Rock gymnasts stop Hawks

It isn't often that you get a bona fide grudge match in gymnastics. But, there is absolutely no love lost between Plymouth Salem and Farmington Harrison.

When the two get together, the normally mild-mannered artistic sport of gymnastics turns into a war.

Such was the case Monday night, as previously No. 3-ranked Salem nipped No. 2-ranked Harrison 124.55-123.20.

"There weren't any harsh words between the two teams like there was last year," said Salem coach Kathi Kinsella. "But we pretty much stayed away from each other."

The root of the rivalry dates back to last year when Salem won a close and bitterly disputed meet. Some of the Harrison performers were upset with the judging and words were exchanged between the two teams.

THE HEART of the rivalry, the reason for its lingering intensity, is that the two teams are so evenly matched. If Harrison and Salem met 10 times, it's likely that each team could win five — a rarity in gymnastics.

"We looked in the paper (Observer) and saw that Harrison was ranked second and us third," Kinsella said. "I pointed that out to the girls. I don't think they liked that very much. It kind of spurred them on. My motto all week long was, 'How bad do you want it.'"

Harrison jumped in front after the first event, vaulting. Salem's Jackie Huff (8.95) and Beth Rafail (8.4) placed 1-2, but the Hawks' Tracy Solomon (8.25), Lauri Runk (8.1) and Jill Birsa (8.05) took the next three spots.

Misfortune struck the Hawks on the uneven parallel bars. Lauri Runk, a solid all-around performer, injured her knee and had to be scratched from further competition.

"I can't say that we would have won if she didn't get hurt, and I can't say we wouldn't have," Kinsella said. "All I know is, we deserved to win. The girls really wanted it — not for themselves but for the team. They showed excellent team spirit."

THE ROCKS actually won the meet on bars and on balance beam. The two teams were dead even on floor exercise.

Huff won on bars with an 8.15 and Rafail took beam honors with a solid 8.8. Rafail placed fourth on bars (7.4) and Sue Lally fifth (7.15).

Sara Michalik came through with a personal best 8.15 on beam for Salem. Huff took third on beam (7.95).

Harrison got a 2-3 finish on bars from Jody Solomon (7.6) and Tracy Solomon (7.45). Jill Birsa (7.75) and Tracy Solomon (7.55) placed 4-5 on beam.

Huff (8.6) and Rafail (8.4) went 1-2 on floor, but Tracy Solomon (8.05), Birsa and Julie Runk (7.9) and Jody Solomon (7.65) offset them by finishing 3-4-5.

Huff totaled the highest all-around score: 33.65, her personal best. Rafail was second with a 33.0. Tracy Solomon placed third all-around with 31.3 and Birsa was fourth, 30.5. Michalik was fifth with 30.0.

The (gymnastics) community is going to have to give Plymouth Salem the recognition it deserves," Kinsella said. "North Farmington is No. 1, OK. But people are saying 'Who's Plymouth Salem?' They better start finding out."

The Rocks are a perfect 8-0 on the season. The Hawks, after winning seven straight, are now 7-2.

NORTH FARMINGTON put together its second straight 130-plus team score, beating Plymouth Canton 130.35-114 Monday.

The Raiders (9-0) were paced by a quartet of solid all-around performances, led by Eileen Murtaugh. She won three of the four events, scoring 8.95 on vault, 8.05 on beam and 8.85 on floor. Her 8.45 was second on bars.

Lucine Toroyan won on bars with an 8.65. She placed third on vault 8.25, second on beam (7.95) and second on floor (8.65).

The third prong of the Raiders' attack was Kara Karhu. She placed fourth on vault (8.05), fourth on bars (7.55), third on beam (7.9) and third on floor (8.3).

Lisa Brundle, the fourth-prong, placed fifth on vault (7.95), third on bars (7.65), tied for sixth on beam with Canton's Carol Horvath (7.3) and sixth on floor (7.55).

The Raiders also got a fifth on bars from Marilyn Dunn (7.2) and fourth on beam from Chris Carrier (7.6).

The young Chiefs were led by sophomore Megan McGow. She placed second on vault (8.3), sixth on bars (6.95), fifth on beam (7.4) and tied for seventh on floor with teammate Cheryl Battaglia (7.4).

Ann Healey, another sophomore, placed sixth on vault (7.8), seventh on bars (6.85) and fourth on floor (7.85).

Mary Jo Charron, a freshman, scored a fifth on floor (7.8).

The Chiefs are 0-7 on the season.

FARMINGTON won its second meet of the season beating Walled Lake Central 107.25-93.4.

Katie MacIntosh led the way winning all four events. She scored a 7.95 on vault, 7.1 on bars, 8.15 on beam and 8.35 on floor.

Stacy Swanderski placed second on vault and beam, and took fourth on floor.

Debi DeWitt placed second on floor (8.0) and fifth on both the bars and beam.

Pam Goodhue took fifth on vault and third on bars. Jennifer Cunningham chipped in with a fourth on bars, Karen Runyan nailed a third on beam and Lauren Mistor grabbed a fifth on floor.

Farmington is 2-5.

Harrison's Tracy Solomon scored highest among the Hawks with 31.3 all-around points. But she placed behind Salem's Jackie Huff and Beth Rafail.

photos by BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Jill Birsa strikes an artistic pose on the balance beam Monday night. Her beam routine scored a 7.75 and placed fourth.

Area's best gets thumped

By Brad Emone
staff writer

Ann Arbor Huron turned Tuesday night's basketball showdown with state-ranked Wayne Memorial into a rock concert.

A motley band of River Rats jammed all night — and then some — to the tune of a 77-55 victory over Observerland's No. 1 ranked team.

Visiting Wayne, which suffered its first loss in 14 games, saw nothing but Purple Haze most of the evening.

"We like to run, but the only running we did was going back to catch them," said Wayne coach Chuck Henry. "We didn't do a good job of getting back or rebounding. They had 11 offensive rebounds in the first half."

Huron pounded the offensive boards right from the opening tip against Wayne, rolling to a 20-9 first quarter lead and stretching the margin to 41-27 at halftime.

Pollis Robertson, a 6-foot-6 senior who led Wayne with 19 points, scored the first basket of the third quarter to bring the Zebras to within 12, but they never got any closer. The River Rats went on to outscore their opponents 19-11 in the third quarter before coasting home for the victory.

"WE KNEW THE BOARDS would be big against big Robertson," said Huron coach Harold Simons, whose team is 11-2. "Our game plan was to get on the boards. We like to run so much, but we can't do it unless get the ball off the boards."

Stevie Boyd, a 6-foot-5 forward, led Huron and all scorers with 20 points, including 2 slam dunks.

Dashing guard Alex Polakowski also laid some heavy metal on Wayne, scoring 18 points and dishing off 7 assists. Jim Stark came off the bench to add 10, while 6-5 center Mike Lewis and guard Marshall Hamilton contributed 9 each.

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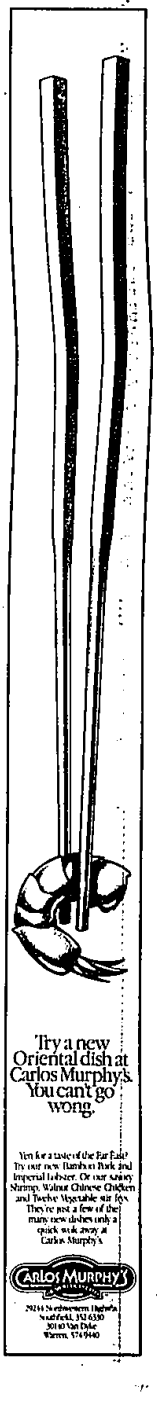
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