

Fortune smiles on Harrison; Raiders, Falcons post victories

By Chris McCoaky
staff writer

It's true: What goes around, comes around.

Last year, during the Farmington Harrison-Plymouth Salem gymnastics meet, fortune smiled on the Rocks. Harrison's top gymnast, Lauri Runk, was injured and Salem won by one point.

Fortune smiled on Harrison this year. Salem's top gymnast, Jackie Huff, was injured (broken foot) and Harrison won by 1.40 points — 119.85-118.45 Wednesday night.

"I really felt bad for Jackie," said Harrison coach Linda Perkins. "I know how she feels; I remember when Lauri got hurt last year. But, it's the nature of the sport, I guess. Salem still had the power to win even without Jackie. They could have done it."

Harrison pulled ahead early in meet taking a 32.1-27.75 advantage after vault. But Salem kept chipping away.

"I thought we were in big trouble going into the floor exercise," Perkins said. "I knew we'd be going up three points. We didn't have the depth on the floor."

Tana Burningham made sure Harrison held onto its lead. The sophomore turned in a first-place 8.4 performance to clinch the victory.

Burningham also placed first in the vault (8.55) and uneven parallel bars (8.5). She took second on the balance beam (8.45).

Tracy Solomon also had a productive night for the Hawks. She placed second on vault (8.35), second on bars (8.35), tied for second on floor (8.25) and fifth on beam (7.45).

Jody Solomon scored all-around for the Hawks, as well. She placed in a tie for fourth on vault (7.6), fourth on bars (7.35), third on beam (8.2) and tied for fifth on floor (7.25).

For Salem, Beth Raffall won beam with an impressive 8.65. She took third on vault (7.8), fifth on bars (6.85) and fourth on floor (8.0).

Becky Talbot also contributed mightily. She tied for fourth on vault with Jody Solomon and teammate Sue Lally (7.6), third on bars (7.5), fourth on beam (7.55) and tied for second with Tracy Solomon on floor (8.25).

Harrison is now 3-0 on the season. Salem is 1-1.

PLYMOUTH CANTON had the misfortune of opening its season against the area's best team, North Farmington, Wednesday night. Final score: North 124.4, Canton 113.6.

But Canton coach John Cunningham wasn't discouraged.

"I refer to us as an iceberg team: you can barely see how good we are," the successful coach said. "We're real young. We're basically a sophomore team. But my sophomores are good. Come see us at the end of the year. You'll be impressed."

For now, though, let the praise go the North. Led by Eileen Murtough and Lucine Torony, the Raiders appear poised to tackle its ninth straight Western Lakes title.

Each of the two All-Area performers won two events. Murtough won the vault (8.65) and floor exercise (8.55). Torony won the bars (7.8) and beam (8.2).

Murtough also placed second on bars (7.7) and second on beam (7.9). Torony placed third on vault (8.0) and second on floor (8.1).

Kara Karhu, another All-Area standout, placed second on vault (8.45), fourth on bars (7.3), tied for third on beam (7.65) and third on floor (8.35).

Canton, saddled with a rash of injuries, was paced by sophomore Darcy Gignac. She placed fifth on vault (7.85), third on bars (7.5), tied for third with Karhu on beam (7.55) and fourth on floor (7.55).

North is 2-1 on the season.

FARMINGTON won't put Wednesday's season-opening meet against Walpole Western in its highlight film, but it'll take it.

"It's just great to say we're undefeated," said Falcon coach Mary Beth Schornhorst.

The Falcons beat Western 94.3-92.85.

Freshman Jackie Dally led the way. She won on vault (8.6), beam (7.7) and floor (7.8), and placed second on bars (6.8).

Pam Goodhue placed third on vault (8.45), third on bars (5.85) and fourth on floor (7.8).

Michelle Wisniewski placed third on floor (6.9). Jennifer Cunningham took fifth on bars (4.95) and Laura DeAngelis placed fourth on beam (5.15).

Continued from Page 1

The Waco Herald-Tribune reported that Briggs and Iba got into an argument, which Briggs and other Baylor players said never took place.

Briggs, however, returned to the team and came off the bench to score 14 points in leading the Bears to a season-opening win at Oral Roberts.

A fifth-year senior, Briggs regained his starting job by the fourth game, but played only three minutes in an 84-61 loss to Vanderbilt.

At the Drake Classic (Dec. 13-14), Briggs was named to the All-Tournament team scoring a total of 35 points.

BUT A WEEK LATER in the Tennessee Volunteer Classic, Briggs played 18 minutes, scoring eight points in a loss to UNC-Wilmington. The next night he did not play at all in a four-point win over Furman.

After the Furman game, Iba was quoted as saying, "He (Briggs) hasn't had a good practice in three weeks."

One Baylor player, who asked not to be identified, said that when Briggs came back after his initial three-day suspension, "he was like a new man."

"Carlos busted his butt in practice, and I don't know why the coaches kept bugging him," said the Baylor player.

"And he (Iba) told us (the seven suspended players) that we didn't have to come back to practice until Sunday (Jan. 5). They just keep messing with everybody's minds."

Mitchell said of Iba, "He had it in for Carlos and me."

"He (Iba) is not always telling truth," Mitchell said. "He's just trying to cover himself."

Mitchell said he was suspended by the NCAA for getting a ride to and

from school last year by then assistant coach Larry Hargett. Mitchell was also penalized because a Baylor coach made too many recruiting visits to his home. Briggs said he was suspended for accepting plane fare home.

THE NCAA INVESTIGATIONS started last February when the University launched an in-house probe into alleged recruiting violations. In wake of the allegations, coach Jim Haller was fired.

Iba was immediately hired after spending eight years at Houston Baptist, where he built a 128-95 record that included three straight 20-win seasons and one NCAA bid. He came to Baylor stressing discipline, tough defense and ball control. Iba is the nephew of former Oklahoma A&M and legendary U.S. Olympic basketball star Hank Iba.

New Yorker Rock Eisenberg, Eric Johnson's former coach at John Jay High, flew into Waco last week on behalf of Winnie Johnson to discuss the NCAA suspensions with Iba and Baylor athletic officials.

"I went down there to let them know that these kids shouldn't be penalized for something that happened last year," he said. "I'm concerned about Eric and all of them for that matter."

Eisenberg said he has spoken with attorneys in New York on Johnson's behalf.

"We've looked into the possibility of a preliminary injunction order (to get the players reinstated) or an irreparable harm suit," Eisenberg said.

Eisenberg added the Briggs-Mitchell affair is tragic. He attended a practice session and met several Baylor players during his two-day stay. The players told him that missing practices wasn't the real reason for Briggs' and Mitchell's dismissal.

"That's a lie, and the players all know it," said the former high school coach. "Iba is a new guy and I think he just wanted to get rid of the seniors and keep his own kids. Carlos is well-spoken and street-wise. He's the type who won't accept the party line. He posed as a threat."

"(He) Iba seems to have the Napoleon complex. He tends to sound like an egomaniac who is impressed with his family background. He could build a winning team in the future, but he won't have any happy players."

"But he's legitimate in his beliefs whether it's productive or not. And the school officials are supportive about them staying and getting a degree."

WHEN EISENBERG was asked whether Johnson, a sophomore, was going to transfer, he said: "What was the name of the movie with Burt Rutler?"

"I think he (Johnson) is 'Gone with the Wind'."

Mitchell said he plans to finish school and obtain his degree.

Briggs, who hoped to have impressed NBA scouts with a good senior season, said he is uncertain about his future. His mother, Betty, living in Detroit, has urged him to continue his schooling.

"Basketball was his life, and they ruined his career," she said. "But I hope he stays down there and finishes up."

Mrs. Briggs said that she has never received a call from Iba about her son's dismissal.

"He (Iba) called me once when Carlos was suspended before the season, and I met him briefly in the lobby of the hotel (Dec. 21 at the Tennessee tournament) — that's it," she said. "I haven't heard from him since."

Farmington gym club wins at Spartan meet

The Farmington Gymnastics Center club gymnastics teams took a pair of firsts and one second at the Spartan Youth Mens Gymnastics Compulsory Meet at Jensen Field House in East Lansing recently.

Farmington captured team firsts in both the Class III-Division 6 category (+13-18 years of age) and in Class III-Division 5 (10-12). It placed second at Class IV-Division 4 (10-12).

Individually, Jeff Juliano, of Farmington Hills, took first all-around in Class III-Division 6 with a 45.0 score. He took firsts in both the vault and horizontal bars.

IN THE same division, Farmington team members Steve Strausberg of Novi and Brian Longstreth of West Bloomfield placed second and third, respectively.

In Class II-Division 7 (13-15 years of age), Farmington's Robby Thomas of West Bloomfield placed second and David Thomas of Bloomfield Hills placed fourth.

In Class III-Division 5, Doug Stibel of Canton placed third and Mike Wdovjak of Canton placed 10th.

The Farmington club is coached by Kevin Watson.

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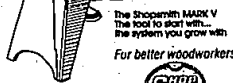
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