

Red-hot North Farmington wins district title

By BRAD EMONS

North Farmington coach Jerry Maxwell called it "the biggest day for me in baseball."

He was simply "ecstatic" after his team captured the Class A district crown late Saturday afternoon at Plymouth Salem with a 5-2 victory over Milford Lakeland.

The Raiders, 18-5 overall and winner of 16 of their last 17 games, now advance to the regional this weekend at Wyandotte Roosevelt.

Maxwell's squad advanced to the district finals with an 11-4 semifinal win over host Salem early Saturday. In the

other semifinal, also played Saturday, Milford Lakeland knocked out cinderella Farmington, 6-0.

"I'm so happy," said the North Farmington coach. "I can't tell you how happy I am."

Maxwell's jubilation came as a result of solid pitching from Matt Ruud and Rich Nutter.

Ruud struck out 11 and held a power-hitting Salem team to five hits in the opener. Nutter, a senior righthander, limited Lakeland (17-6) to six hits in the championship game. He also received stellar play from his defense in the field.

"This man (Ruud) can pitch," Max-

well said, "and Nutter had excellent control. They were both fantastic."

"PITCHING and defense is the key. In the second game we played beautiful. My guys were together."

The Raiders jumped on Lakeland pitcher Bill Hallman, who went into the game unbeaten, for three runs in the second inning.

Third baseman Jim Carrier led off with a walk and Nutter, surely the MVP for the day, followed with a single. Carrier scored on a Lakeland in-field error. John Leitch then drove home Nutter and Pat Carney with a double up the gap in right center field.

North made it 5-0 in the third when Nutter singled home catcher Rex Baker.

Meanwhile, Nutter retired the first nine Lakeland batters and was able to weather any potential storm.

He had three of North's five hits while Hallman, who suffered the loss on the mound, had two singles for Lakeland.

In the first game, North took advantage of walks and miscues by the Salem defense.

The Rocks jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the first inning against Ruud when Mike Woodard singled home lead-off man John Heikowski.

Salem starter Pat McNamara, who went into the semifinal with a sparkling 7-1 mark, was victimized by walks and "Texas League" type hits.

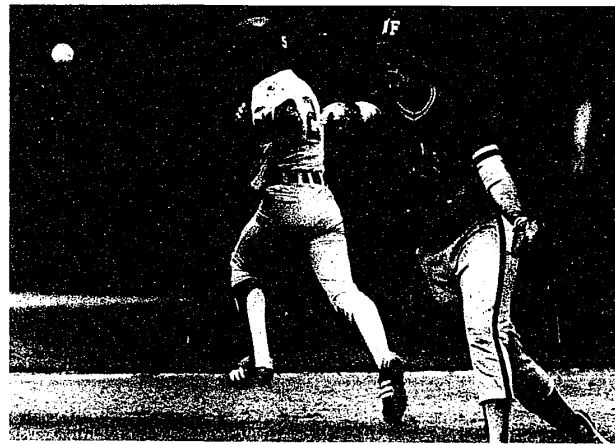
He was touched up for three runs in the second inning. Scott Williams' two-run double gave North a 2-1 edge and Chuck Kott made it 3-1 when he singled home another run.

In the fourth inning, Salem cut the margin to 3-2 as Heikowski singled home Greg Etienne. Ruud, however, got out of trouble with two runners aboard as he got McNamara on a ground out.

In the bottom half of the inning, Scott Williams walked with two out and scored on a fielder's choice.

Salem retaliated in the fifth with one run. Etienne, who had two of Salem's five hits, doubled and scored on an error.

Nutter then broke the Rocks' back in the bottom of the fifth with a slicing two-run homer just inside the foul pole near the 300-foot sign in right field to make it 6-4.



Rich Nutter of North Farmington scorches another Salem rally as he throws a runner out from his

third base post. His two-run homer helped North Farmington to an 11-4 semifinal win over the Rocks. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

"That was a big hit for us," said Maxwell. "Salem seemed a little down after that."

One swing of the bat, however, can change the complexion of a game at Salem's small park.

For instance, Woodard sent a drive up against the fence with two men aboard in the sixth that Carrier hauled in.

That seemed to take the steam out of the Rocks, who yielded five runs in the bottom half of the inning.

"IT WAS not our best performance," said Salem coach Brian Gilles. "We had too many walks, too many left on base and too many misplays defensively."

"We struck out too much, and you can't do that and win the district. The key is to get guys on base and move them. We didn't drive the ball today."

Salem ended the year with a 14-7-2 record. North made five errors.

"We played sloppy defense in the first game and made some mistakes, but we try to be aggressive and force the other teams into mistakes," said Maxwell. "That's the name of the game."

"I told my team between games that we had to play better defense."

FARMINGTON-LAKELAND

Pitcher Mark Brown of Lakeland one-hit Farmington for the second straight time this year in a 6-0 victory.

It was the third win in a row this season for Lakeland over the Falcons, both members of the Inter-Lakes League. Brown retired the first 13 Farmington batters and faced only 24 batters.

Lakeland scored two runs in the first off Falcon starter John Dunn and then scored an insurance run in the fourth before exploding for three runs in the seventh.

"WE HIT the ball, but he (Brown) did a good job," said Farmington coach Tony Wenson.

"We didn't beat ourselves," he said. "Before we lost to them because of errors."

Third baseman Greg Konis collected the only hit for Farmington. That came in the sixth to break up Brown's no-hit bid.

Farmington bowed out of the tourney with an 11-9 mark. The Falcons were considered a longshot to win the crown. They had upset Plymouth Canton, 5-3, to reach the semifinals.



Brian Gilles tries to get things going for Plymouth Salem as he shouts encouragement from his third base coaching spot. Gilles' squad finished with a 14-7-2 record. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

Harrison tennis squad still second best in WSL

Northville, winner of four of seven flights, came away Wednesday with the Western Six League tennis title by capturing the league meet hosted by Plymouth Canton.

The Mustangs, who tied Farmington Harrison for first place during the regular season with a 5-1 mark, repeated for the 5th straight year. Northville totaled 17 points.

Canton, 6-4 in league duals, pulled off a mild surprise by finishing second in the meet ahead of the Hawks. The Chiefs had 12 points to Harrison's 11.

Livonia Churchill, Walled Lake Western and Waterford Mott rounded out the field with one point apiece.

"When the league comes we're usually pretty good," said Canton coach Jim Hayes. "The improvement was great this year. This is the best bunch of kids I've had."

Canton's only individual winner was junior Bob Adams at No. 4 singles. He outlasted Harrison's Rick Kovan in the finals, 1-6, 6-4, 6-4. Adams rolled to straight set wins over Churchill's Tim Irons and Mott's John Durocher.

Harrison won two flights.

Senior Nancy Green showed her male counterparts how to play the game at No. 3 singles. She romped to an easy 6-1, 6-1 win over Northville's Jeff Williams in the finals. Green downed Kevin

Johnston of Canton in the semifinals, 6-2, 6-3.

DAVE HAWTHORNE and Mark Miller captured first place at No. 2 doubles. They downed Northville's Kevin Swayne and Jim Herbel in the finals, 6-3, 6-1. In a first round match, Swayne and Herbel outlasted Canton's Pete Lee and Mark Roberts, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

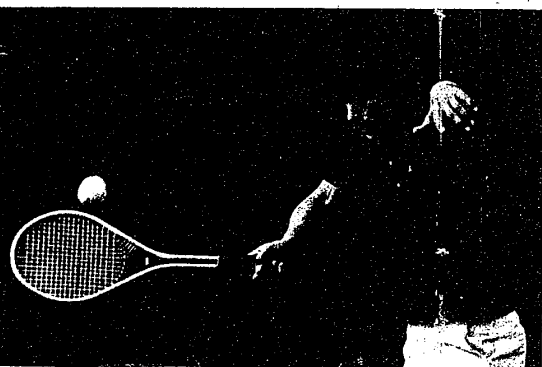
Canton junior Greg Kinnel played a strong match before in the finals at No. 2 singles. He was beaten by Doug Horst, 4-6, 7-6, 6-2. Kinnel, a steady baseline player, reached the finals with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over Dave McDevitt.

Barry Ouellette was extended in the No. 1 singles final. The Northville netter, a contender for the Class A crown, managed to get by Harrison's Dave Brady, 6-1, 4-6, 6-1. It was the first time in three tries that Brady had gone three sets with Ouellette.

In a semifinal match, Ouellette downed Canton's Bob Young for the third time this year, 6-1, 6-3. In another close final, Northville's Andy Orlando and Ian Wild held on to win the No. 1 doubles crown over Canton's Jeff Garrity and Curt Crocker, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. The Canton duo reached the finals with a three-set triumph over Harrison's Andre Berk and Narenda Blagat, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

The No. 3 doubles title went to Northville's Les Neal and Dale Fisher. They beat Canton's Greg Crago and Steve Jones in the finals, 6-3, 6-4.

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Dave Brady of Harrison made the finals of the No. 1 singles flight in the Western Six

League meet last week at Plymouth Canton. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

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