

## Sports

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(F10)

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C.J. Risak

## JUCO athletes battle unjust negative image

Second of two parts.

**T**HE JUNIOR COLLEGE athlete is branded. The best JC athletes aren't smart enough; the smartest JC athletes aren't good enough. So what is John Gelmi doing at Schoolcraft College? Wasn't he smart enough to go to a four-year college after graduating from Livonia Stevenson? His 3.1 grade point and high scores on entrance exams suggest he was.

So wasn't he good enough? All-state in soccer, he narrowly missed all-American honors. He was named to the prep all-Midwest team.

So what's Gelmi doing at a JC? "Some (college soccer) programs automatically won't play freshmen or sophomores," he explained. "I thought, coming here, I would learn more by playing than by sitting on the bench."

**GELMI** WANTED to play soccer, not watch it. At Michigan State University, he was told he would watch from the sidelines his freshman season. Plus there was money to consider. Full-ride soccer scholarships are rare; MSU has just one, which is split among several players.

Gelmi chose to attend and play soccer at SC while living at home. He also has worked and was able to save money for next year, when he plans to enroll at MSU to pursue a business degree.

"I had my fun; I played soccer and saved some money," said Gelmi.

Gelmi's choice was based in logic. He had decisions to make. He sorted through them and made the one he felt would be best. At present, Gelmi isn't even sure he'll play soccer at MSU.

**CARLOS BRIGGS** had no such decisions to make. Briggs came out of Detroit. Benedictine with a grade-point average a bit too low (1.95) to earn him a major college scholarship. So Briggs enrolled at SC and became the school's best basketball player.

"It helped me a whole lot," said Briggs, who spent a less favorable

two-year stint at Baylor University after his two years at SC. "I think sports in a JC helps guys. It helped me mature, to get used to a college atmosphere and get my goals together, to find out what I want."

Briggs was the top NJCAA scorer during his stay at SC. He went on to enjoy a productive junior year at Baylor before running afoul of a new coach and getting caught up in recruiting scandals as a senior.

Still, he was drafted in the fourth round by the NBA's San Antonio Spurs. He did not make the team, so he will play in the Continental Basketball Association this year.

"I HAD some friends go off to four-year schools and they didn't do too well, either playing or in school," said Briggs. "It's a lot of responsibility for a guy coming right out of high school."

But going to a JC did more for Briggs than just allow him to get his grades in order. He was recruited by several schools for basketball when he graduated from high school, "but not by as many as when I came out of Schoolcraft."

Still, Briggs faced the same prejudice other JC athletes are confronted with. "Some guys look down at a guy for going to a JC instead of a four-year school," he said. "It's hard for kids to accept that, coming out of high school."

"But kids shouldn't be influenced by friends. I'd tell them there's nothing wrong with going to a JC." Briggs' athletic career blossomed at SC. Academically, he's 17 hours short of a degree in communications. He plans to attend summer classes at Baylor to finish up.

**EXAMPLES LIKE** Gelmi and Briggs make JC athletes look appealing. What else could a four-year coach ask for? An athlete with two years of college playing experience and enough time to adjust to college academics seems ideal.

And yet, most coaches still would rather recruit freshmen. They view JC players as stop-gap or emergency measures who can

Please turn to Page 4

## Falcons rule WLAA!

By Bill Parker  
staff writer

It's official. What everyone speculated throughout the high school cross country season was verified Tuesday afternoon at Walled Lake's Willis Park.

Farmington's boys and girls cross country teams are the best in the

Western Lakes Activities Association.

It was the second year in a row that Farmington High School won both ends of the WLAA cross country meet.

The Falcons boys took top honors with 40 points followed by Walled Lake Central with 67, Northville with 94, Walled Lake Western with 121, and Plymouth Canton with 146.



BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Bonnie Stecker was the first Farmington girl to cross the finish line Tuesday. Her time of 20:58 was third overall, helping the Falcons win the title for the second straight year.

The girls captured the title with 48 points followed by Walled Lake Central with 66, Plymouth Salem with 110, Livonia Stevenson with 144 and North Farmington with 151.

The smooth running of Farmington's Chris Inch astounded many of the competitors. Gliding through the tough, hilly course at what appeared to be an effortless pace, Inch won the boys race setting a new course record of 16:28. Walled Lake Western's Kyle Chura set the previous record of 16:41 in 1983.

"INCH was incredible. He breezed through the course," said a Western harrier after the race was over. "It was more like he floated through it," replied another.

Farmington's No. 3 man Brandon London surprised race officials by finishing second overall at 16:50. Al Stebbins, who recently returned from an injury, placed 10th for the Falcons at 17:22 followed by Ron Smedley, 13th at 17:29, and Matt Walter, 14th at 17:35.

"I'm very happy to have won," said Inch. "It was a tough, tough course. My time wasn't all that great, but for this course it will do. The hills were really tough. They just killed you. At about 2 1/2 miles into the race, there was a real steep down hill and I got going pretty fast. I started to get tired but I got my wind back near the end and was able to pick it up."

It was the third league title in as many years for the Falcons boys, which pleased coach Jerry Young.

"WE DID WHAT we were supposed to do. We won it," said Young. "It doesn't always work out that way, but this time it did. The kids are really coming along. They all did real well. Brandon (London) did a super job. We were hoping he'd finish seventh or eighth. And Chris just drilled them. He broke the course record by 13 seconds."

Stebbins, London, Smedley and Walters are the ones that really carry the team. Inch is always in there. He's dependable. It's the other kids that decide where we finish as a team."

In the girls competition, a strong finish by Bonnie Stecker, third at 20:58, and Jennifer Kell, fourth at 21:00, enabled the lady Falcons to run away with the winners trophy.

**LIVONIA CHURCHILL'S** Karen Kantor won the race with a time of 20:39, followed by Walled Lake Central's Colleen Yuhn at 20:53. Farmington's Nicole Jelley placed seventh

## cross country

WESTERN LAKES  
CROSS COUNTRY MEET  
Tuesday at Willis Park

**BOYS TEAM RESULTS:** 1. Farmington, 40 points; 2. Walled Lake Central, 67; 3. Northville, 94; 4. Walled Lake Western, 121; 5. Plymouth Canton, 146; 6. Livonia Stevenson, 144; 7. Farmington Harrison, 151; 8. North Farmington, 151; 9. Livonia Franklin, 156; 10. Livonia Franklin, 156; 11. Livonia Church, 234; 12. North Farmington, 312.

**BOYS INDIVIDUAL RESULTS:** 1. Chris Inch (Farm), 16:28 — new course record. Old mark was 16:41 set in 1983 by Kyle Chura of Walled Lake Western; 2. Brandon London (Farm), 16:50; 3. John Friske (PL), 16:54; 4. Kevin Haas (PL), 16:55; 5. Scott McLean (WLC), 17:12; 6. Al Stebbins (PL), 17:22; 7. Dan Leod (WLC), 17:24; 8. Kevin Jones (PL), 17:27; 9. Ron Smedley (Farm), 17:29; 10. Matt Walter (Farm), 17:35; 11. Mike Jensen (WLC), 17:39.

**GIRLS TEAM RESULTS:** 1. Farmington, 48; 2. Walled Lake Central, 66; 3. Plymouth Salem, 110; 4. Livonia Stevenson, 144; 5. North Farmington, 151; 6. Livonia Franklin, 156; 7. Plymouth Canton, 159; 8. Livonia Church, 234; 9. Walled Lake Western, 200; 10. Walled Lake Western, 200; 11. Farmington Harrison, 209; 12. Northville, did not finish.

**GIRLS INDIVIDUAL RESULTS:** 1. Karen Kantor (Farm), 20:39; 2. Colleen Yuhn (WLC), 20:53; 3. Jennifer Kell (Farm), 21:00; 4. Jennifer Kell (Farm), 21:00; 5. Nicole Jelley (Farm), 21:01; 6. Laurie Foto (WLC), 21:13; 7. Nicole Jelley (Farm), 21:14; 8. Karen Kuehl (LS), 21:20; 9. Jenny Anderson (PL), 21:22; 10. Shannon Donnelly (PL), 21:24; 11. Lisa Chummes (WLC), 21:31; 12. Michelle McDonald (WLC), 21:31; 13. Amy Trunk (Farm), 21:35; 14. Paula Blodgett (WLC), 21:41; 15. Cindy Spensard (PL), 21:45.

at 21:14 and teammate Amy Trunk finished 13th at 21:35.

"We're extremely happy," said Farmington girls coach John Barrett. "We really don't have any front-runners. We usually finish in a pack. We worked together as a team all year. We have a great sense of team attitude."

"We ran here last week and knew the hills would be our biggest obstacle. We did hills all week in practice and it really paid off. We caught people and made up some time on the hills."

Both teams will compete in the class A regional tournament Saturday afternoon in Ann Arbor.

## Harrison, North Farmington brace for WLAA showdown

By Chris McCosky  
staff writer

There's a bit more at stake Saturday than the mythical Farmington city football championship. Heck, this is even more important than the famed Taco Bowl title that was revived last season. This is immense.

And the best part is, we'll do it all over again a week from Saturday.

The mournful groan you just heard came from the two coaching staffs.

Here's what's on the line Saturday when North Farmington hooks up with rival Farmington Harrison:

- The Western Lakes Activities Association championship. Harrison, for the fifth straight year, is the champion of the Western Division. North shared the Lakes Division title with Livonia Stevenson and Westland John Glenn but earned the right to play Saturday because of its edge in state playoff points.

- A berth in the state playoffs. For North to make it into the Class A state tournament, it cannot lose to Class B Harrison. Not this Saturday, nor the following Saturday when the teams play their regularly scheduled non-league finale. Even if North wins both games, a playoff berth isn't guaranteed. A 14-9 loss to Livonia Stevenson continues to keep the Raiders on the fringe of the playoff picture. Harrison, on the other hand, could clinch a playoff spot with a pair of wins.

- Civic pride: These two schools enjoy proud and successful football traditions. Countless debates have been waged at Farmington-area watering holes and eateries — many between the players at the Taco Bell restaurant on Orchard Lake Road — over which is the better team. From 1981 to 1985, talk was all there was because the two teams didn't play

## 1986 RECAP

The following are the paths taken by North Farmington and Farmington Harrison to Saturday's Western Lakes Championship game.

**WEEK 1**  
North 21, Southfield-Lathrup 7  
West Bloomfield 28, Harrison 27

**WEEK 2**  
North 7, Walled Lake Western 6  
Harrison 29, Farmington 6

**WEEK 3**  
Livonia Stevenson 14, North 9  
Harrison 14, Livonia Franklin 7

**WEEK 4**  
North 9, John Glenn 7  
Harrison 12, Northville 3

**WEEK 5**  
North 20, Walled Lake Central 12  
Harrison 21, Livonia Churchill 7

**WEEK 6**  
North 22, Plymouth Canton 14  
Harrison 7, Plymouth Canton 0

**WEEK 7**  
North 24, Farmington 7  
Harrison 28, Walled Lake Western 3

**WEEK 8**  
North (6-1) at Harrison (0-1), 1 p.m. Saturday.

each other. But from 1971 to 1981 the issue was settled on the gridiron. Harrison won six games to North's five.

Last year, the teams renewed the rivalry and Harrison won bragging rights 21-9.

**AND HOW** about an touch of irony: Harrison head coach John Herrington coached under former North boss Ron Holland. North head coach Jim O'Leary and Herrington used to coach together. North assistant coach Irv Horwitz coached with Herrington. Another North assistant,

Dave Thorne, was a standout player for Harrison at Harrison. Still another North assistant, Mark Babcock, teaches and coaches track at Harrison.

Saturday's game will be as emotion-packed as an Italian opera.

If fact, one of the coaches' toughest assignments this week will be keeping the emotions from overwhelming their players.

"They way we're looking at it, we are representing the Lakes Division and they are representing the Western. It's a big game because the championship is at stake. We're trying not to overemphasize this because we don't want them overly keyed-up," O'Leary said.

Said Herrington: "We're not talking about the state playoffs. Sure, it's in the back of our minds, but the league championship has been our primary goal all season. Somebody asked me if we would hold something back from this game and save it for the second game. That's ridiculous. You go all out for the league championship, then you go back and give what you have left the next time out."

North has been ranked ahead of Harrison all season, but the team's are evenly matched. Both have potent offensive weapons and stingy defenses.

North's top gun is potential all-state running back Scott Selzer. Selzer has gained 1,061 yards this season. That's just 15 short of Brad Pease's 1972 North single-season rushing mark. He's easily the most dangerous back in Observeland this season.

**BUT HARRISON** isn't preparing for a one-dimensional attack.

"It would be a big mistake to de-

Please turn to Page 2



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