

All-Area softball: No. 1

By Brad Emons
staff writer

WHEN IT COMES to softball, this year's all-observer team, selected recently by area coaches, is state-ranked.

State Class A and Western Lakes Activities Association (WLAA) champion Livonia Franklin landed two players on the first team and two others on the second team.

Northwest Suburban League (NSL) champion Garden City, another highly regarded team with a 25-3 record, boasts two on the first team and one on the second team.

Farmington Hills Mercy, the Catholic League's Central Division

winner, scored big with three first-team picks and one second-team choice.

Plymouth Salem, one of the WLAA's top teams, garnered two first-team spots, while Westland John Glenn, a district champion, claimed one on the first team and two on the second team.

Also represented are Redford Thurston of the Tri-River League and Redford Union of the NSL.

Here is a brief rundown of the first-team All-Area squad. (The second team is honored with photos only).

FIRST TEAM

Tracy Letcia, pitcher, Livonia

Shelly Malone, pitcher, Garden City: Only a Junior, Malone went undefeated this season, going 23-0 before being felled by an arm injury. Her ERA was a sparkling 1.61.

Among the accolades Malone received this season included first team all-NSL, MVP of the 16-team Taylor-Mellus Tournament, team MVP and all-district.

As a hitter, Malone batted .383 and led the Cougars in RBIs with 35. She struck out only three times this season.

Nicki Fraser, catcher, Farmington Mercy: An all-district pick as a sophomore, Fraser was noted for her speed and defensive abilities.

She served as an on-field leader for the Marlins, as well.

She collected 22 hits in 57 at-bats for a .386 average with 14 RBIs as the Marlins finished with a 23-3 overall record.

Denise Tackett, first base, Plymouth Salem: One of the most powerful hitters in Observant, Tackett finished her junior year with a .413 batting average and a team-high 40 RBIs. She also led the team in extra base hits.

A three-year starter and all-Western Lakes pick, Tackett proved herself this season, batting .375 against Letcia and Malone.

Tackett has 109 career RBIs.

Maria Vassellou, infielder, Livonia Franklin: The junior shortstop proved her value in the state semifinals and finals, reaching base in seven of 12 at-bats. She also had all three Franklin RBIs and collected four hits.

The first team all-Western Lakes and all-district choice batted over .400 for the season and was a standout defensively for the state champions, especially down the stretch.

Michelle Fryatt, infielder, Farmington Mercy: The senior shortstop led the Marlins in several categories.

She batted .417 this season with a team-leading 35 hits.

Mercy coach Suzanne Brown described Fryatt as a "talented athlete with head-smart poise and versatility."

Fryatt was also an all-district and all-Catholic League pick.

Carol Hall, infielder, Westland John Glenn: A three-sport standout,

Hall enjoyed a prosperous senior season.

She batted .402 with 33 hits, including nine extra-base hits. She walked 15 times and struck out only twice.

The all-Western Lakes and team MVP is cycling either Wayne State, Michigan or Michigan State to continue her career. (Her grade-point average is 3.83).

"Carol has tremendous speed and power," said Glenn coach Linda Jimenez. "She's very intense, coachable and a hard worker."

Karen Sandman, outfielder, Garden City: Smooth as silk defensively, this All-Area repeater made only one error in center field.

Noted as an excellent batter, the GC junior batted .326 with 24 RBIs.

Said coach Jim Lettie of Sandman: "She has a strong, securing arm and gets a quick jump on the ball. She's also an aggressive base runner."

Sandman was also named to the all-league and all-district squads.

Leslie Plichta, outfielder, Plymouth Salem: Although hampered by a knee injury this season, Plichta capped a fine four-year career batting .316 with 25 RBIs. Because of her offensive capabilities, many opposing pitchers elected to put her on base with intentional walks.

A first-team All-Area and all-region pick last year, Plichta drove in 60 runs during her career.

Her coach, Bob Willette, said the senior possessed a great arm and had good range as a center fielder.

Judy Janitz, outfielder, Farmington Mercy: Also a center fielder, Janitz batted .483 with eight extra base hits and 18 RBIs.

She made all-Catholic League and all-district this season.

"Judy is very agile and quick," said her coach. "She is an all-around, heads-up ballplayer who gives 110 percent. She also has a strong and accurate arm."

Joe Epstein, coach of the year, Franklin: The third-year Franklin coach has led the Patriots to two consecutive state Class A finals.

A year ago, Franklin reached the championship game before losing to Lane Kreuze North. Epstein lost four starters off that team, including two All-Area players.

This season, Franklin finished 31-5 overall and won the coveted title. They also won the Western Lakes Conference, district and regional crowns.

Epstein, a physical education instructor at Franklin, was ably assisted by Bob Blue.

Joe Epstein
Coach of Year

2nd Team

1st Team



Tracy Letcia
Franklin

Shelly Malone
Garden City

Nicki Fraser
Mercy

Denise Tackett
Salem

Maria Vassellou
Franklin

Michelle Fryatt
Mercy

Carol Hall
John Glenn

Karen Sandman
Garden City

Leslie Plichta
Salem

Judy Janitz
Mercy

Dawn Williamson
John Glenn

Terri Nalodka
Mercy

Pam Isenegger
Thurston

Kris Roman
Franklin

Chris Forrest
RU

Mikay Gorak
Garden City

Jenny Okon
John Glenn

Cherie Mascarello
Franklin

Sally Daniels
RU

all-area softball

ALL-AREA SOFTBALL
SECOND TEAM

P-Dawn Williamson	John Glenn
P-Teri Nalodka	Farm, Mercy
C-Pam Isenegger	Red, Thurston
1B-Kris Roman	Liv, Franklin
INF-Chris Forrest	Redford Union
INF-Mikay Gorak	Garden City
INF-Anne Marie Moss	Red, Thurston
OF-Jenny Okon	John Glenn
OF-Cherie Mascarello	Liv, Franklin
OF-Sally Daniels	Redford Union

HONORABLE MENTION

Livonia Franklin: Karen Schoeninger, Rose Obrey, Gayle Chedde, Shelly Lankford, Garden City: Amy Thompson, Mary Hobert, Farmington Mercy: Jean Wassenaar, Mary McLeod, Amy Edwards, West John Glenn: Kristi Grichole, Karen Greenough, Katy Koss: Livonia Clarenceville, Dawn Goeman, Maggie Messner, Jessica Handley, Plymouth Canton: Laura Darby, Dana Kriekenbocker, Redford Thurston: Virginia Angles, Julie Waterloo, Penny Socoy, Redford Union: Andrea Roeding, Farmington: Becky Phipps, Kelli Koss: Livonia Clarenceville, Dawn Goeman, Anne Ledda, Dana Lindsey, Kelly Watson, Karen Young, Livonia Stevenson: Gurnee Allen, Lori Bailey, Donna Carzonetti, Kelly Kowalski, Redford Bishop Borgess: Cheryl Livingston, Teresa Brown, Livonia Ladywood: Jenny Haden, Duane Delons, Lisa Krutik, Michelle Pionka, Nicole Ewald, Livonia Churchill: Nicole Allen, Laura Porter, Kim Alger, Leigh Anna Zaharia: Farmington Harrison: Dana Reddick, Kristi Rugh, Heidi Reys, Theresa Spitz, North Farmington: Robyn Weatherford, Leah Dominant, Redford St. Agatha: Karen Crespi, Cathy Giering, Maryann Krick.

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