

Sports

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No. 1 in state?

Hawks hungry for 'B' title; Farmington, North begin again

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Farmington Harrison boys tennis coach Bernie Goldstein is excited. That's not exactly uncommon, but Goldstein generally likes to downplay his excitement in the early stages of a season.

"He can't downplay it this season. Now that we've dropped into Class B, we could be one of the better teams in the state," he said. "In Class A we would have been good. In Class B, we'll be one of the best."

The Hawks placed 12th in Class A last year. They won the Western Lakes championship for the second straight time, finishing with a 14-2 dual meet record.

Returning from last year's squad are its No. 1 and No. 2 singles players: junior Ken Davidson and senior Mark Rakoczy. In preseason challenges, Rakoczy beat Davidson.

"Right now, I don't know which one will play No. 1," Goldstein said. "Kenny played No. 1 all of last year, but Rakoczy beat him. Kenny spent last week at Nick Bollettieri's tennis camp. They'll have to play again before I decide."

Returning the Hawks' singles contingent are a pair of private school transfers: Bill Brockhaus from state champ Catholic Central, will play No. 3 for the Hawks and David Jaffe, from Detroit Country Day, will play at No. 4.

"We thought we were going to be in trouble in those two spots," Goldstein said. "Steve Thomas and Mark Eisenberg (last year's Nos. 3-4) graduated. But those two transferred in." Goldstein also appears to have his doubles teams in place. At No. 1 are

tennis

seniors Jeff Levin and Rick Bartholomew. At No. 2 are sophomores Rick Brockhaus and Brian Fredrick. Senior Aaron Tam and junior David Levin will begin the season at No. 3.

Although the Hawks will be favored to win the Western Lakes, Goldstein is keeping a weary eye on Northville, Plymouth Canton and Livonia Stevenson.

The Hawks will open the season tomorrow at Waterford Mott.

FARMINGTON

Farmington enjoyed one of its finer tennis seasons a year ago winning the Western Lakes Division title and placing third overall in the conference.

That's the good news. The bad news is coach Bill Wahlstrom graduated eight of last season's 10 starters.

"I think we'll be competitive," Wahlstrom said. "I'd hate to go into the season thinking we couldn't compete. But it'll be a rebuilding year. We have 12 sophomores, all real close in ability. The competition makes kids improve a lot. And these guys have three years in front of them."

Seniors Scott Maszy and Jeff Mobley were division champs at No. 2 doubles last year. This year, they will be No. 1 and No. 2 singles players. Wahlstrom hasn't determined which senior will play No. 1.

A trio of sophomores are presently

battling for the last two slugs spots: Jim Vanderhill (a transfer from Indiana), Dave Anderson and Chris Cahill.

Among the multitude of prospective doubles players, Wahlstrom is high on Eric Pavelka, Scott Cameron, Scott Voder and Chris Haas — all sophomores.

The fledgling Falcons will open the season tomorrow at Southfield.

NORTH FARMINGTON

After seeing their six-year reign as Northwest Suburban League champs come to a halt (thanks to Livonia Franklin) last season, the Raiders must begin anew — a new team in a new league.

Much of coach Norm Stanislawski's 1985 team graduated, leaving only four seniors for the 1986 campaign.

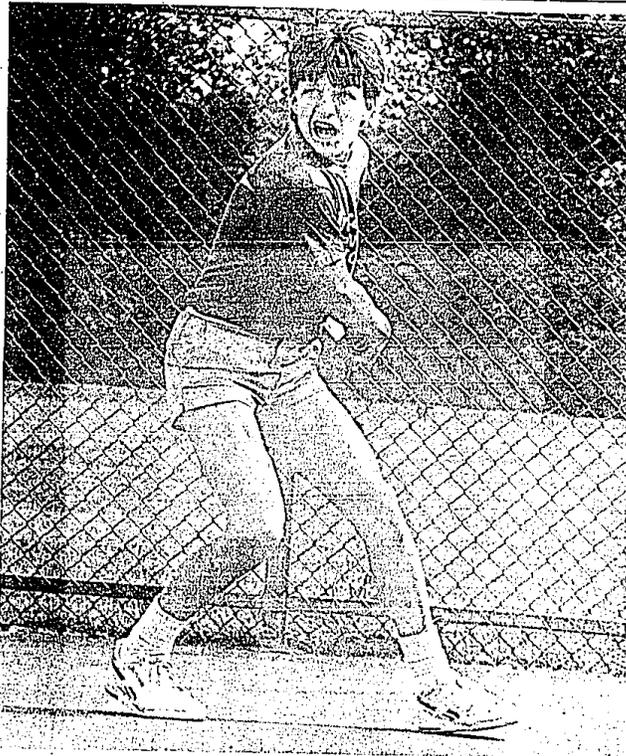
"We're a real young team," Stanislawski said. "Mostly sophomores and freshmen. But we had 52 kids come out and lot of them are equal in ability."

No. 1 and No. 2 singles are being fought for by sophomores Josh Hoffman and Jason Weiss. Weiss was the NSL champ at No. 3 singles last year and Hoffman was runner-up at No. 2.

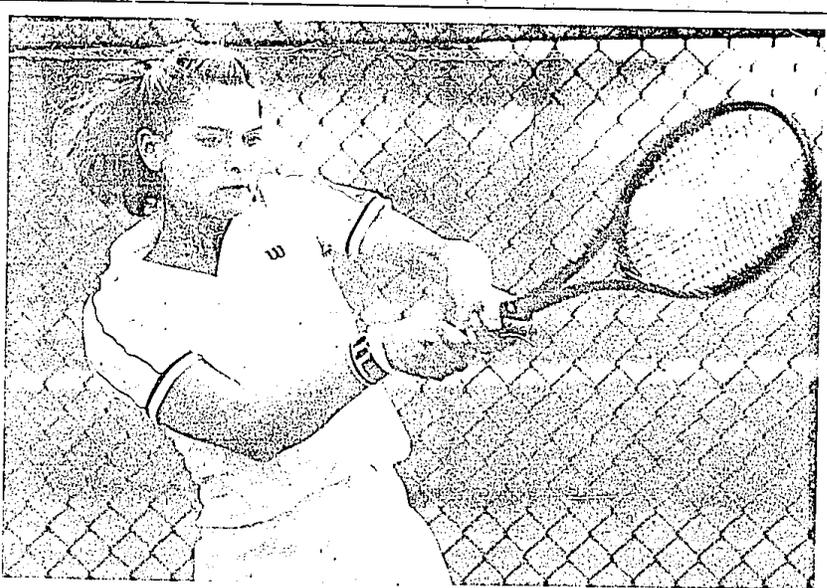
Seniors Jim Ragland and Jeff Seifman will play at No. 3 and No. 4, respectively.

As for doubles teams, Stanislawski is searching for combinations. Seniors Ryan Effler and Darrel Krause are in the chase. As are juniors Scott Johnson, Sanjay Ghosh, Jeff Zonder and Todd Melberger.

North opens at home tomorrow against Southfield-Lathrup.



Ken Davidson, last year's Western Lakes champ at No. 1 singles, is having to battle teammate Mark Rakoczy to retain his No. 1 spot on the Harrison squad.



Wendy Gilles has made a smooth and rapid transition from high school tennis to Big 10 college tennis at Wisconsin.

Wendy Gilles adapts to college nets

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

What adjustment? Wendy Gilles went from the No. 1 high school player in the state to the No. 1 singles player at the University of Wisconsin without skipping a beat — although she did skip her final semester at Plymouth Salem.

"Wendy has been just fine," said Wisconsin coach Kelly Ferguson. "She plays like a senior. She's adapted great."

Wendy graduated from Salem in January after winning the state Class A singles championship in October. She immediately enrolled at Wisconsin and joined the tennis

team. While the rest of her Salem classmates are preparing for the prom, Wendy Gilles has busted herself at U-W winning four straight matches at No. 2 singles, then posting a 3-5 record at No. 1. She also plays No. 1 doubles for the Badgers, she and partner Lisa Fortman are 6-4.

IRONICALLY, Wendy's arrival has somewhat pushed her sister, sophomore Chris Gilles, into the background. As a freshman last year, Chris qualified for the NCAA nationals at No. 1 singles.

Since Wendy's arrival, Chris has played primarily at No. 3 singles. "Chris has lost some confidence in

her game," Ferguson said. "It's nothing drastic, and we're hoping for her to come out of it. Before she would stand on the baseline and never miss. Lately she's been more erratic. With her style of play, she can't afford to be that way."

Chris, who could not be reached for comment, was 6-6 at No. 1 before moving down. She's 10-2 at No. 3. Chris and Cathy Van Pelt are 13-4 at No. 2 doubles.

"It's not that I am any better than Chris or that she's better than me," said Wendy. "We're both pretty equal. I think that Kelly just saw that Chris was having some problems and put me at No. 1."

Although it hasn't affected her

play, the fast leap into college life hasn't exactly been a breeze for Wendy.

"THE BIGGEST difference is getting used to a team concept," she said. "I have to get used to playing for a team and not just for myself. It's weird, everyone is playing for the same goals. You don't have time to get down on yourself. Like if you lose a singles match, you have to forget it because in 10 minutes you have to play doubles."

Then of course there's the academic adjustment. "I don't want to discuss it," she said with a laugh. "I

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Spring conjures up happy-sad memory

I CAN'T believe he's been dead for nine years. I forget sometimes that he is dead, probably because the memory of his short, beautiful life comes back to me every spring. Temperatures warm up, kids wearing mitts and carrying baseball bats begin hunting the playgrounds for some dry earth.

It never fails to take me back.

The summer of 1971 — one of the happiest summers of my life. I was 15 years old, playing baseball for several teams while helping my father coach a little league team (kids between the ages of 11 and 13). Baseball was my life, how could I not be happy?

About an hour into our first practice — I was hitting fly balls to the outfielders while my father worked over the infielders — a fraill-looking boy approached my father and asked if he could try out for the team.

Fraill-looking might be an understatement. He looked sick, anorexic even. He spoke with a lisp. You had to wonder if the kid could pick up a baseball, let alone throw one.

NEVERTHELESS, my father gave him a tryout. To this day, I can see the look of utter joy that spread across the little kid's face. His expression was such that you'd have thought my father said: "Sure, and here's a million dollars to spend as you wish."

I think my father saved the boys' life by giving him a tryout — at the very least, he gave the boy a reason to live.

What he lacked in ability, he more than made up for with heart and hustle. After virtually every practice, I would, at his constant begging, stay an extra hour to hit him ground balls or throw extra rounds of batting practice.

"Come on Chris, just a few more." I can still hear him saying that to me with his characteristic, endearing lisp.

His enthusiasm for the game of baseball was unbridled and infectious. The whole team got caught up in his spirit. We had a powerhouse team.

THE SKINNY little kid was our starting second baseman that year



Chris McCosky

and our leadoff hitter. What a fireplug he was! He loved playing the game so much that he had trouble containing his emotions on the field.

He chattered non-stop (even though I doubt anyone on either team could fully grasp what he was trying to say). He bounced around the infield the same way a waterbug skims the surface of a pond.

When he got a hit or made a good play in the field, he would applaud himself. Imagine, throwing a guy out, taking off your glove and giving yourself a nice ovation. It was the cutest thing I have ever seen, but only this little guy could pull it off.

I remember one time, he made the final out of the game. I think he left the tying run at third base. He seemed shocked that he failed, but he didn't cry or throw a fit. He simply came back to the bench and apologized to the whole team.

"I'm chorry guush, won't happen again."

What a great kid. You just felt great being around him.

AS HE GREW older, he matured; both physically and mentally, but his enthusiasm never waned. He was a first-string player in junior high school, first-team junior varsity his freshman year in high school.

But the biggest thrill of his life came during the spring of his sophomore year. He made the varsity baseball team. I remember calling him and congratulating him from my college dormitory. He told me he was so excited that he almost started crying. "Right there in front of the guush." He said he had to run into the shower to keep from being seen.

The young man was killed that summer in a head-on car crash. The guy who so prematurely ended my friend's life was alone drunk at the time.

Ah spring, what a splendid and sorrowful time of year.