

'86 smiles on those Irish eyes

THE QUESTION I find myself asking this time of the year is why limit such a good thing to one day out of 365? St. Patrick's Day, the New Year's Eve for the American Irish, should be celebrated as often as possible.

I do. I celebrate St. Patrick's Month, St. Patrick's Week and St. Patrick's Day. It's great. So what if I greet April with corned beef growing out of my ear, it's well worth it.

In the spirit of the day, I'd like to pay tribute to those people around us who made it a great year for the Irish.

I know the Fighting Irish from Notre Dame didn't have that great a football season, but that other great Irish institution from the Midwest, the University of Michigan, certainly made up for it. The Wolverines, named after the animal that helped St. Patrick drive the snakes out of Ireland, did us Irish proud with a win over Nebraska in the Fiesta Bowl.

North Farmington gymnast Eileen Murtaugh, the Observer & Eccentric's nominee for St. Patrick's Day Parade Queen, led the Raiders into the state championship meet as the placed fourth in all-around regional competition. Murtaugh also won the all-around title at the Western Lakes Activities Association meet.

Rochester Adams basketball coach Mike Dillon put his team on the Metro Suburban Activities Association map by guiding the Highlanders to a winning record. The Highlanders, who are now moved to Scotland from Ireland, will be among the league leaders soon, probably before next St. Patrick's Day.

West Bloomfield coach Mike "Wearing Of The Greene" led the Lakers to their second straight Metro Suburban Activities Association girls basketball championship. Greene, oftentimes seen with a four-leaf clover on his lapel, insists luck of the Irish has nothing to do with his success.



Jim Hughes

Troy High's football team had some Irish on its side when it won 11-2 and played for the Class A state championship. Head coach Jeff O'Keller learned his football playing for the Scots of Alma, just up the road from Michigan State where Duffy Daugherty was in charge. Troy's defense, a unit that rose to the occasion against offensive powers Southfield, Athens, Detroit Henry Ford, Sterling Heights Stevenson and the Shamrocks from Catholic Central, was coached by Gary Griffith.

Enough said.
• Southfield football coach Cal Fletcher may not be Irish, but he looks it. Cal, who says he's "a mongrel," isn't sure if he has any Irish blood at all, but his football team must have. Their backfield of Torin Dorn, Torin Dorn, Torin Dorn and Torin Dorn was as dynamic as the legendary Four Horsemen of Notre Dame.

You can't talk about famous Irishmen without mentioning John Herrington, the successful football coach at Farmington Hills Herrington High. The only active coach to have a school named after him, Herrington has won two state championships. His team went 7-2 last year — a sub-standard season for him but a mark some schools hit once every decade.

Athens girls basketball coach Joe Clinton and his team finished second in the Metro Suburban Activities Association and didn't win the district tournament, but it still was a good year for the Green Hawks. Besides, Clinton would be offended if his

name wasn't included in a St. Patrick's Day column.

The same can be said for Orchard Lake St. Mary's basketball coach Rick Krinski. The Eagles coach, who changed his name from O'Shaughnessy to Krinski JUST so he could join the Holy Cross Knights of Columbus, shows his true colors downtown every year at the St. Paddy's Day parade.

Bob Shoemaker, former basketball czar at St. Mary's, left Bloomfield Hills Andover to take a more prestigious job coaching the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame in Harper Woods. It was a good move for the shoe, although he thought he was replacing Digger Phelps.

Rochester Adams grad Eileen McClennen, another person you can't leave out of an Irish article, played 25 games as a freshman basketball guard at Hofstra University. McClennen finished the season averaging about 23 minutes, five points and three assists. She also shot 79 percent from the free-throw line.

Larry Archey. There's so much to be said about one of my favorite Irishmen. Despite a 1-19 girls basketball season at Troy, Archey always remains optimistic. He's always got a smile on his face and a friendly words in conversation. A great guy who just happens to be Irish.

It was a great year for another pair of my favorite Irishmen — Eccentric sports writer Larry O'Connor and myself. During the past year, O'Connor and I got engaged. (No, not to each other.) You can count on a couple of wild Irish weddings in the near future.

I couldn't include everybody in this piece, so I hope people like co-workers Chris McCosky and Hugh Gallagher don't feel slighted.

I'll leave you with one final thought. Remember, today is amateur day. The true Irishmen celebrate all year.

Falcons' Walsh resigns mat post after 11 seasons

By Chris McCosky
Staff writer

Barry Walsh, one of the most respected wrestling coaches in Observance, has resigned after 11 years at Farmington High School.

"Coaching takes a lot of time," Walsh said Thursday night. "I have a young daughter and I want to spend more time at home."

In his stint at Farmington, the team has had only one losing season. The Falcons won one Inter-Lakes conference championship and two Class A district titles.

Farmington's best season under Walsh was 1978. The team placed 10th in the state.

"I think the program has always been good," he said. "I took over a good program from Dick Cook back in 1975. All the years, it's been positive."

Walsh produced five all-stars in his 11 years: Ron and Randy Stern, Hal Hazen, Dave Hovey and most recently, Dan Parillo.

HE CAME TO Farmington after an All-American wrestling career at both Schoolcraft Community College and Southern Illinois. After two seasons as head coach of the Falcons, he took an assistant wrestling coach job at Indiana University for one season and then headed the Schoolcraft wrestling program for one season.

Before coming back to Farmington, he spent a year as the head coach at Livonia Franklin.

'You shouldn't be wishing you were someplace else. When that happens, it scores you. You know it's time to get out.'

— Barry Walsh
ex-Farmington coach

"When you have a kid that's wrestling, you should be glad you are there with him," Walsh said of his decision to resign. "You shouldn't be wishing you were someplace else. When that happens, it scores you. You know it's time to get out. The kids deserve your total attention and there were times when I was torn between wanting to be at two different places."

HE SAID he wasn't sure if he'd return to coaching. "We'll just play it by ear," he said.

In the meantime, he hasn't exactly left the cupboard bare at Farmington. Thirty-one wrestlers from this year's team are expected to return next year, including 10 lettermen.

"The kids really improved during the course of the year," he said. "All of them are still real young. Two of top scorers were sophomores and heavy-weight) Bill Critcher should be ready to have a tremendous year."

Walsh's successor has not been named.

Coaching vacancies stir rumor mill

Continued from Page 1

EMU does not appear to be a realistic possibility for Thomann. OU, too, must be considered a longshot. The school's administration has hired men to coach its women's team (current coach of Detroit coach Dwayne Jones), but would probably want someone with more college experience.

That still leaves OCC, where the un-

voiced message is that, should McPhillips not return, the job would be Thomann's for the taking.

"I'm still not even in a position to think about that," said Thomann. "Being thrust into this position, under these circumstances, is not the best way to do it. That's why I told the players and the people in the administration I would take it one day at a time. I'll talk to Tom first. In my mind

it's still his job. It's his team, he recruited them, they're his players."

McPHILLIPS IS due to return in a week. But don't expect Thomann to make a decision quickly. He still enjoys teaching at Salem, and already was looking forward to coaching the girls team next year, which he thinks could be one of the school's best ever.

As for the OU position, Hartman has

shown a tendency to select non-local coaches (Kampe, an assistant at Toledo, in mens basketball, and women swim coach Mary Ellen Wydan, from Pennsylvania and an assistant at University of North Carolina).

Not that Hartman wouldn't listen. The question still remaining is: Would Thomann be interested?

And the only answer possible is, stay tuned.

OCC cagers bounced in semifinals

The balanced scoring that marked Oakland Community College's men's basketball success throughout the season was missing Friday, and that cost the Raiders in a 69-59 loss to Parkland (Urbana, Ill.) CC in the NJCAA Division II semifinals at Flint, Mich.

Early foul trouble plagued OCC. Starters Gary Holt and Willie Jones both missed nine minutes of the opening half after drawing their third personal fouls, enabling PCC to open up a 34-25 lead by the intermission.

Young Knipper No. 1 in nation

Katie Knipper of Farmington Hills, a sixth grader at Warner Middle School, set a Michigan state record in the girls 10-and-under 50-yard breaststroke March 7 at the United States Swimming Michigan (formerly AAU) girls state swimming meet at Oakland Community College.

Knipper's time of 34.56 ranks her No. 1 in the nation for the season.

She swims with the Clarenceville Swim Club.

That advantage grew to 16 before the Raiders rallied behind Jones, who scored 20 of his 24 points in the second half, and Rod Thompson, who had eight of his 18 in an OCC surge that tied it at 50 with six minutes left.

The way the best the Raiders could do, however, PCC scored the next four points and stayed in command by earning 13 of 14 free throws down the stretch. For the game, PCC hit 23 of 29 foul shots to seven of 16 for OCC. Dave Stein led the winners with 26 points.

No other Raider scored in double figures. Pat Gardner was limited to seven points and Holt scored just one basket before fouling out.

ON THURSDAY, OCC advanced to the semifinals with a fairly easy 68-48 thrashing of Allegheny College (Pa.) CC.

The Raiders were in command throughout, open-

ing up a 35-22 lead by halftime and expanding it eventually to 30 points. Allegheny didn't score its 30th point until the nine-minute mark.

"It turned out to be a fairly easy game," said Thomann. "Defensively, we were very good. We used foul-court pressure, dropping off into a zone, to try and save our legs for the rest of the tournament. After we got the lead, we used half-court pressure, then dropping off into a zone."

Whichever defense, OCC performed it adeptly. The Raider offense wasn't bad, either, with four players reaching double figures: Gardner and Thompson (16 points each), Holt (12) and Jones (10). Gardner and LeSean Hugood (eight points) topped the OCC rebounders with seven apiece.

The Raiders connected on 52.6 percent of its field attempts (30 of 57) to 41.2 percent for Allegheny (21 of 51).

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