

# Brake puts halt to critics complaints

By C.J. Rieck  
Staff writer

Other than success on the field of play, perhaps the best thing that could happen to an athlete is to be recognized for his talents.

So why should Greg Brake, the ace of the Western Michigan University pitching staff, be upset after his name appeared so prominently in a story printed in the March 19 issue of Sports Illustrated?

The answer is timing. The story — which concerned scouts and scouting — was written about a Greg Brake of three years ago, a player who had just completed his freshman season at Western.

And it didn't deal with his talent. Rather, the story spoke of his lack of talent.

"IT DISAPPOINTED ME at first," Brake, now a senior, said. "Then I realized what he said happened three years ago. Since then I've developed more velocity."

The story, an excerpt from Kevin Kerrane's soon-to-be-published book, "Dollar Sign on the Muscle," dealt in part with Gary Nickels of the Philadelphia Phillies and his scouting of the 1981 AAIA World Series in Johnstown, Penn. Brake, a Redford Bishop Borgess graduate, was pitching for Detroit's Adray Sound.

"He just happened to be watching my game and was criticizing my pitching," said Brake. "Nickels, using the Phillies' rating system of 60 (low) to 80 (high), called Brake's curve a 71, above average for a major league pitcher."

BUT HE SAID Brake's fastball was only a 67 — about 81 mph — slow by major league standards. He also said his control rated only a 68, with 70 the major league average. Still, that wasn't the worst of it.

"He said I'd never get any faster, that it would be hard to see me any higher than college or the low minors," Brake said, adding that he has improved his velocity since then to about 84 mph. "At first it kind of upset me — especially coming out now."

Certainly the timing could be better for Brake, a lefthander who has profes-

sional aspirations. Whatever Nickels' scouting report claimed (he admitted in the story to panicking Cal Ripken Jr., the American League MVP last season), Brake has flourished at Western.

On the team's Florida trip this spring, Brake collected three straight victories, beating Jackson State (8-2), Missouri (6-2) and Purdue (2-1). He had a 1.35 earned run average and struck out 22 in 20 innings, allowing just four walks.

These kind of stats — together with last season's 6-2 mark — might earn at least a look from some pro teams. But

Brake has received little attention, perhaps because of Nickels' report.

"I'D LIKE TO be drafted in June," said Brake. "I'd like to give the press a shot. Since I started playing my goal like any other kid's was to play pro baseball."

"I'm just like any other kid." It always Brake that scouts put such a premium on speed and care little about pitching.

"In high school you could get by with just a fastball," he said. "You can't here. It doesn't matter if you throw 80 or 100 miles an hour, everyone can hit the fastball."

## 2 Raiders lift area gym team

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"Dona is a very dedicated gymnast," Glitz said. "She gave a lot of herself to the team. She provided outstanding leadership as our captain. Her talents will be sorely missed next season."

Kebrdle's high marks in 1984 were a 9.0 on vault (which she tallied at the Western Lakes conference meet), a 7.9 on bars, an 8.5 on beam and an 8.0 on floor. Her top all-around score was 33.20 and her average was 32.50.

She won league honors on floor, was second on vault and third all around.

Sharon Shifra, North Farmington: After Kebrdle scored a 9.0 on vault at the league meet, the crowd was buzzing. The buzzing turned into a roar when Shifra stepped up and hit a 9.1.

It was a great way for this hard-working senior to wrap up her career. And the smile, or rather the glow, on her face after receiving the 9.1 was as triumphant and infectious an expression as you'd ever want to see. It was suitable for framing.

Glitz's comments about Shifra mirror those of Kebrdle: "Sharon was a good captain and leader. She, too, was very dedicated to her sport and supportive of her teammates. She, like Dona, will be greatly missed."

Shifra and Kebrdle, besides their gymnastic proficiency, helped stabilize a very young Raider contingent. Performers like Lucine Toroyan, Eileen Murtalugh and Lisa Brundie — names you will be hearing a lot about in future years — owe some gratitude to both Kebrdle and Shifra.

Shifra's top scores, besides the 9.1 vault which brought her a league championship medal, include an 8.85 on bars, 7.8 on beam, 8.2 on floor and 33.10 all around.

Katie MacIntosh, Farmington: Speaking of performers whose potential is still untapped...

This multi-talented junior was consistently good this season, but showed flashes of flat-out brilliance, like against North Farmington, Observerland's No. 1 team. MacIntosh was smitten by the flu bug. She seemed to struggle for breath. Yet, she scored in the low-to-mid 8s in every event, earning a 32.75 all-around score, her season's best.

"As a first-year coach, it was great to have a seasoned gymnast like Katie on the team," said Falcon coach Mary Beth Feeney. "She's a consistent performer and a true team leader."

MacIntosh is making her second appearance on an All-Area team. She was the area's premier diver on the All-Area girls swim team.

Her top marks this season were: 8.25 on vault, 8.35 on bars, 8.35 on beam, and 8.35 on floor. Her 8.35 bars score earned her a first-place Lakes Division medal at the league meet.

Beth Raffal, Plymouth Salem: The Rocks were perennial league cellar dwellers in gymnastics until this super sophomore burst upon the scene. Salem was 1-10 last season. This year the Rocks were 6-2. Their top team score last year was 106.85. This year, the team earned a 123.65.

Raffal's talents helped Salem qualify for the state regional meet for the first time in its history. Raffal was also the first Rock gymnast to compete at the state meet.

"Beth is a very consistent performer," said Salem coach Kathi Kinsella. "Every one of her vault and floor scores were qualifiers for regional. All but one of her bar scores also were qualifiers. And she is continually improving."

The sophomore owns every Salem gymnastic record.

Her high marks this season include a 9.0 on beam, which she hit at the Trenton Invitational. She also scored 8.55 on vault, 8.55 on bars, and 8.90 on floor. She was league champ on beam and was fifth best all around with a 32.20 score.

How's that for a first-ever All-Area team?

### SECOND SIX

Tracey Solomon	Harrison
Lucine Toroyan	N. Farmington
Eileen Murtalugh	N. Farmington
Annette Bryce	Canton
Lisa Lovich	Canton
Jackie Huff	Salem

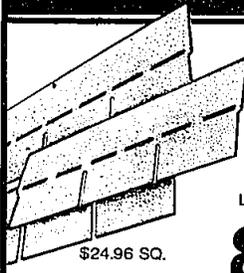
### COACH OF YEAR

Kathi Kinsella, Salem

HONORABLE MENTION: Farmington: Karen Devise, Deb DeWitt; Clareceville: Julie Jacob; North Farmington: Kara Kato, Lisa Brundie, Marlynn Dixon; Farmington: Harrison: Jill Bira, Lauri Runk, Julie Runk; John Glenn: Teri Proffitt, Tanya Verdis; Plymouth Canton: Helene Zahn; Plymouth Salem: Sara Michalik, Debbie Babna, Suzanne Gibbons, Deirdre Flynn.

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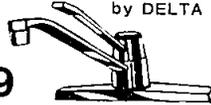
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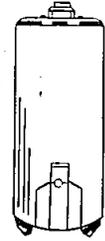
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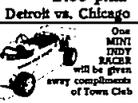
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