

Concentration is key for Olympic hopeful

By CORINNE ABATT

Mark Churella, a 19-year-old Farmington wrestler who finished fourth in the 145-pound class at the Olympic trials last month has formed some definite opinions about what it takes to become a champion. It takes a combination of things. First and most obviously, it takes physical ability. Not quite so apparent at least until the role of Tiger pitcher Mark Fendrich and U.S. Open money winner Tom Feltz is the need for total concentration. Less well recognized but of great importance is money.

Churella, a 1975 graduate of Farmington High School, was an outstanding prep wrestler and football player. A football guard, Churella won the Vince Lombardi lifetime award in 1974. But wrestling has been his main sport ever since he began to work under coach Dick Cook at Farmington.

Wrestling has been my sport and my form of recreation, too," he said.

The Olympic wrestling trials were held in Brockport, N.Y. and for the first time there was a 10-day training camp for wrestlers preparing for Olympic team competition. The first three finishers in each of the 18 weight classes were reimbursed for camp expenses. The others had to pay their own expenses.

He describes Lloyd Kreser, the eventual winner in the 145-pound competition at the Olympic trials, as having "super concentration."

"You get to a certain point in any sport where the competitors have the same physical abilities," Churella said. "Then it comes down to concentration."

Churella remembered winning one match from a wrestler from the Marine Corps, being well ahead in another match, but finally losing because his opponent was able to maintain such a high level of concentration on what he was doing.

"You see wrestlers every day in practice who have the physical and mental abilities and they're tough in practice," Churella said. "But in a meet with people watching, when the pressure is on, they just can't do it."

Staying in condition has never been a problem for Churella. He's never out of shape because he wrestles all year long. The season at U of M runs from the third week in September through the following March. When that was over, he participated in AAU meets to prepare for the Olympic trials. Junior World wrestling competition begins right after the AAU season.

CHURELLA SAID that Cook, his old high school coach, was the most influential person in his wrestling career.

"In a lot of high schools the math teacher or the football coach is also the wrestling coach," he said. "Dick Cook was a national champion wrestler and I was very fortunate to have him as a coach. Now, we are good friends."

While in high school, Churella made a trip to Japan, and took part in several tournaments there. Through his AAU and Olympic trial experiences, he has wrestled

opponents from many foreign countries.

"The Russians are very technique oriented," he said. "They are not into total physical training like the Americans. The Russians and the Japanese do a single leg drag a lot. They like to get down on their knees."

Churella said that there are "only a dozen or so" wrestlers in his class in the country that he knows of who could seriously challenge him. But, at the same time, he knows the dangers of becoming complacent.

"There are always some kids coming up out of nowhere that you don't know about," he said.

The Olympics remain a goal for Churella. He'll be at Montreal as a spectator, learning what he can. He said he'll try for a place on the 1980 Olympics team.

"Sure, I would like to go to the Olympics as a number one man," he said. "There's a guy 21 who made the wrestling team. That's a little old, but usually you can stay with it until you're 26 or 27, if you have the money."

Someday, Churella hopes, wrestling will become a more popular spectator sport in the Midwest.

"Most people here don't really know what the sport is all about," he said. "It's very popular in Oklahoma, Iowa and Pennsylvania. It's almost as popular as football in those places."

"But look at tennis," he added. "Only a few years ago there wasn't much to professional tennis, either. Maybe in 30 years, there will be professional wrestling of high quality."

But for now, Churella is putting all his energies into college wrestling. When the 1980 Olympic torch is lit, he'll be 23 years old — a good age for a gold medalist.

Farmington's two Conroe Mack Class D League teams, the Reds and the Blues, continue to play winning sandlot baseball this summer.

Manager Dan Marston's Reds lead the new-team league with an 8-0 record. Last Monday, the Reds pounded out 27 hits in 10 innings to post a double header victory over Cranbrook. Farmington won the first game, 12-2, and then took the nightcap, 11-0. Both games were called after five innings in accordance with the league's mercy rule.

The Farmington Blues, managed by Dick Rettig, took a double header from Walled Lake Central 5-4 and 9-4. The Blues are in third place with a 6-3 record.

Reds pitchers Dave Duro and Bob McKenna were standouts in the double header victory over Cranbrook. Duro tossed a four-hitter in the opener, striking out seven and walking one. McKenna, who has given up just two earned runs in 30 innings of work this summer, three-hit Cranbrook in the second game. He fanned eight and walked none.

Bob Jenko, Farmington's second baseman, was a batting star in the first game. He went four for four, including three singles and a double, and knocked in three runs. Teammate Dave Heberholz, an outfielder, drove in three runs with a triple double and single.

In the second game, Farmington supported McKenna with 14 hits, including a grand slam home run by Dan Marston. Jenko continued to have a hot bat, collecting three hits in four trips to the plate.

The Reds also play in the Suburban Federation League, where they sport a 6-1 win-loss record.

Good pitching also seems to be the trademark of the Farmington Blues. Against

Walled Lake Central, Gregg Mathiak tossed a five-hitter in the opener. Mathiak, who starred at Farmington Harrison High last spring, struck out eight and walked five. Teammate John Zamboli drove in two runs with a triple and a single.

In the nightcap, Mark Bentley, who pitched at North Farmington High, allowed Central just two hits. He struck out five and walked six. Danny Scanlon, Bob McElb, Chris Kallgren and Bentley each slammed a triple for Farmington, which had 14 hits.

The Reds will play floater in a Pontiac Conroe Mack Class B League game at Oakland University on Thursday (July 8) at Oakland University. Game time is 6:30 p.m.

Mark Churella demonstrates a wrestling hold with friend Jim Simmons. (Photo by Cyd Abatt)

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Little Caesars ace shines

Farmington Little Caesars, managed by John Stenson, had an old score to settle with Wendy's Restaurant in the Livonia Adray Baseball League.

Earlier this summer, Wendy's bested Farmington on a one-hitter, Last Friday, Farmington got even by beating Wendy's 1-0, on a fine one-hitter by Mike Thomas in the first game of a double header. Wendy's won the second game, 11-4, to drop the Farmington club to 2-1 in Adray play this summer.

Thomas, a right-hander who pitched for North Farmington High School last spring, looked very sharp, allowing just one hit — a scratch single — while striking out eight and walking none. He had a no-hitter going until the seventh inning when Wendy's Mike Tyranski singled up the middle.

Everybody was pulling for Thomas to get the no-hitter," Stenson said. "He was throwing his fastball on the outside corner, and he kept it low. I don't think he had two pitches up high."

Randy Wroten, contributed to Farmington's efforts by collecting two hits, including the single which drove in the winning run in the third inning. Wroten also

helped save Thomas one-hitter by making two picture catches in center field.

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Adray All-Star Game

The Detroit Adray All Stars defeated the Livonia Adray All Stars, 8-2, before 2500 fans at Livonia's Henry Ford Field last Sunday. Mike Henry, who plays for Detroit Luchington, was the winning pitcher.

Two Farmington players, Jim Vogt and Sherman Stenson, played in the game. Vogt played third base and recorded a double in two trips to the plate. Stenson batted once and was hit by a pitch. Bill Matthews of Clarkston was a pitching standout for Livonia Adray. He pitched only one inning, striking out two and getting the third batter on a pop up.

Walled Lake contest next

4th inning letdown spoils Legion's efforts

Farmington's American Legion baseball team missed a chance to move into second place after 18th District standings by drop-

ping a 14-0 decision to Berkley last Monday night at Farmington's Drake Park. Berkley scored 11 runs in the fourth in-

ning to overcome a 5-2 deficit and win the game. Berkley's victory lifted it into second place behind front-runner Waterford (Chief Justice). Farmington fell to third place with a 5-11 Legion record.

"It was just one of those nights," said Farmington manager Wally Christensen, whose team outlasted Berkley, 15-12, in the game. However, Berkley strung together seven hits in that disastrous fourth inning. Mike Lynch provided the big blow, a grand slam home run. Teammate Mike Sed had two hits, and two runs batted in.

Farmington pitcher Kevin Delp left the game with two on and Berkley leading, 6-5. Larry McKee pitched the rest of the game.

"Our problem seems to be our pitching," Christensen said. "We lack depth in starters, and we don't seem to have that big stopper in relief that hitting has been good. Like Lundy — we had eight runs and 15 hits. You can't knock that. Those were legitimate hits."

Farmington opened the scoring with three runs on five hits in the first inning. With one out, Bruce Sher singled and moved to second base on Randy Meyer's single. Both runners scored on Jay Cummings' double. Cummings took third on Rob Patrick's single and scored on Delp's single.

Farmington added two more runs in the fourth, when Meyer reached first on an error, and advanced to second on Cummings' single. Both runners moved up on Patrick's hit, and scored on Delp's single.

The loaves picked up three more runs in the seventh. Patrick and Marty Bone each singled. Rock Miller's single knocked in Patrick. Fred Stenady's single scored Bone, and Dick Radatz' single drove in Miller.

Farmington's batters have been recording some lousy averages this summer. For example, Meyer was batting .500 in four games. Delp has been hitting .000. Radatz .444, Cummings .380, and Sher .300.

Farmington plays next at Walled Lake on July 11. The first game of the double header begins at 7 p.m.

Softball stars to play at SHS

Softball star Eddie Feigler and his Livonia team, known as The Kings and His Court, will play a benefit softball game on the Southfield High School football field at 6:30 p.m. July 15. The Feigler team will take on the Southfield All Stars, consisting mostly of area coaches.

Tickets, at \$1.50 for adults and \$1 for children under 13, may be purchased at the door. Proceeds from the game will benefit Southfield High's athletic fund.

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Farmington's Larry McKee loses his hat as he delivers a pitch against Berkley. (Staff photo by Craig Newman)