

# Catholic Central gridders hit the big time

BY DAVE SCHWARTZ

As you pull up on Breakfast Drive in Redford Township you see a blue sign proclaiming: "Catholic Central High School, est. 1928, Basilian Fathers."

It's the home of the number-one rated football team in the state.

Things have changed at this institution. The remnants of past times when the school was on Outer Drive in Detroit are all but gone.

This is a special year for coach Tom Mach's Shamrocks. Oh, CC has had several good, if not great, football teams in the past. They've had the Ruzdinski brothers and Alan Mitchell and other famous grid names scattered in there.

But ask people about Catholic Central's two most famous athletes and you get the same answer — Frank Tanana in baseball and Tom Lagarde in basketball.

CC has been known for its baseball, basketball, wrestling and so on. The football program has never been hunting by any means, but it is finally emerging from the shadows.

Catholic League football has usually been dominated by Brother Rice or an occasional Harper Woods Notre Dame. It's not that CC wasn't tough. It's just that people didn't realize that Shamrock football was equal to other CC sports.

But not this year. It's blue and white, fight, fight, all the way to the exclusive top of the Class A ratings.

"Meet the Challenge" reads the slogan on the CC football program. They have, and how.

The Shamrocks, undefeated going into their Class A playoff game with Dearborn Fordson last weekend, earlier rolled over tough Detroit DeLaSalle at the Silverdome for their first Catholic League championship since 1960.

"It's great that we're finally getting some recognition," said Mach, as his Shamrocks scrimmaged on the practice field.

Mach doesn't look like your typical Catholic League coach and the Shamrocks don't look like your typical Catholic League team. Mach (rhymes with sack) is youthful, a man who it would appear could still go out and play football with the kids and show them a few things.

His team is of surprisingly average size as

best linemen in the Catholic League.

Aaron Roberts and John Utter are stalwarts in the Shamrock's potent running attack. Roberts, a tailback with sprinter's speed, is only a junior. Tim Geran, Pat Wheeler, Mike Renkiewicz and Jim Govan anchor the ultra-tough defense.

But there are a host of stars for CC. Mach couldn't emphasize enough the Shamrocks

thinking of football being a team effort. And CC indeed looks and practices like a team, and a special team at that.

Players and coaches combine to make a lively practice where all participate. The team feels that the sacrifice of hard work is well worth it.

"We play as tough a schedule as anybody in the state," said Mach. "We found out what kind of team we had early, when we had to play Ypsilanti and Flint Southwestern back-to-back."

"Ypsilanti is always tough. They hit you hard. We beat them and then had to go up against Flint. We were down 13-0 at the half. In the locker room, we told them that it was there, they had to go out there and show what kind of people we had."

"Mike (Lewis) sat out the first half. He was sick. But he said he was going to play the second half, he went out there and it gave us a tremendous lift. We dominated the second half completely. That was a real character-builder."

"Every week is a big one for us. We can never let down. The Brother Rice win was great, of course. So was beating Noije Dame. Each week was a big challenge."

if you tell the kids that discipline and character are important, then you go out and lose, they'll stop listening. That's why I'm lucky. I've got a great group of kids to be associated with. I can't give them enough credit.

"They believe in themselves. Saying you do is actually bad, but these kids associate with. I can't give them enough credit."

"To us, winning is secondary to the kids themselves."

Mach used the phrase "the best" freely in describing his team, associates and fans. "My coaching staff is the best around," he said. "We're always prepared to play, every week."

"I especially want to credit our defensive coordinator, Rick Coratti. We've always had a great defense and Rick does a super job. The Catholic League emphasizes defense to a big degree, every team."

Mach also heaped praise on the rest of the staff — Dan Mach, Dan Fortune, John Salter, Jim Gibbons, Tom Luchenbill and Jim DeJaeger.

A walk-on defensive back at Wayne State in his college days, Mach started his career as an assistant at Southgate Aquinas. This is his fourth year at CC. He posted a gaudy 19-6 overall record in his first three years.

"My goal when I applied for the job at CC was to be competitive for the state," recalled Mach. "I knew that CC was that type of a school. They always want to be number one."

"Our co-captains, Mike Lewis, Pat Moug, Jim Govan and Dave Yudasz, provide us with a great amount of leadership. We're a very close-knit group. We never give up, no matter what the situation."

"These kids all have tremendous attitudes, just tremendous. We've never had a discipline problem in the four years that I've been here. The kids go out there and do their best every play, our second and third guys, all of them."

The Shamrocks have several stars in their run-oriented, tough defense, attack.

Quarterback Mike Lewis is three-year starter. Not big for a QB, Lewis is a leader, one of the cogs that is responsible for CC's success.

Mach called Pat Moug and Dave Yudasz "the

The Farmington YMCA Gym J's captured 19 of 20 events enroute to its second straight Class III gymnastic meet win, 171.25-156.95, over the Port Huron YMCA.

Kirsten Tomlin in the 10-and-under and Katy Finn in the 14-and-over won all five events in their age groups. Holly Thurston was a winner in the uneven parallel bars, floor exercise, vault and all-around in the 10-12 age category, with teammate Lisa Chalmers taking the balance beam.

In the 12-14 years old competition, Jill Birsa finished first in the bars, beam, floor exercise and all-around and was second in the vault.

The Gym J's swept the top three places in seven of the 20 events and the top two in four more.

## Local drivers join road rally

Three Rochester area drivers were among the finishers in the Press On Reggaeless Rally, Nov. 2 and 3 in the Upper Peninsula.

Scott Harvey, of Oakland Township, placed second in the rally. Larry Schmidt, of Rochester, finished third. Michael Beel, of in Rochester, was the 22nd finisher.

The 600-mile rally began and ended in Houghton. Drivers from around the U.S. and Canada competed. The winner was a driver from Langley, British Columbia. The Sport Car Club of America sponsored the event.

Harvey was accompanied by navigator Randy Graves of Long Branch. Joe Andreini of St. Clair Shores navigated for Schmidt. David Conlin of Birmingham assisted Beel.

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