

Cardinal hockey ready to start

By JOHN RAFFEL

BIG RAPIDS — Mark Nov. 24
Down on your sports calendar.
It will be an historic day for Big
Rapids High School Sports.

The new Big Rapids varsity
hockey squad will open the 1984-
85 season by hosting Kalamazoo
Hackett at the Ferris Ice Arena that
day.

Coach Russ Greenleaf made a big
step Friday to prepare for the opener.
Following a week of practices, Green-
leaf made his first cut, trimming the
number of 26 players who appeared
at tryouts to 17.

The Cardinals will be skating with
a unique 16-game schedule. ALL
games will be at home with the
exception of the post-season
regionals. The schedule could be
increased to 17 if an open date Jan.
26 can be filled.



Russ Greenleaf

Opponents on the first varsity
Cardinal schedule include
Kalamazoo Hackett, Saginaw
Nouveau, Kent County Midgets,
Traverse City, East Grand Rapids
Grand Rapids Christian, Grand
Rapids Northview, Saginaw
Eisenhower, Lowell, Flint,
Kalamazoo Central and Grand
Rapids Kenowa Hills. In late
December, the Cards will be skating
in the Ferris State Christmas
Tournament.

"We're looking at one game a
week for now until the end of
February," Greenleaf said, noting
that games will be on Friday
evenings. Saturday afternoons and
Saturday evenings. A Sunday game
has been scheduled for Dec. 2
against the Kent County Midgets.

"It's a very competitive
schedule," Greenleaf said. "We're
Coming in somewhat blind. We just
Don't know.

Flint Kearsley, Saginaw Nouveau
and Kalamazoo Central are among
the formidable opponents Greenleaf
expects to face.

"I don't see an easy team." The
Big Rapids ice skipper said. "But
our guys are tough. They've been
playing before in the junior hockey
association. We should have a
competitive team. Our guys have
grown up in the local association
like everyone else. We can be as com-
petitive as anyone."

Greenleaf expected to have a
senior-junior dominated team, "But
we're looking at four sophomores,
six and probably seven seniors, four
juniors and three freshman." He
said.

The hockey association's midget
team will be utilized as a "junior
varsity" reserve squad for the
varsity skaters.

"If we keep 17 skaters, we should
have three full lines and two
goalies," Greenleaf said.

It appears the Cardinals will be
practicing six times this week and
five times the following week to
prepare for the season opener.

"We only have two weeks and will
have to teach the kids a lot."
Greenleaf said. We will have to
Spend time teaching some of the
specifics."

One can't say the Cardinal skaters

aren't "sacrificing." Two of their
weekly practices are 6:15-7:30 a.m.
that's no typo—a.m., not p.m.

"Those morning practices are
kind of nice," Greenleaf said. "Sure
it's hard to get up in the morning,
but once the kids are there, they're
ready to go and are enthusiastic."

His team seems to accomplished
plenty during those early morning
workouts. "So far, they haven't had
any problems getting to school on
Time," Greenleaf said. "It's been
working well."

Other practices are 8-9 p.m.
Tuesdays, 5-6 p.m. Thursdays and
after school on Fridays.

"He has a lot of hockey
knowledge," Greenleaf said, noting
that Boyington has played in the
International Hockey League and
other circuits. "He has a goot at-
titude. I think the two of us can teach
the kids a lot about the game during
the season."

As the season opener approaches,
the players themselves are counting
the days.

"They're really enthusiastic,
especially when they heard about
the teams on the schedule."
Greenleaf said. "This is one more
step for them. It's not just junior
hockey. It's like varsity football and
varsity basketball. They're looking
forward to going as far as they can.
They're entrusted and ready to
learn."