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Monday, September 1, 1986 O&E

(F118)

Young Marlins face tough road in Catholic race

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Farmington Hills Mercy has not won the Catholic League girls basketball championship since 1983. Considering that the team has won 11 district championships in 12 years and a state-record six consecutive regional titles, a two-year dry spell in the Catholic League seems odd. But that may be the least of Larry Baker's concerns as he enters his 12th season at Mercy.

With one major exception, Mercy is starting over this year. Gone from

last year's 18-6 team are starters Missy Duczynski (Central Michigan), Terri Ford (University of Detroit) and Michelle Fryatt (Hillsdale). Jean Wassenberg, the first Marlin off the bench and spot starter last year, also graduated.

Baker, for the first time in four years, will be relying on several untested players.

"The last time that happened was in 1982," Baker said with a sheepish grin on his face. Mercy won the state championship in 1982 with three sophomores and a junior.

BUT THE DECK will be stacked against Mercy this season. The relative inexperience of the players aside, Mercy will be uncharacteristically small and slender this season. In contrast, many of Mercy's opponents have gotten larger. Birmingham Marlan and Livonia Ladywood, to name but two Catholic League foes, will floor extremely big and physical teams.

Last Wednesday, Baker got word that his starting center, 6-0 junior Jennifer Slosar, had contracted chicken pox. It is possible she will miss Thursday night's season opener at Plymouth Canton.

An inauspicious start, to be sure. But if tradition means anything, don't sell the Marlins short.

"Last season reminded me that if you get the right chemistry on the floor, and positive attitudes off the floor, anything is achievable in high school basketball," Baker said.

Mercy has an ace in the hole. Senior guard Yvette Maison.

"She is the best guard in the state and without question the best guard I have ever seen emerge from our league," said Baker, who is normally very cautious with his praise of individual players.

"THE UNIQUE thing about this team is that it is built around one player," Baker added. "I don't normally do that. But given Yvette's talents, I'd be a fool not to. She's simply a cut above in terms of ability — not just above her teammates, but above some of her peers at other schools."



photos by RICK SMITH/staff photographer

Yvette Maison, one of the premier guards in the state, will be shouldering a heavy work load for Farmington Hills Mercy this season.

Maison, an All-Area, all-state choice last year, was named Best Playmaker at the All-Stater Basketball Camp this summer.

"One aspect of her game that has been the least appreciated is her shooting ability," Baker said. "She'll put it up this year."

Seniors Margaret DeMattia, a driving force in Mercy's late-season push last year, and Maria Dietz, plus juniors Jan Herberholz, Adrienne Clark, Slosar and Maureen Seullen are the key returnees for the Marlins.

DeMattia and Herberholz have shown the ability to score inside. They will have to make a strong contribution on the boards for Mercy to compete with the larger teams.

"I've said this about 300 times already: Jennifer Slosar will be our leading rebounder and everybody else will have to rebound beyond that," Baker said.

BAKER is high on Clark. An explosive player, Clark has many of

the same physical talents Terri Ford flashed in her sophomore and junior seasons. She will be crucial in Mercy's fast-paced attack.

Dietz and Seullen are battling for playing time at the off-guard spot.

Colleen Clinton, Patti Chapp and Kim Baldwin should also see action this season.

"Obviously, our lack of size will affect our style of play," Baker said. "We have good ball handlers and everyone on the team can run. We can't wait for teams to just wade in and

pound on us. It's more important than ever for us to play our game."

Mercy's schedule, again, is severe. Aside from the Catholic League foes, Mercy will play Canton, Plymouth Salem, Saginaw and Sarnia St. Patrick's — no slouches in the bunch.

Bottom line? Mercy has a long, tough road ahead if it envisions ending its Catholic League title drought. But come to think of it, that young untested 1982 team didn't win the Catholic League title either.

Food for thought.



Adrienne Clark should add punch to Mercy both offensively and defensively.

Preseason glance at area teams

BISHOP BORGESS

- Head coach: Mike Fietzer, third season.
- Last year's overall record: 2-18.
- League affiliation: Catholic League Central Division (10-10).
- Notable losses to graduation: Cheryl Livingston, guard.
- Leading returnees: Tanisha Stokes, sophomore center; Kelly Falty, junior guard; Melissa Hunt, sophomore forward.
- Promising newcomers: Pat Hines, sophomore center-forward.
- Fietzer's '86 outlook: "We think we can be more competitive in the non-conference portion of our schedule."
- "We have some decent young players on our team, but we lack depth, maturity and experience. We do not have the talent to match the teams in our division."
- "We'll probably be at the bottom of our league. Hopefully we will fare better against teams the caliber of Redford Union or Thurston, whom we play also."

LIVONIA LADYWOOD

- Head coach: Ed Kavanaugh, 11th season.
- Last year's overall record: 27-1.
- League affiliation: Catholic League Central Division (10-4).
- Titles won last year: Great Lakes Top-Cat, Central Division, Class B District, Regional and State championships.
- Notable losses to graduation: All-Area center Sue Laberta (Western Michigan University), Cathy Schram (Northwood Institute), Jenny Haszard, Debbie Lepinski and Mary Joy Konecni (all starters).
- Leading returnees: Nicole Ewald, senior point guard; Katie McElroy, 6-2 junior center; Monica Galt, 5-8 senior forward; Julie Oaks, 5-10 senior guard; Ann Marie Thomas, 5-4 junior guard.
- Promising newcomers: Mandy Chandler, 5-9 senior forward; Yvonne Barnett, 5-5 sophomore guard.
- Kavanaugh's '86 outlook: "It's a way to early to tell how good we'll be. We have to replace all five starters. We'll rely again on balance and depth."
- "Defensively we know what we're doing. We're a lot more this summer, but we won't run at the time. I think our girls can adjust well."

REDFORD ST. AGATHA

- Head coach: Jim Murphy, 10th season.
- Last year's overall record: 2-15.
- League affiliation: Catholic League C-D Division (2-10).

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RANDY BOST/staff photographer

Joan Anzlover will trigger North Farmington's offense this season for new head coach Greg Capling.

North's fate rests in 'D;' Falcons, Hawks regroup

By Bill Parkor
staff writer

Defense.

That's what North Farmington girls varsity basketball coach Greg Capling is stressing to his team this season.

Capling is in his first season as head coach at North Farmington, having taken over the program Greg Grodzicki coached to a 14-9 finish last year. Grodzicki is currently teaching in Swansea, Wales, on the Fulbright Teacher Exchange program.

"Defense must be our strength in order for us to be successful," said Capling. "We have good team speed but we don't have the big individual scorer. Our scoring should be pretty balanced, but our inside scoring will be tough because of our lack of height."

Heather McPhillips, an all-league center for the Raiders last year, was lost to graduation, and Capling admits "her shoes will be hard to fill."

But North Farmington returns a good group of juniors and seniors, and Capling believes the team will be competitive in the '86 season.

LEADING RETURNÉES include senior forwards Sandy Spahn (5-foot-7) and Maureen O'Brien (5-7); senior guards Jean Anzlover (5-1), Renee Fishell (5-8) and Rory Talamini (5-2).

Robyn Weatherford (5-9) is in line to take over the starting center position. Also returning is junior forward Suzi Butcher (5-10).

Capling also expects big things from freshmen guards Jenny Bustford and Kim Gurek.

"Right now we have some nagging injuries that are hindering our practices," said Capling. "But we could surprise some teams with good defense and balanced scoring once we get started."

pre-season favorites but doesn't rule out the Raiders' chances.

"Naturally we'd like to finish first, but realistically it's going to be tough to crack the top three," said Capling. "We should be competitive with most of the teams in the area, and if we can get scoring from our inside people we could be tough. Again defense is the key because scoring is going to be an area where we'll really have to work."

FARMINGTON

In her second season at the varsity helm at Farmington High School, Diana Fair (formerly Diana Schwartz) looks to improve on last year's bleak 2-19 mark. And she believes this year's team has the ability to do just that.

"We are hoping to be and quite capable of being in every game," said Fair. "The Salfems and Cantons are still a tremendous challenge but we have the potential to beat any team on our schedule. This team has a lot of heart and a super attitude."

Despite the loss of its leading rebounder, Lisa Spence, Farmington returns a seasoned crop of talented players.

Senior Becky Philp, a 5-9 forward, and junior Stacy Swanderski, a 5-7 guard, return to lead the team after receiving first team All-Area honorable mention last year.

Also returning from the 1985 campaign are junior Kelli Koss, a 5-2 guard; seniors Carrie Hale, a 5-3 guard; and Tracy Jourden, a 5-10 center-forward.

Newcomer Linda Hacker, a 5-7 forward who transferred from Milford, is also expected to add depth to the lineup over the next two seasons.

improve with each game and peak at the end of the season."

For a team that lacks size, Fair feels the Falcons will stay away from serious trouble with their speed and ball control.

"We are essentially a small team. We have no big post players, but we should be able to compensate with our quickness and speed. Moving the ball rapidly will enable us to score both inside and out, which we are capable of even without a large post player."

FARMINGTON HARRISON

Cosching a team that hasn't had a victory in its last three seasons (61 games) is not an ideal situation for a coach to step into. But that's exactly what first-year coach Jim Neve did when he accepted the assignment of girls varsity basketball coach at Farmington Harrison.

Neve was an assistant to former head coach Chris Lessnau last year, so he is no stranger to the Harrison program. Prior to that he coached at St. Dunstan in Garden City for 12 seasons.

Naturally, the Hawks' top priority this season is to chalk up a mark in the win column. Although the season has yet to begin, the prospect of a victory looks better than ever. Harrison enters the '86 season with a 14-player roster, up six members from the eight-player roster they sported last year.

"This year we have more strength on the bench and we should be able to stay in the games longer," said Neve. "Our main goal is to get that monkey off our back and get our first win. The sooner we can do that the better off we'll be. Then we can relax and try some different things."

The 61 consecutive losses is a state record.

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