

Sports

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(F1C)

All-Observer runners best in state?

By C.J. Flisak
staff writer

WHEN ARE THOSE bigwigs at the Michigan High School Athletic Association office up in Lansing going to get smart and stage the cross country state meet where it belongs?

Namely in western Wayne County, or at least somewhere close by.

What area deserves it more? Take a look at some of the athletes the Observer-area coaches selected to the All-Area cross country team at a meeting last week.

Redford Catholic Central's team smoked every other squad in the state in claiming the Class A title. And there were lots of other outstanding performances by the boys. Nine of the 10 chosen to the All-Area team placed among the top 45 in their respective races at state meet.

And three finished in the top 10.

The area's female runners also sparkled. Eight of the 10 selections finished among the top 50 at state meet.

If that isn't enough to convince the MHSAA that this area is just about the best there is in the state for cross country talent, what would it take?

Here's the coaches' picks for this year's All-Observer cross country team, boys and girls. Incidentally, this year's squad is truly an All-Observer team, with the inclusion of Farmington school athletes that make it more competitive than ever.

Catholic Central's state title earns the boys first discussion rights.

ALL-OBSERVER BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

Steve Shaver, Redford Catholic Central, junior; CC coach Tony Magni called Shaver "a runner who thrives on competition."

Shaver lived up to that estimation by overcoming some early season injuries and peaking at the state meet to finish fourth (15:48). He was the Catholic League and Haslett Invitational champion and took fifth at the regional.

Shaver's best time was 15:34 at the Sturgis Invitational. He was named All-State and All-City for the second time and All-Catholic for the third.

Marty Hegarty, Catholic Central, junior; Hegarty ran close behind teammate Shaver in placing seventh at state (15:54). That clocking came after a season's-best performance at the regional (15:37.5).

"He's one of our most talented runners," Magni said. "He came on strong for the big races."

Hegarty has been named to the All-State, All-Catholic and All-City teams twice each.

Jim Cauzillo, Catholic Central, junior; Cauzillo might be a star on any other team but at CC he's just one of a long line of first-rate runners.

Cauzillo earned a "most improved runner" description from Magni. "He matured nicely through the year," Magni continued, "and was a key to our performance in the finals."

Cauzillo's state finals performance was a 21st. He was also seventh at the regionals and sixth at the Catholic League, and earned All-Catholic and All-City accolades.

Mark Anderson, Catholic Central, senior; It wasn't just swift feet that Anderson contributed to CC's success this season.

"He was one of our senior leaders," said Magni. "He led our team in the early part of the season when we were struggling with injuries."

Anderson also did a lot of leading with his feet. He placed third at the Shrine and Haslett Invitationals, fifth in the Catholic League, 14th at the regional and 44th at the state. Anderson was named both All-Catholic and All-City for the second time.

Ken Dubois, Livonia Stevenson, senior; Dubois ran up a record while at Stevenson that will be difficult to beat.

The record — maybe, but it would be difficult. Dubois won every dual meet he ran in during his three-year career. This year's titles include first at the Livonia city meet, Schoolcraft Invitational, Spartan Invitational, Redford Union Invitational and the Western Lakes Athletic Association title meet.

Dubois placed sixth in the state with a 16:06 clocking and was named to All-Western Lakes Activities Association (WLAA) and All-State honors.

Doug Plachta, Livonia Churchill, junior; Plachta charged to a 17th-place finish at the state finals and, together with teammate Don Miller, gave Churchill a strong one-two combination.

Plachta's best clocking came in a third-place finish at the Redford Union Invitational (16:26). He placed third in both the WLAA and city meets and was fifth at the Schoolcraft Invitational and in the regionals.

"He came on strong as the season progressed," said coach Dave Westover.

Don Miller, Churchill, senior; Miller won five of

Honorable Mention, more pics page 2C

Mercy steals Catholic title

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Sarah Basford knew she could make the shots. If only her darn knees would quit shaking.

There was 5:34 left to play in the Catholic League championship game Sunday night at University of Detroit's Calihan Hall. Basford's team, Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy, trailed Livonia Ladywood 28-27. Mercy had trailed the entire game, at one point by 14 points. Basford had not made a single field goal. Now she had a chance to be a hero.

In front of the largest crowd ever to watch a girls' basketball game in Michigan, 3,552, Basford sank the front end of a one-and-one. Then she made the other and Mercy led.

"I was real shaky," Basford said. "I played a bad game. In the second half I just said, 'forget the first half. It's a brand new half.' On the free throw, my legs were shaking and I thought, 'oh, God, I can make the shot if my legs stop shaking.'"

BASFORD MADE five more free throws before the game ended, and Mercy held off the fisty Blazers to win its first Catholic League title since 1977-78.

Once again Mercy (17-2) displayed an uncanny ability to come from behind. Ladywood (15-3) came smoking out of the gates. Emily Wagner canned 10 first quarter points, including three-point plays to begin and end the quarter, and the Blazers led 14-1 after one.

Mercy missed its first 10 shots from the floor.

"The first quarter we got up and then kind of quit playing," said Ladywood coach Ed Kavanaugh. "I hope we play better in the state tournament."

Neither team played up to their abilities.

"THE EMOTION LEVEL was so high I think it affected play tonight," Mercy coach Larry Baker said. He also gave credit to the Ladywood defense.

"They really attacked our guards. They stopped our first pass and it choked off our offense."

Mercy began chipping away. By half-time, Ladywood's lead was cut to seven.

Mary Rosowski, Mercy's often overlooked center, took charge in the second half. She made four steals and scored four points to draw the Marlins within three with a minute left in the quarter.

The lead was soon back to five, however, as Wagner, who was brilliant both offensively and defensively for Ladywood, sped past the Mercy defense to score a layup at the buzzer.

THE BASKET was Ladywood's third of the quarter, all by Wagner. Entering the fourth quarter, Wagner, in addition to holding Basford to just one free throw, had scored 18 of her team's 28 points. She would not score another point.

Baskets by Amy DeMatita and Rosowski to begin the fourth quarter pulled the Marlins within a point and set the stage for Basford.

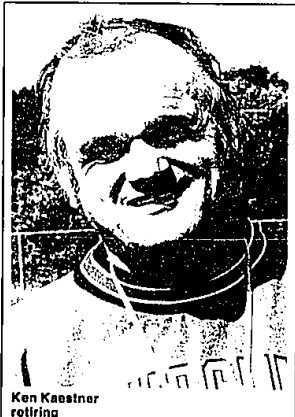
After Basford put Mercy ahead, Ladywood's Char Gowan tied the score with a free throw. Then Mercy's Terri Ford made one of two free throw attempts to put the Marlins up by one with 2:58 left. Rosowski added two more from the charity stripe to put Mercy up 32-29. Ladywood's Tracey LaDouceur made two clutch free throws, and after two more Basford free throws, hit a jumper. With 52 seconds left, Ladywood was within one, 34-33.

Basford missed a free throw, but DeMatita pulled down the rebound. Basford was fouled again. She made one of two, but again, DeMatita hauled in the clutch rebound. Basford (again) was fouled. This time she sank both shots to tie the win.

"We're down one and don't come up with the ball twice in a row — it hurt," Kavanaugh said.

Wagner's 18 points topped all scorers. Rosowski had 11 points and 14 rebounds. Mercy outrebounded Ladywood 15-4 in the final quarter.

Mercy will take on Detroit Cass Tech 7:30 Tuesday night at Calihan in the annual Operation Friendship game pitting the Detroit PSL and the Catholic league champs. Ladywood plays Detroit Western at 6 p.m. in the consolation game.



Ken Kaestner retiring

Grid coach quits post

By Brad Emons
staff writer

One of the most personable and respected football coaches in the area is stepping down after 14 years at Livonia Churchill.

Ken Kaestner announced last week that he is retiring from the game he so dearly loves.

"I've coached for 26 years," Kaestner said. "I considered it when I hit the 25th, but I came back in consideration of last year's kids. We didn't have a good year (1-8) and I couldn't leave it at that."

Churchill started slowly this season, but came on strong, winning its final three games to finish with a 4-5 record.

But Kaestner's coaching career may always be remembered for his 13-12 upset last month of No. 1 ranked and defending Class A champion Farmington Harrison, snapping the state's longest winning streak at 29 games.

"This year turned out to be an unbelievable finish," he said. "I'm leaving it with a great feeling."

KAESTNER'S RECORD at Churchill was 72-59-3. He won four Western Six League titles and had two unbeaten teams (1972 and 1978). His 1978 team made the Class A playoffs.

Please turn to Page 2

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