

## Sports

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(F10)



Brad Emons

## Watkins leaves with sour taste

WHEN THE SUBJECT of sports at Schoolcraft College comes up, the first thing that comes to mind is soccer. Soccer is *The Sport* on campus. The men's and women's teams win, and they do it with local talent and local coaches.

Conversely, the men's basketball program is made up primarily of obscure, but talented inner-city players who often lack academic skills and discipline.

Last week Schoolcraft College athletic director Marv Gans decided to make a change in the men's basketball program, replacing "Rocky" Watkins with his duties as head coach. Watkins had spent 10 years coaching at Schoolcraft, six as head coach.

Gans called it a "mutual agreement" between the two parties, but Watkins reluctantly stepped down. He wanted to finish the 1985-87 season because of a commitment he made to his underclassmen.

## THE CRITICISMS of Watkins mounted over the years.

Despite a 100-70 career record and 1982-83 Eastern Conference Coach (Schoolcraft was 23-7 that season), the rap on Rocky was more than wins and losses.

During his stint, Watkins' teams were constantly plagued by academic woes. Several key players were lost because of poor grades at the end of the first semester. Four starters this year were ruled ineligible.

Gans, although appreciating Watkins' efforts, said that Schoolcraft needs a better mix of players from the inner city and the suburbs. Others found fault with Watkins' practice habits, resulting in a lack of discipline on the court during game situations.

Watkins was firm on the bench, but some critics maintained the team could have accomplished more.

UNLIKE SOME of his competitors in the Michigan Community College Athletic Association (MCCAA), Watkins coached basketball on the side because "it was a special love affair with me." Watkins has a full-time job. He is an assistant to the fire commissioner of the city of Detroit.

The timing of his dismissal has left Watkins somewhat bitter.

"If they knew all along (about the firing), I'd prefer them doing it right after the season," Watkins said. "Instead, they pardoned me and my family through the banquet (April 19). I had already started my recruiting and preparing for next year. I was maybe going to stay one more year anyway, but I wanted to see these guys (underclassmen) through here."

Despite the circumstances surrounding his departure, Watkins is proud of the job he did. "I really have no regrets," he said. "I'm satisfied that I did everything I possibly could — given the resources."

"THE PEOPLE don't come here as polished students. What they're saying is that I'm totally responsible for the academic student." Schoolcraft's academic requirements for athletes is probably tougher than most community colleges in the state.

"I stressed academics even before we went to the athletic support system," Watkins said. "This past team did better academically than any other team I had, but they did not play as well (Schoolcraft's record was 17-14)."

WATKINS REFUTES the charge that he didn't recruit the suburbs and surrounding Overland area. He points to such players as Eric Sink (Livonia Bentley), Bill Keyes (Livonia Stevenson), Scott Conrad (Livonia Churchill) and Mike White (Plymouth Salem).

"I don't want to knock the area, but you won't win with players just from that area," Watkins said. "There's some quality players, but not the quantity."

Watkins is right. The Overland area often has little to choose from. He wouldn't have survived in his league without recruiting such former SC standouts as Carlos Briggs, Phil Blevins, George Merriweather and Derrick Kearney.

GANS HAS INDICATED he wants a coach with local ties to the area. Next season Schoolcraft will award four basketball scholarships to students in its service area.

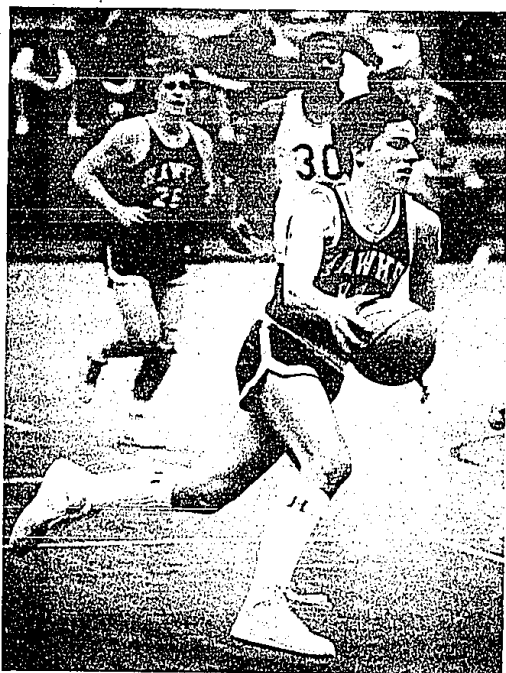
Gans also admitted he needs to upgrade salaries for all his coaches. He firmly stands behind his academic requirements, even though both the NCAA and MCCAA have relaxed the rule on mid-year grade accountability for next season.

But before Gans and school administrators hire their next coach, this question should be asked: What kind of commitment is Schoolcraft going to make toward basketball?

To run a successful JC basketball program, in terms of academic and athletic success, you need an in-house coach who is also a member of the faculty. The demand is too great on someone with a full-time job who works outside the school.

WATKINS WAS LOYAL to his players and loyal to his bosses. He is a decent man who went beyond the call of duty given the conditions he had to work under. He helped many of his players get scholarships to four-year schools.

"The greatest satisfaction can't be measured in wins or losses," Watkins said. "The fact that I was able to deal with young men in their formative stages is what I draw my greatest satisfaction."



RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

## Brit bound

Ken George, Farmington Harrison's crafty point guard, will attend Albion College next fall. George chose Albion over both Alma and Kalamazoo College. All three schools compete in the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association. George said he will concentrate on basketball, but may also play baseball for the Britons.

## FHS, North rule the city

By Chris McCosky  
Staff writer

Ah, these city track meets. Nobody really cares about them. They are just like scrimmage meets. They don't really count, so why worry about them?

Right. And Japan was just joking around when it bombed Pearl Harbor.

Farmington, Farmington Harrison and North Farmington went after each other with vengeance on the Harrison track Tuesday night, each wanting to claim the mythical-yet-precious title of "city champ."

The Farmington boys claimed the title for the third straight year. The Falcons nipped Harrison 80-58 1/4, while North Farmington was a close third, 56 1/4.

On the girls' side, North Farmington was an easier winner, amassing 70 points to Farmington's 57. Harrison was third with 55.

THE BOYS meet came down to the final event, the 1,600-meter relay.

"We won by two inches," said Farmington's assistant coach Jerry Young.

He wasn't kidding. Going into the anchor leg of the final relay, Harrison held a 10-meter lead over the Falcons. Carrying the baton for Farmington was Al Stebbins. He was chasing Harrison's speedy Roger Hane.

Stebbins had already brought home Farmington's winning 3,200 relay in 8:15.7. He caught and just nipped Harrison right at the finish line. Farmington's official time was 3:34.2, Harrison's 3:34.3.

Harrison's mile relay team had just lost a race this season.

"Farmington Harrison is a spectacular job," said Falcon head coach Dave Catherman. "We thought it

## track

would be tight, but not quite that tight. Harrison earned it, they ran well. But we saved our ace in the hole."

That ace in the hole was the mile relay team of Bruce Kraft, Chris Inch, Mike Kramer and Stebbins.

SAID HARRISON coach John Schumacher: "It's a letdown because we were undefeated coming into the meet. But it's not disappointing because we lost to a super team in Farmington."

Farmington got first-place efforts from Craig Petersmark (52-9 in the shot put), Steve Quenneville (10:17.7 in the 3,200) and Dave Barringer (41.8 in the 500 low hurdles).

Harrison's firsts came from Brian Soeder (5-9 in the high jump), Eric Wise (12-6 in the pole vault), Aaron Yaverski (53.3 in the 400) and Chris Hart in the 1,500 (4:42.5).

North won the 400 relay (45.3) and the 800 relay (1:35.7). Individually, Wes Pringle won the discus (125-0), Marc Brown the long jump (19-3 1/2), Chris Wojtowicz the 110 high hurdles (16.7), Mark Weintraub the 100 (11.6), Scott Selter the 200 (22.0) and Kirk Armstrong the 800 (2:04.0).

IN THE GIRLS RACE, defending champ Farmington stayed close until the sprint events. But North Farmington won the 100, 200 and 400 dashes to notch the city title.

The Spengler twins were the big guns for the Raiders. Tammy Spengler won the high jump (4-9), while sister Terry won both the 100 (13.3) and 200 (27.7).

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## S'craft ousts cage coach

By C.J. Risk  
Staff writer

Quinton "Rocky" Watkins, for six years the Schoolcraft College men's basketball coach, has resigned, it was learned Monday.

SC athletic director Marv Gans verified that Watkins "resigned," although Gans added that the decision "was not exactly mutual."

Watkins agreed, "I felt it coming," he said, "but I wanted to get through the next year because I made a commitment to these underclassmen."

Rumors had circulated in the past weeks regarding Watkins' tenuous position after a season that saw the Owls start strong, then stumble after four key players became academically ineligible in January. Three of the four — Clarence Jones, Frank Jones and Bradley Turner — started; the fourth — Mike White — was first off the bench.

"Rocky's a good guy," said Gans. "I just felt we needed a change."

SEVERAL MOTIVES for Gans' decision to replace Watkins have surfaced, but the Owlet AD refused to elaborate on his reasons. Watkins did have trouble keeping track of his players' grades because he did not work at the school. Watkins is employed as assistant to the city of Detroit fire commissioner.

Discipline, too, may have suffered because of his full-time job. Watkins was often late for team practices, which meant either the assistant coach would have to start the practice or the players would start on their own.

A third reason rumored to be integral in Watkins' leaving was his inability to recruit players within SC's district. Many of his recruits were from Detroit and played in the Public School League.

Although avoiding comment on Watkins, Gans did say he is searching for a replacement who "knows the local basketball scene, someone who knows the caliber of basketball it takes to play in community college, and someone who can recruit this district."

GANS ADDED: "Hopefully, there will be some local people out there who might be interested. Whoever is chosen as head coach I want to give the opportunity to select his own assistant. I don't want to force anyone on him."

Watkins served as Ron Hall's assistant coach at SC from 1975 to 1980. When Hall's restaurant business expanded, he stepped down and Watkins became head coach prior to the 1980-81 season, with Hall becoming his assistant. In his six seasons as head coach, Watkins had a 100-70 record.

His best team was the 1982-83 squad, which won the Eastern Conference championship and went 25-1. Carlos Briggs, who became an NCAA All-American, was a freshman on that team.

Gans said Watkins "would work with whoever the new coach is, to make the transition a smooth one."

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