for the seniors," said Bolles, who will remain the school's varsity football and softball coach. "They didn't want to go o-fer. We knew it would be hard for (White Cloud) to beat a team three times in a year. But for the kids to go out in the fourth quarter and take that win, they were just elated."

For Hesperia fans in attendance, the game started out like so many others, and there wasn't any hint that something special was about to happen.

The Panthers fell behind 13-0 in the first quarter, but scrapped, clawed and willed their way back into the contest. They had lost to the Indians twice in the regular season, but didn't let those losses, or the early deficit, throw them off.

Instead they buckled down on defense and kept the Indians from pulling away.

"We got down 8-0 right away and I called time out," Bolles recalled. "I told the kids, 'It's going to be a blowout if we don't hunker down and start turning things around.' It had to be all about heart and effort."

The Indians scored the game's next five points, but the Panthers got the deficit down to 13-4 after one quarter and then trimmed the score to 16-14 at the half.

The Panthers gained the advantage in the second half, outscoring White Cloud 13-4 in the third quarter to take a 27-20 lead headed into the fourth.

Then senior captain Jacob Klemundt caught fire in the fourth



Jake Klemundt, above, scored 11 points in the fourth quarter; Johnny Segura, bottom left, celebrates with an assistant coach; Logan Balkema battles past a defender.
Photos/Kim Smith

quarter, scoring 11 of his team-high 15 points, including three huge 3-pointers, lifting Hesperia to the improbable victory.

Suddenly Hesperia was the only team from its conference to still be standing in the state tournament, despite the fact that the Panthers finished last.

The Panthers had some unexpected moral support down the stretch as they battled for that first win.

Bolles said the Hart student section began to sense that the underdog Panthers had a chance for the upset, and roared with every big play or basket they made.

"That was huge," Bolles said. "They really got behind the underdog. I even went up to them after the game and thanked them for their support."

Bolles said the Panthers' struggles this season have been due to a lack of scoring punch and depth.

"We've had seven kids (on the roster), but when we played Hart back in December we were down to five in the fourth quarter, then we had a kid foul out," he said. "So we played the last quarter with four guys."

After facing so much adversity throughout the season, Bolles said his players made the most of the victory in a spirited postgame celebration in the locker room.

"It's a group of kids that just refused to quit," the coach said. "They wanted to experience their own March Madness."

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In February, when northern folks are still shoveling snow, and Major League baseball players are just gathering and stretching for spring training, college baseball is already in full swing.

Teams from Michigan head south to play regular season games in states where there is no snow.

That's always been fine with Tyler Trovinger, a Mona Shores graduate who has spent the last two seasons as the starting shortstop for the Oakland University baseball team.

He can't get enough baseball, and he's always ready to get rolling every season, the sooner the better.

But this year, for the first time since he started playing as a young kid, Trovinger will not be competing in any baseball games, at least at the collegiate level.

He had a scary turn of luck over Christmas break, when a bizarre medical problem rose up, put him in the hospital for several days, and ended up costing him the 2019 baseball season.

The way he explains it, a virus that caused a routine upper re-



Life throws a curveball

at Mona Shores grad Tyler Trovinger, who will have a spring without baseball due to a rare medical condition

spiratory infection ended up attacking his heart, causing a condition called myocarditis. His heart became inflamed and the amount of blood being pumped away from the organ slowed.

Trovinger says his life was never in danger, but he was later told by doctors that if he had waited much longer to be treated, he could have suffered a heart attack.

The bizarre illness passed very quickly, and Trovinger was hoping he could be cleared to play at least a good part of the college season. But a doctor who has the final say decided to wait and be sure he has no lingering problems. That led to the end of his season before it started.

Trovinger understands the cautious medical decision, but he doesn't like being on the sidelines at all.

"I was very upset about it," said Trovinger, 20. "I know they are holding me out for a reason. If anything were to happen to me while I was playing, it wouldn't be good. But it was very defeating."

Trovinger is known to most Mona Shores High School fans as a multi-sport standout who played football, basketball and baseball during his prep years.

He's probably best known for his exploits in football. As a junior, he was the backup quarterback who came in and helped lead Mona Shores to a miraculous comeback in the 2014 Division 2 state semifinals against Farmington Hills Harrison.

As the senior starting quarterback in 2015, he led the Sailors to a perfect 9-0 regular season, the O-K Black Conference title and a playoff victory, before they lost to rival Muskegon in the Division 2 district finals.

But his first love has always been baseball, and his sights have always been set very high.

"I've wanted to play Division I baseball since I starting playing, ever since I was 4 or 5 years old," Trovinger told another publication when he was still in high school. "I want to play in the big leagues. Being able to play in college will get me one step closer to



that."

Trovinger accomplished the first part of that dream during his junior year of high school, when he accepted a baseball scholarship to Oakland University, a Division 1 school based in Rochester.

He decided to join the recently struggling Grizzlies baseball program, partially because it gave him the opportunity to play as a freshman and start honing his skills against elite college competition.

He's been showing flashes of his potential ever since then.

In the summer of 2016, Trovinger was among a select group of high school baseball standouts who were chosen to play in the East-West All-Star Baseball Classic at Detroit's Comerica Park. He left his mark by hitting a double and scoring a run in that game.

He became the starting shortstop for Oakland University right away in 2017, and performed well enough to be named to the All-

Freshmen team in the Horizon League.

Trovinger put up very good numbers at the plate during his sophomore season in 2018, leading the Grizzlies with 28 RBIs, tying for the team lead with five home runs, and placing second on the squad with 43 hits.

All of that had Trovinger super pumped for his junior season, which would have begun in February.

He was at home over Christmas break, mentally preparing for the start of the season, when everything went wrong.

"One day I woke up with a sore throat, it was very sensitive to the touch, and I was sweating and having hot flashes, just feeling under the weather," Trovinger said.

"Once the upper respiratory infection went away, I felt fine for a day, then I started getting chest pains. When they got too bad I went to the hospital and stayed there for two nights.

"It was really scary. The first thing that came to my mind was baseball season, and possibly not being able to play due to recovery time. I was freaking out about that."

In one respect Trovinger was very fortunate. According to the Mayo Clinic, myocarditis is a very rare condition that in extreme cases "can lead to heart failure, abnormal heartbeat, and sudden death."

The entire experience was a little mind-boggling for a healthy, active young athlete who never had a serious medical problem in his life.

"It was really confusing," he said. "You don't really see people my age go through something having to do with the heart. You see that in elderly people more often. It was pretty freaky."

"It was weird because we have no family history of any heart problems. I didn't see why I had to go through that."

Even when he felt better, Trovinger was told to take it easy and avoid strenuous physical activities for 6-8 weeks. That automatically meant he would miss the start of the college baseball season, which begins in mid-February.

"I was unable to do any sort of training or lifting, and I couldn't

practice with the team," Trovinger said. "It was really frustrating that I couldn't do anything to get myself ready. It sucks being unable to do anything with my team."

After sitting around for so many weeks, he was excited when a cardiologist recently cleared him to play, and he started thinking about hitting the diamond and making up for lost time.

But he also needed clearance at the university level, and that never came.

An Oakland University doctor, being cautious, wanted to wait until a full three months had passed since his bout with myocarditis.

That would have taken him into late March, which is pretty late in the college baseball season.

So Trovinger is stuck with a lot of wondering of what will happen with his 2019 season.

He is still trying to sort things out with his doctors and Oakland, but believes taking a medical redshirt is an option. Taking that route would mean he will have junior eligibility again next spring, when he's actually a senior in college, and could play for two more years.

But he still doesn't know yet where he stands.

"A day or two after being cleared by the cardiologist, I had the meeting with the Oakland doctor," Trovinger said. "He is just being cautious and taking the maximum amount of time for my heart to recover."

Trovinger accompanied his team on its first southern trip of the season, but since then he's been back on campus, focusing on his classes, working part time, and trying to keep his mind off baseball.

But that's tough for him to do, particularly this time of year. Right now he's just looking forward to his next physical exams, hoping he can be cleared to at least get back to a full training schedule.

"I've been driving myself nuts since I got the word that I couldn't play," he said. "All I can think about is baseball. I've been watching a lot of games now that college baseball is on."

"It's depressing not being able to play the game I love. But I know God has a plan, and I'm just trying to take it day by day."



Trovinger gets ready to call signals as Mona Shores' QB in 2015. Photos/Eric Sturr



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At 119 pounds, the Division 4 state champion is...

Robbie Altland of Hart



The senior won the championship match in an 'ultimate tiebreaker'

By Andrew Johnson
LocalSportsJournal.com

After inching closer every season, Hart senior Robbie Altland finally reached the peak at the Michigan High School Athletic Association individual state wrestling finals on March 2.

And he did it in the most dramatic fashion possible.

Altland won the Division 4 state championship in the 119-pound weight class at Detroit's Ford Field by defeating Caden Natale of Hudson in the title match in an "ultimate tiebreaker."

The special tiebreaker was needed because Altland and Natale were tied after three regular two-minute periods and two overtime periods.

The score was 0-0 after one period. Natale led 2-1 after the second period, and the score remained tied 2-2 after the third period, and each of the two overtimes.

In the tiebreaker, Natale got to choose between starting on the top or bottom because he scored the first point in the match. Natale chose to be on top, and if he stayed there for 30 seconds, he'd win the state title, but if Altland scored, he would win.

Altland managed to get to his feet right away. Natale dropped down to try to get a hold on his leg, and that's when Altland managed a two-point reversal to get the victory.

Altland said he wasn't worried in the ultimate overtime, even though he had very little time to score and win.

"Going into the match I was real confident, and during the match, even when I couldn't do the things I wanted to do, I never got nervous or scared. I knew I just had to be patient and keep working."

He said he felt a huge adrenaline rush after the victory, to the point where he had to burn off his excess energy.

"I was just super excited, I couldn't stop moving," he said. "I went and ran right after my match, then I ran back to watch my teammate wrestle. The whole time I couldn't stop moving."

His father, Hart wrestling coach Brad Altland, said he was very confident that Robbie would emerge victorious in the extremely close match.

"When they chose to put Robbie down I was happy," Brad Altland said. "I wasn't 100 percent sure, but I thought he'd get out, just by watching him over the years, and the way the match was going. I was probably about 80 percent sure we were going to get out of that, because mindset is a huge part of it."

For Altland, the state championship was a just reward for all the

hard work he's put in as a four-year state qualifier.

He finished seventh in the state finals as a freshman, third as a sophomore, and second as a junior.

"It's been my journey since I was young," Altland said. "It means everything to me because it's what I've worked for my entire life."

"Wrestling has been my main sport and main thing since I was six or seven. I practice two or three times a week in the offseason and this whole experience is kind of motivational for me, because I know that I can do anything as long as I put in the work."

Altland said he was extra motivated this year, after losing 7-2 in the state title match last season to Hunter Assenmacher of Ida.

"When I lost that match, I remember thinking that I hadn't wrestled my best, and in my head I knew I needed to get back there and prove myself," he said.

Altland won four matches over the two-day state tournament to claim the championship.

He pinned Travis O'Neil of Newberry in his first match in just 34 seconds. He beat Dylan Amm of Lawton 8-2, and then defeated Drew Gebhardt of Manchester 11-0 in the semifinal match.

While Robbie is happy to be a state champion, he knows that it was more than just a personal accomplishment.

"I guess the majority of it is for my teammates and coaches," he said. "They've put so much into me, and even if I wouldn't have won it, I'd still feel pretty accomplished. But I needed them to get over that hurdle."

Brad Altland said there couldn't have been a better way for his son to close out his season and varsity career.

"It would be hard to write a story like that," he said. "He's a four-time All-Stater and achieved 200 wins, before winning a state title in his last match. He's a pretty fortunate kid to accomplish what he did."

Altland said it was special to win a state championship while being coached by

his dad, who also wrestled for Hart back in the day, finishing sixth in the state as a junior and third as a senior.


"My dad sacrificed a lot," he said. "He's been taking me all over the state to wrestle since I was young, and spent a lot of money for me to go to camps. Mentally he's always tried to keep me focused, so I would keep my goals in mind."

Like many athletes who are coached by a parent, Altland said there have been challenging moments.

"Sometimes we got into arguments, but we pushed through it, and I think it will help our relationship in the future, because we were able to get through our arguments, come home and still love each other," he said.



Altland placed at state all four years of varsity wrestling.



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