

Sports

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Cothran, North recapture city volleyball crown

By Chris McCosky staff writer

Forgive members of the Farmington, North Farmington and Farmington Harrison volleyball teams if they appear a bit fatigued these days. In a five-day stretch last week (Saturday through Wednesday), the teams played anywhere between 18 and 22 games — roughly nine to 11 matches.

All that during final-exam week. Consequently, you might presume that the fatigue might sap the intensity from Wednesday night's annual Farmington city volleyball tournament.

Nope. "This is for bragging rights in the city," North Farmington coach Sandy Lubieniecki said. "This is very important to the kids."

The three schools took after each other in typically spirited fashion. And in the end, North Farmington regained its city title.

With a thrilling 15-6, 20-18 win against defending champ Harrison, and a somewhat anticlimactic 15-4, 15-1 drubbing of Farmington, the Raiders won back the crown they owned for four years prior to 1985.

THEY LEFT immediately to play a scheduled Western Lakes league match with Northville. (Northville bested the bushed Raiders, 12-15, 15-11, 15-4.)

"This (the city title) was nice for us," Lubieniecki said. "Even though this is a new group, these kids knew what we've done in the past. It was important for them to do well."

Eleven of the Raiders' 12-member roster had never played on a city championship team.

The championship match wound up being the first match of the tournament: Harrison vs. North.

Harrison made things easy for North in the first game. Harrison errors, most unforged, led to 11 of the Raiders' 15 points.

FARMINGTON CITY VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT

Championship: North Farmington def. Farmington Harrison, 15-6, 20-18.

Consolation matches: Farmington Harrison def. Farmington, 15-4, 15-2; North Farmington def. Farmington, 15-4, 15-1.

ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Nancy Cothran (MVP) | North |
| Bob Dutton | North |
| Tom McClain | North |
| Jennifer Hughes | Harrison |
| Thomas Spizer | Harrison |
| Lori Caserio | Farmington |

—Selected by Chris McCosky.

Game two was far different. North jumped ahead 8-2 but Harrison battled back and gained an 11-10 lead thanks to some inspired play by Jennifer Hughes. Hughes stopped North's first run with a powerful spike, then served up four consecutive points.

THE LEAD switched sides six times after that. Harrison had three serves at match point. North won the game and match on its third attempt at match point — 20-18.

Nancy Cothran's block put North up 14-12, but Harrison's Katie Doll buried a pretty pass from Hughes to win a side out and keep Harrison alive.

With Heidi Rost serving, Harrison scored two points to tie the score, then Hughes' block put the Hawks up 15-14.

From that point on, the match dissolved into a virtual one-on-one battle between Hughes and Cothran — both senior captains of their respective teams.

"You go to your seniors in times like that," Lubieniecki said. "They are the ones who've been there before."

Hughes, the team's setter, was most effective at the net in the late stages. She had three kills for side outs, a spike and a block for points and a service point.

Please turn to Page 3



North Farmington sophomore Stephanie Knapp leaps high for a block during the Raiders victory over Farmington en route to the Farmington city volleyball title.

Kuick quits Falcon post

By Chris McCosky staff writer

And they thought he was kidding. Farmington High School football coach Don Kuick told the school's administration that he'd resign if certain requests weren't met.

"I told them I wanted what all the other schools gave," said the outspoken 35-year veteran coach, the last three at Farmington. "I wanted a sixth-hour phys ed class for weight training and conditioning. I had it when I started, then they took it away."

Kuick said he'd quit if he wasn't given the class.

The administration said, according to Kuick, "Hogwash."

So Don Kuick has resigned as head football coach at Farmington High.

"IT JUST got to me," he said. "It's just too hard to compete at this level, especially in our league. I don't know three out of the schedule, but whoever it was didn't do us any favors."

There were other factors that drove Kuick out.

None of Kuick's assistant coaches worked in the high school building. "That's a difficult situation," he said. "And our assistants couldn't get six-hour free to get to practice on time. I was handling the practices alone for the first half-hour."

Kuick, after 35 years, admitted to growing "too old for this stuff." "I just got tired," he said. "It's such a long season. It starting getting to me along the sidelines — that never happened before."

Kuick was also miffed at the school's feeder programs.

"Our lower programs just stink to high heavens," he said. "The way it is, if the kid has a choice, he goes to Farmington Harrison. We're losing two and three a year to Harrison or Catholic Central. And really all it is a lack of personal drive by the administration."

KUICK SAID that the little league football programs in the Farmington area are taking the players away from the middle school program. The little league football program recently increased its weight requirement allowing more middle school-age students to play.

Said Farmington athletic director Ron Holland: "The weight thing has nothing to do with it. One year the kids play with us (middle schools) and the next they play with them (little league). It varies from year to year depending on the type of program we have to offer. Three years ago all the kids played little league. Then we got some good coaches at the middle schools and the kids came back. We're working with the little league programs now to try and eliminate some of the conflict that exists."

"Our lower programs just stink to high heavens. The way it is, if the kid has a choice, he goes to Farmington Harrison. We're losing two and three a year to Harrison or Catholic Central."

— Don Kuick ex-Farmington coach

In the end, though, it was the aggravating non-football incidents that broke Kuick's spirit. A group of students — several were members of the football program — vandalized the equipment storage room and concession stand alongside the football field. This occurred during the latter part of last football season.

"These were some of my first stringers, and I had to kick them off my team," he said. "And four JV kids were involved. I looked at that and said, 'I just don't need this stuff anymore.'"

KUICK DID a credible job in his three years at Farmington. He took a losing program to a Western Lakes Division title and a 6-3 record in his second season at the helm. In his three seasons Farmington compiled a 12-13 record, 10-8 the last two years.

"I'm proud of my record and the accomplishments of the kids," Kuick said. "Helping send a kid like Craig Petersmark on to a school — although I can't take all the credit — those are the kinds of things you look back on. It's the coaching of the kids, showing them what it takes to win and how to take defeat that's important. I think I helped turn the program around. It's on the right track now. They know what it's like to win."

Holland said that he would be interviewing coaching candidates this week. He wouldn't say whether the candidates were inside or outside the district.

Kuick offered a recommendation:

"I'd like to see them give it to Dave Catherman," he said. "I told them (the administration), 'How long does a guy have to be an assistant before he gets his chance?' He knows a lot about the game, and he's great with the kids. He helped get a lot of kids out for the team this year."

Kuick said he may get back into coaching at the middle school level. But, for now, "I just want to enjoy my summers."

Observerland gridders make early commitment

By Brad Emons staff writer

Two Redford Catholic Central football standouts, Ken Wandzel and Nick Varano, have made verbal commitments to Michigan State and Toledo, respectively.

The two will each sign national letter-of-intent on Wednesday, Feb. 12, the first of high school seniors can accept a scholarship under guidelines set by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Wandzel, a wide receiver and defensive back, made visits to MSU and Cincinnati. The 6-foot-4, 210-pound stand-out was named to the All-Observer squad and was honored on various metro area and all-state squads.

"I think Michigan State is more interested in Ken for defense, but I'm sure they'll give him a look at wide receiver," said CC coach Tom Mach.

Varano, the Shamrocks' 6-1, 250-pound All-Catholic and All-Area nose guard, will join his brother Mike, a fifth-year senior defensive back, on the Toledo squad.

"Nick could have gone to a bigger school, but he had his mind made up last month," Mach said. "He's their No. 1 recruit."

ANOTHER CC STANDOUT, consensus All-State tackle Dan Nash, will visit four schools including Notre Dame, Stanford, Rice and Michigan.

A 3.94 student, Nash is looking for an engineering curriculum.

are being recruited by Mid-American Conference schools, according to Mach.

"This should be a very good year for our seniors," Mach said. "We have a lot of kids we're sending out to play."

Meanwhile, All-State running back Tony Boles of Westland John Glenn apparently has narrowed his choices down to Michigan and Michigan State.

According to Glenn coach Chuck Gordon, Boles has made visits to U-M, MSU and Tennessee, and will visit two more schools, including Iowa.

"I think he'll stay in the state," said Gordon.

Glenn tackle Don Croft will visit a pair of Mid-American schools before making a decision.

FARMINGTON HARRISON'S All-State receiver, Brian Smolinski, is reportedly leaning toward Michigan State, but will also make visits to Ohio State and Penn State.

Harrison coach John Herrington said that although Smolinski has an open mind, he is leaning toward MSU because he'll get an opportunity to play baseball. Smolinski was an All-Area shortstop a year ago.

Farmington's All-Area tackle Craig Petersmark is leaning toward Eastern Michigan, but is talking to several Mid-American and Great Lakes Conference teams, according to former Falcon coach Don Kuick.

Two Redford Bishop Borgess All-Area players, Mike Stewart and Ed Drellinski, are both talking to Division I schools, but are undecided at the present time, according to school athletics director Ralph Owen.

North freezes, Rocks roll

By Chris McCosky staff writer

Basketball, when played correctly, looks like an easy game to the casual observer. But when certain elements of a team go bad, something as simple as putting a little ball into a basket can become a monumental chore.

Ask North Farmington. The Raiders did many things correctly at Plymouth Salem Friday night. They played a pesky pressing defense which forced 24 Salem turnovers. They played aggressively and they rebounded fairly well against the taller Salem team.

But they lost, 59-44.

"Basketball is different than a lot of other sports," said North coach Tom Negoshian. "The intensity and concentration has to be there all the time. You can underline 'all the time.'"

Clearly, North Farmington's concentration wasn't with them all the time Friday night — especially not in the third quarter.

NORTH OUTSCORED Salem 10-2 at the close of the first half and went into halftime down a point, 26-25. But much of North's intensity stayed in the locker room.

The Raiders missed their first 11 shots of the third quarter and went 14 possessions without a point. Rick Anderson's basket with 1:28 left was North's first and last of the quarter.

"How many turnovers did we force that quarter?" asked Negoshian. Eight.

"How many layups did we miss?" Five.

Indeed, North's full court press gave the Rocks fits in the third quarter. But the team failed to convert the turnovers into baskets.

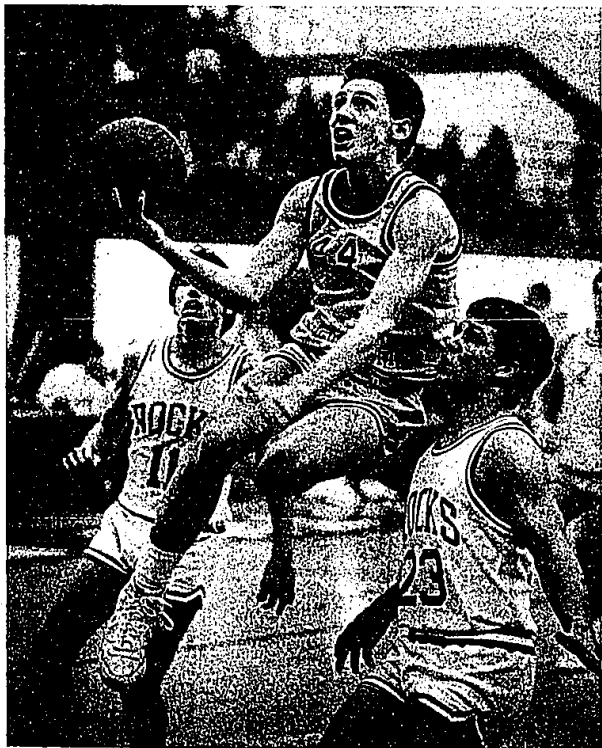
And yet, until Salem's Tony Moore scored five straight points in the final 30 seconds of the quarter, North was still in contention. The Raiders pulled within six points halfway through the final quarter, but the Rocks outscored North 17-8 down the stretch, converting 11 of 12 free throws.

CREDIT AN outstanding defensive game by Salem for much of North's offensive woes. The Rock man-to-man kept North's top guns, Anderson and Paul Wahrman, away from the basket most of the night.

"The defense was definitely the key," said Salem coach Bob Brodie, whose team had lost two in a row prior to Friday night. "What'd they get, one basket in the third quarter? That's pretty good work."

Brodie credited the hustle of Moore, Mike Hale and Keith Smith with keeping Anderson under wraps. Anderson scored a game-high 20 points, but they were extremely hard-earned. He hit 6-of-20 shots from the field and 8-of-8 from the free throw line.

Please turn to Page 2



Paul Wahrman (No. 44) goes airborne against Plymouth Salem Friday night in the Raiders' 59-44 loss.

BILL BRESLER/staff photographer