

## Girls' gymnastics preview

## Champs feel the heat

By TOM BAER

North Farmington's girls' gymnastics team has a problem reserved for winners.

"Everybody's out to get us," said North coach Mary Johnese, who guided the team to a 14-0 dual-meet record and a first-place tie with Ludington in the state meet last year.

"It's sort of rough on us," Johnese said. "Everybody wants to beat North because we're the state champs. Some of the pressure the girls are giving themselves. They haven't lost in two years, and they don't know how to react to a loss."

With five girls back from last year's squad, North's chances for a repeat of last year look pretty good. Two of those returning — junior Kathy Temple and senior Suanne Casillo — were stand-outs in last year's state meet.

Temple, who has a long gymnastics background in the Steve Whitlock program, was North's strongest performer in last year's state meet. She won the all-around competition, which includes skills from the four other individual events, with 34.65 points, and finished first on the uneven parallel bars.

"She's pretty strong in all areas, but her best event is the uneven parallel bars," Johnese said. Casillo didn't have her best meet at state last year, but still scored on the bars with 16.60 points for a fifth-place finish.

"Both Kathy and Suanne are very hard workers," Johnese said. "They both have the same attitude — they don't like to lose. So they really work. That attitude carries over to the other girls on our team."

**SOME OTHER** North prospects include seniors Kim Garver (all-around) and Lale Akman (floor exercise and vaulting), and junior Jody Schupbach (all-around).

"We'll be a contender if we don't have any injuries to our top people," Johnese said. "An injury would hurt us now because we have a small team and four of our girls are beginners."

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"Probably our weakest event is the bars. We have two super-strong girls, Kathy and Suanne, on bars. But the others are not quite there. Our strongest events are floor exercise and balance

beam. We're average in vaulting."

North Farmington begins its season Jan. 14 at home against Walled Lake Central. North and Ludington will compete in the Dearborn Invitational on Jan. 19.

Troy High, Bloomfield Hills Lahser and East Lansing — all top teams — are also on North's schedule.

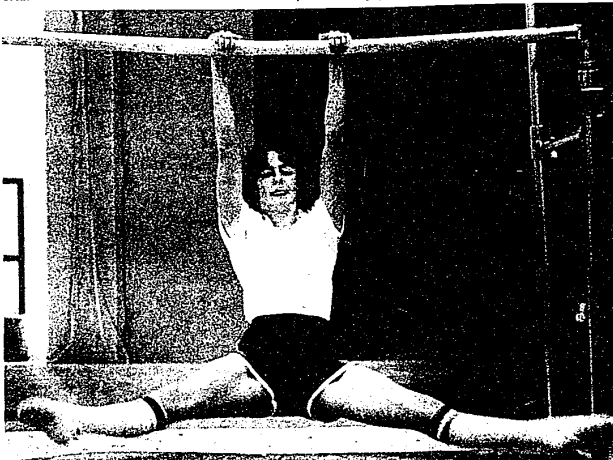
At Farmington, Harrison, the girls' gymnastics team consists of seven girls — very much down from former years," according to coach Kim Dennis.

But Harrison has strong competitors in seniors Janet Thibodeau and Kathy Purcell and junior Dorene Keenan. This

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MARY JOHNESEE: "It's sort of rough on us. Everybody wants to beat North because we're the state champs."



Kathy Temple, one of the best high school gymnasts in the state, works out on the uneven parallel

Suanne Casillo will play an important role for North Farmington's girls' gymnastics team this year.

## Prep volleyball preview

## FHS spikers sting rival

By C.J. RISAK

Farmington's volleyball team lived up to coach Ron Shortt's expectations by opening the season with victories Farmington Harrison and North Farmington in the city tournament Monday.

The Falcons and North met in the finals and the Raiders held an early advantage by winning the first game in the best-of-three match, 15-11. Farmington rallied, however, to edge North in the second game, 15-13, and swept to the tournament championship with a 15-7 victory in the decisive third game.

"We relied heavily on our bench and they did a super job for us," Shortt said.

North advanced to the finals by whipping Harrison in straight games, 15-3 and 15-6. The Hawks took Farmington the full three games before falling to the Falcons. Harrison won the first, 15-10, but Farmington won the next two, 15-9 and 15-8.

Shortt is looking for big things from his Falcons this season. Now in his fourth year at the helm (and the only volleyball coach

Farmington has ever had), Shortt has watched his team improve every year. He sees this year's squad as the best yet.

"We've gotten better every year," Shortt said. "We were tied for third in the ILL (inter-Lakes League) last year and were fifth two years ago. We hope to be better this year."

"This is the best group I've ever had. I can't really tell how good they are, not until we get into the heat of competition."

**TWO PLAYERS** Shortt will be relying on are senior Julie Tadrzynski and junior Jean Zuhorski. Both were first team picks on the All-Conference team last season.

But Shortt has plenty of other experienced players returning as well. Lisa King and Isabelle Smith join Tadrzynski as senior members of the team with two years of varsity experience. Erica Stevens is a senior in her second year on the squad.

Stacy Kinjorski and Cathy Christensen round out the top seven players on team. Both are juniors.

Livonia Stevenson, the defending ILL

champs, are Shortt's pick as the top team in the conference. "They are a tough school. If you can beat them, you got to be good."

North, under the guidance of Sandy Lubienicki, recorded its first winning season ever last year with a 10-8 mark. Five starters return from that team.

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NEXT GAME: SAT., JAN. 12, 7:30 p.m.  
Atlanta Chiefs  
FOR TICKET INFORMATION: 338-9116



Farmington's Cathy Christensen sets up the volleyball for a spike during last Monday's game. (Staff photo by Randall Lee Borst)