

Falcon hitters issue challenge

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

As always, Livonia Stevenson will be the team to beat in the Western Lakes Athletic Association volleyball race this year.

That sounds silly considering the W.L.A.A. is only two years old. Nevertheless, Stevenson is this area's perennial volleyball champion, regardless of league barriers.

But Kim O'Neill, first-year varsity coach at Farmington High, has said what many coaches may think but wouldn't dare say out loud: O'Neill thinks her team can beat the mighty Spartans this year.

"We are hoping to. I think it looks pretty good," she said. "I really think this is the year we can beat Stevenson."

to handle it. After graduating from Livonia Churchill in 1980, where she was a three-year standout on the Chargers' volleyball team, O'Neill took her talents to Schoolcraft Community College where she played for two years and competed in the National Junior College championships both years. In 1981, when Schoolcraft was second in the nation, O'Neill earned the Best Defensive Player Award in the national tournament.

Last year, O'Neill played for Eastern Michigan University. She hopes to earn her bachelor's degree in accounting from E.M.U. this year.

"I'm really excited about this season. This team is really enthusiastic and talented," she said.

"She's so tall and very aggressive," she said.

The Falcons have eight juniors, seven of whom played for O'Neill last year on the JV, and three seniors on the roster.

"Hitting and serving are our best strengths," said O'Neill. "Defense and passing were the weaknesses last year. I think we have made improvements in both areas this year."

The Falcons began their season Dec. 14 with a victory against Novi. They next play Wednesday, Jan. 4 at home against Northville. The big test comes Monday, Jan. 9 as the Falcons host Stevenson.

Harrison won all of three games last year and finished dead last in both the Western Lakes conference and the Lakes Division. Shortt, thus, isn't expecting any miracles in his first year.

"WE ARE looking pretty good, but I'm not one to make predictions," he said. "I think there will be improvement over last year, but it's hard to say. There will be no championship this year, that's pretty sure. I mean, I know what I'm up against."

Shortt said he has been pleased with the performance of what he called his "top eight" players. Those top eight players include six seniors: co-captains Laurie Ambrose and Carla Primo, Deanne Kool, Karen Sklar, Kris Stevenson and Anke Jeutner, an exchange student from Germany.

Also among the top eight are junior Colette Casin and sophomore Jennifer Hughes.

Seniors Nancy Young and Kim Cardecia, along with Kim George should also be contributors for the Hawks.

"I think you have got to keep an eye out for Harrison this year," said Plymouth Salem coach Jeanne Martin. "That Ron Shortt really knows his stuff. He is an excellent coach. I think Harrison will be the dark horse this year."

FARMINGTON HARRISON

O'NEILL HAS coached the junior varsity program at Farmington the past three seasons under varsity coach Ron Shortt. Shortt, a teacher, was transferred to Farmington Harrison this year. Harrison was without a volleyball coach. Shortt figured it best not to coach at one school and teach at another, and took the Hawks' volleyball job.

That left the Falcon job open and O'Neill moved up. She is quite qualified

LEADING THE FALCON talent parade are senior captains Laura Varty and Jill Waterman. Both are very strong hitters and keys to the Falcon offense.

Taira Twomey, another senior, is the Falcon premier setter.

No team wins without defense and juniors Laura Spencer and Maryann Kwasmiejewicz are the Falcons' defensive specialists.

Another junior, Jeany Wischmeyer, has the potential, according to O'Neill, to become the team's best hitter.

As much as Stevenson has been the perennial champion of the area, the Hawks have been the perennial push-over.

Those push-over days may have ended when coach Ron Shortt became the head man at Harrison.

"I think you have got to keep an eye out for Harrison this year," said Plymouth Salem coach Jeanne Martin. "That Ron Shortt really knows his stuff. He is an excellent coach. I think Harrison will be the dark horse this year."

The Hawks will open up their season Wednesday, Jan. 4 at Salem.

Raiders eye title

Continued from Page 1

we have built our hitting up. We hope we can use a little bit of both."

Coch L is counting on Junior Suzette Greenberg and sophomore Laina Shaw to add depth to the squad.

"We have some outstanding specialist players who are really going to help us. All 12 players on the roster will help us. The good thing is that everybody knows their role," she said.

Their role is to be champions. Seems easy enough to remember.

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