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C.J. Risak

Ocelot success: gamble paid off

THERE WERE DOUBTERS. In any new endeavor there always will be. Some dare to envision, while others are too timid to peak.

Mary Gans and Ed Dudek dared to dream of what Schoolcraft College could gain as the first community college in this region to field a women's varsity soccer squad.

The decision paid handsome dividends when the Ocelots traveled to Trenton, N.J., last weekend and came home as the NJCAA tournament finalists.

You doubt the weightiness of the decision that Gans, as Schoolcraft's athletic director, ultimately had to make? Then consider:

- The first time Schoolcraft formed any kind of women's team was last year, when it was treated as a club-level sport;
- Being varsity meant putting more games on the schedule, an increase from 10 to 22;
- Varsity also meant more money, particularly to cover travel expenses, since few of the east coast schools (where most of the NJCAA's women's teams are located) would travel to Michigan for one game, and that against a team of unknown quality.

Also note that Michigan State University, which boasts an athletic budget that would dwarf Schoolcraft's, will not grant its women's soccer club varsity status despite players' pleas and student's petitions.

THE VALUE of a dollar is far greater at a community college, with its limited resources, than at a major state university. At Schoolcraft, it must be spent wisely; if not, it could be lost forever.

All these were weighed by Gans, who approved funding the trip to the NJCAA nationals for the women's club team last year. Coached by Dudek, the Ocelots were 3-3-1 going into the tournament. They lost all three of their matches.

Not exactly the kind of performance to build confidence for the future. Schoolcraft qualified for the tournament because it was the only community college team in the region, giving it an automatic berth.

But Gans, who once coached Schoolcraft's men's soccer team, and Dudek, who also coaches Livonia Churchill's girls squad, know their sport. They knew the team they took to nationals last year was not the best they could muster.

"We were somewhat competitive last year," said Dudek. "We knew, with a little strengthening of our team, we could compete with any team on the east coast."

DUDEK DIDN'T need to convince Gans. "After what we saw," the Schoolcraft AD said of the '83 tournament, "we felt we had the local talent to compete nationally. We went to get the experience, and to see what it would be like."

So he pushed through the team's varsity status, which not only meant more money and more games, but security. That allowed Dudek to start recruiting in earnest.

His efforts landed him a sizable portion of this year's team, including two players who were named to the NJCAA's all-tournament team: Sue Ferguson and Jenny Gans.

Ferguson, from Farmington, racked up 39 goals during the season, including five in the three-game tournament. Gans, from Northville, permitted just four goals at nationals. She's the daughter of the Schoolcraft AD.

THE DOUBTERS never wanted varsity status, nor did they want Schoolcraft to foot the bill for a team trip to New Jersey, especially after last year's showing.

"I never did (doubt our chances)," the elder Gans said, "but some of our people here did. Some people thought we went only because we were the only team in the region."

The Ocelots proved otherwise. They surprised everybody with easy wins over Union CC (Cranford, N.J.) and Morrisville (N.Y.) CC. And they battled Nassau CC (Long Island, N.Y.) until the final minute before falling.

Schoolcraft's performance earned the school more than a line in newspapers nationwide as the team that lost in the NJCAA finals. It also earned Schoolcraft respect. None of its eastern rivals expected much from the midwestern school.

THAT'S CHANGED. As Dudek explained: "Nassau said they want to come here and play us now. Monroe (N.Y.) CC does, too."

"Instead of always going out to find opponents, we'll have teams coming here. We'll have a much stronger schedule, and better home games."

Which in turn will cut travel costs and aid recruiting. It's bound to be the best women's college soccer in the state when the top two NJCAA teams in the nation tangle at Schoolcraft.

What will also aid Dudek's recruiting is the lack of a varsity women's program at any state university or major college.

"My feeling is the four-year colleges have really missed the boat on this," said Dudek.

He's right. A college-bound female soccer player might want to think twice about enrolling at a four-year school with a club-level team. At Schoolcraft, she'll get to the NJCAAs, a tournament frequented by college scouts. That translates into a possible athletic scholarship at a four-year college.

Such a success breeds all sorts of amenities for Schoolcraft: national recognition, greater opportunities for its athletes and a whole bunch of proud students.

And remember that it started with a dare, because one has to dare to be great to achieve it.

Mercy in finals

North, Falcons bow out

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

For the second straight season, Farmington Hills Mercy has ended North Farmington's girls basketball season.

But, cliché or no cliché, the Raiders didn't go down without a fight.

Mercy, state-ranked and No. 1 in Observeland, defeated North 67-50 Wednesday night in the semifinal round of the state Class A district tournament at Livonia Bentley.

But, as Raider coach Greg Grodzicki will tell you, don't let the scoreboard fool you, North gave the Marlins a fight.

"I don't care what the scoreboard says, nobody will play them as tough as we did tonight," Grodzicki said.

He won't get an argument from Mercy coach Larry Baker.

"OVERALL, I'M very happy with our performance. We came out and played hard and eventually took control of the game. Greg is an outstanding coach. He threw some things at us that we hadn't seen before. We pressed like mad and they kept control of the ball. They did a nice job."

Mercy, idled for two weeks, came out of the gates like animals released from a long imprisonment. The Marlins forced 12 first quarter turnovers, they ran the fastbreak — they did everything in the first quarter, basically, except score.

"We made a lot of mistakes for a lot of very logical reasons," Baker said. "We played like we hadn't played in a couple of weeks."

But the points started to accumulate for Mercy when Baker reached into his deep bench and pulled out Sue Scott. Scott scored 8 straight points in the first quarter to help stake Mercy to a 14-11 lead.

Scott continued her hot hand scoring 15 points on the night.

North Farmington was able to stay in the game early largely for two reasons: Patti Kozicki and

Lisa Mummert. Kozicki scored 11 points in the first half (15 on the night to lead North) and Mummert, a talented point guard, was able to get the ball up the floor against Mercy's press and control the tempo of the game.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR North, both got into quick foul trouble. Mummert picked up her fourth foul in the second quarter.

And in that quarter, Mercy rolled off a 21-12 spurt and looked poised to run North out of Livonia. Things got worse for North in the third quarter. Scott scored 7 more points and Mercy forced 11 more Raider turnovers. After three quarters, Mercy was in command, 50-29.

That's when Heather McPhillips began to take charge of things for North. She reeled off 9 points in the final quarter to pull North back within 10, 56-46 with 2:23 remaining.

At that point, Mummert fouled out. Mercy outscored North 10-4 in the final 2 minutes.

McPhillips finished with impressive numbers: 13 points and 10 rebounds, a very nice performance against Mercy's talented front court.

Mary Rosowski was superb for Mercy. She led all scorers with 17 points and she pulled down 11 rebounds. Bev White contributed 13 points, 10 steals and 7 rebounds. Terri Ford made 6 steals.

Mercy (18-3) will play host Bentley for the district championship at 7:30 p.m. Friday. North finishes its season at 14-7.

BENTLEY 63, FARMINGTON 43: Alyse Fortune will always remember this game. Not only was it the last of her brilliant career at Farmington, but she took the beating of her life.

Bentley's quick, aggressive (to say the least) defense manhandled Fortune. Still, she managed 14 points.

Bentley (14-8) was led by Kelly Kowalski (16), Sherri Wolfe (12) and Lonnie Payne (11). Farmington finishes at 9-12.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Mercy center Mary Rosowski (dark jersey) battles a band of Raiders, namely Isaly Butters (44) and Heather McPhillips (52), for a rebound Wednesday night in Mercy's 67-50 victory.

Bentley shocks Stevenson; North prevails

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Tom Lang looked like a genius.

Twenty-three seconds remained in Monday's girls basketball state district open between Lang's Livonia Bentley squad and Livonia Stevenson. Bentley had just knotted it at 56-56 on Kelly Kowalski's first free throw. Stevenson coach Wayne Henry called time out before Kowalski's second.

"Kelly's going to make this," Lang assured his troops during the time out, "but we'll run out of time to play anyway."

Lang then concentrated on defense. "She is

not to get the last shot," the Bentley coach instructed, referring to Stevenson's Lisa Bokovoy. "Deny her the ball."

He switched his tenacious Bulldogs into a box-and-one defense, with four players in a zone and Sheri Wolfe hounding Bokovoy.

EVERYTHING WORKED. Kowalski hit her second free throw and the Bentley defense stalled Stevenson, forcing a turnover when Mary Kay Hussey tried to get the ball to the double-covered Bokovoy. Kowalski intercepted, was fouled by Hussey and hit 2 more free throws to ice the 59-58 victory at Bentley.

The win sent Bentley into the district semi-

finals against Farmington last night (see story page 1C). Stevenson finished at 14-7.

The teams had split two earlier meetings, each winning in overtime. No overtime was needed this time, but the victory wasn't secure until the final buzzer.

"They're awfully hard to match up against," said Lang. The game pitted his team's quickness against Stevenson's size. Bentley started fast and kept it in high gear throughout, jumping to a 13-8 lead after one quarter and expanding it to 23-14 on Kowalski's fifth-straight point with 2:42 left in the half.

BUT STEVENSON answered with 4 points

in a row and trailed by 5 at the half (27-22) before assuming control in the third quarter.

Behind Bokovoy and Joan Fryberger, the Spartans outpointed Bentley 16-4 in the first six minutes of the second half to assume a 38-31 lead. The 6-foot Fryberger poured in 8 points in the stretch and Bokovoy (6-1) added 8, as the pair went to work inside on the smaller Bulldogs.

"I thought in the third quarter, we were up by 7 and in control," said Henry. "We were being very patient on the offensive end. All we had to do was play good, solid defense."

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Ocelots blanked in national finals

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Not one of the seven teams opposing Schoolcraft College at the NJCAA women's soccer tournament expected much from the Ocelots. After all, last year they were hardly competitive, losing all three of their tourney games.

That opinion has not changed.

It changed about the time Schoolcraft was blanked highly-regarded Morrisville (N.Y.) Community College 2-0 in the semifinals. Suddenly a team in its first varsity season was in the finals.

The last hurdle proved too difficult. Schoolcraft battled Nassau CC (Long Island, N.Y.) until the last minute before tumbling 2-0 in the tournament final at Trenton, N.J.

"None of them were really prepared for us," said Schoolcraft coach Ed Dudek, whose team ended its season with a 16-4-1 mark. "I kept an eye on them, but they didn't even bother scouting us."

THAT WAS a costly mistake, because it allowed high-scoring Ocelot forward Sue Ferguson, from Farmington, to roam the whole field. She responded with 3 goals in Schoolcraft's opening 5-3 win over Union CC (Cranford, N.J.) and 2 more against Morrisville.

Ferguson finished with 39 goals this season and was named to the All-NJCAA tournament team. Amy McCauley and Doreen Dudek also scored against Union CC.

"No one marked Sue early," said Dudek. Nassau learned from the mistakes of its predecessors and shadowed Ferguson in the final. Ferguson injured her back early in the second half with Schoolcraft trailing 1-0 and was forced to leave.

That spared the Ocelots' offensive capabilities. Schoolcraft was forced to

press in the late stages and Nassau got an insurance goal with just 1:10 left.

OCELOT GOALKEEPER Jenny Gans also earned a berth on the all-tournament team. She allowed just 4 goals in the three tourney games.

"Our defense was outstanding," said Dudek, praising the play of backs Heather Brda, Martina Millen, Paige Ericson and Sue Bartrum, and midfielders Mary Taylor and Dudek, as well as Gans. "Jenny was outstanding. She made all the right moves, all her decisions were good ones."

The team captured one other prestigious award from the tournament: the Sportsmanship Trophy, for which Schoolcraft was the unanimous choice.

"It shows our kids were good examples on and off the field," said Dudek of the award. "It was a really nice experience for us — no, I shouldn't say nice. It was great."



Sue Ferguson
Ocelot star

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