

Slam jam

Raiders regroup after '85-'86 skid

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Last year was a nightmare for the North Farmington volleyball team. The Raiders finished below .500 (11-16) for the first time since 1978. But that wasn't what made it a nightmare.

"Last year's team was not a fun team," said coach Sandy Lubienicki. "And having fun is what it's all about. You are like a family for the winter. You have to get along. Last year's team didn't get along and it showed on the court."

If one weekend can be any indication, this year's Raiders team should be far different than last year's.

North Farmington opened its 1986-87 campaign by winning the six-team Mount Clemens Invitational last Saturday. The Raiders knocked off Romeo in the championship match 15-4, 13-15, 15-13.

"I thought we played pretty well especially since we were without Sandy Spahn," Lubienicki said. Spahn is still nursing an injury sustained during basketball season. "And we didn't really hit well. But we passed the ball so well that it made up for our hitting problems."

Twins Tammy and Terry Spengler picked up the slack for North. Tammy Spengler had the hot hand from the service corner with a 94 percent efficiency rating. Both Tammy and Terry were consistent passers and back row players.

Suzi Butcher, a junior, began spiking the ball with authority in the semifinals and finals Saturday. She and Spahn are expected to carry much of the load at the net for North this season.

Lubienicki said the most improved player in camp thus far has been junior Stephanie Knapp. Knapp is perhaps the most dangerous

volleyball

server on the team and she has improved both at the net and in the back row, according to Lubienicki.

Kris McMillan is back for her senior year. The three-year standout will, barring injury, expect North's all-time leader in digs. Although defense is her specialty, the 5-2 hustler can also score at the net.

Junior Missy Bossacavan and sophomore Kelly Coulson will contribute at the net, as well.

North is strong and deep at the setter position. Junior Carrie Lee, senior Rory Talamini and sophomore Debbie Wientraub will share the spot.

"We feel very positive about this season," Lubienicki said. "The girls seem to get along. And when you get along off the court you play better on the court."

FARMINGTON HARRISON

Speaking of improved teams. The Hawks were 20-13 last year and lost five talented players to graduation. But coach Ron Shortt expects bigger and better things this season.

"We are quicker than last year," he said. "We've gained some speed. I don't know, we lost a lot of really good players but I see a better team right now than last year."

Part of Shortt's optimism can be caused by the apparent improvement of senior Janine Whittemore. Always a talented player and potentially dangerous spiker, Whittemore appears to have her total game in good working order. She had 29 kills, 15 ace serves and 30 digs during Harrison's tournament run last weekend.

Also returning from last year's squad are seniors Heidi Reyst, Katie

Doll, Theresa Spisz and Dawn Culbertson.

Shortt expects junior Heather Willer to assume a starting position. Senior Almee Katz and sophomore Darcy Pizini should also see plenty of action.

"We have a good group of six or seven kids," Shortt said. "Willer didn't play last weekend and that kind of hurt us a bit. But I'm looking forward to a good year."

FARMINGTON

Maureen McNabb was understandably apprehensive about this season. After last season's 1-15 performance and with the season starting earlier than ever before, well, she just didn't know what to expect. Alas, the second-year Falcons coach was pleasantly surprised.

Her Falcons posted a 3-5 record in pool play at the Harrison Invitational last Saturday (that's three more games than it had won in the tourney last year) and on Monday, the team beat Novi 15-5, 15-8.

"So far, I'm very excited," McNabb said. "It seems like everybody is working toward the same goal — unlike last year."

The Falcons return a strong nucleus of veteran players. Junior setter Lori Casaroli and senior Anna Quenneville will captain the team. Tracey Jourden, a 6-0 slammer, is back along with junior Kelli Koss and seniors Leslie Martin and Tracy Schreen.

Bolstering that group is a trio of promising newcomers. Junior Stacy Swanderski appears to have won a starting spot with her strong net play and serve. Sophomore Katie McDonald has been impressive. Andrea Garbarino, a junior transfer, should also help out.

The volleyball season will resume Wednesday, Jan. 7. Farmington will travel to Northville, North Farmington to Plymouth Canton and Harrison to Livonia Stevenson.



Tammy Spengler is one of several returning North Farmington spikers hoping to help put the program back on the winning track in 1986-87.

Dearborn captures Hawk title

Dearborn High School captured the second Farmington Harrison Invitational Volleyball Tournament last Saturday.

Dearborn topped Ann Arbor Pioneer 15-5, 15-12 in the finals of the 10-team tournament.

"Dearborn struggled a bit in pool play, but they really got it going in the finals," said Harrison coach and tournament director Ron Shortt.

Harrison placed fourth in the tournament losing the consolation game to West Bloomfield 18-16.

Dearborn had ousted Harrison in the semifinals, 19-13, 15-10. Pioneer knocked off West Bloomfield in the other semifinal match, 7-15, 15-7, 15-11.

Janine Whittemore was the top performer for the Hawks. She posted 29 kills, 15 service aces and 30 digs. Katie Doll had 29 kills and Theresa Spisz 23. Setter Heidi Reyst had 47 assists.

North falls

Jeff Dwyer's debut with the North Farmington gymnastics team was successful Monday night.

The Raiders, 129.1 points, outscored both Ann Arbor Pioneer (123.6) and Clarenceville (107.8).

Dwyer, a 1986 North Farmington grad and a member of the Western Michigan University gymnastics team the past four years, replaced longtime North coach Mary Glitz who retired after last season.

"Mary Glitz handed down a nice program," Dwyer said.

Indeed, Seniors Lucine Toroyan and Kara Karhu were impressive Monday. Toroyan won the uneven parallel bars (8.45), the balance beam (8.6) and floor exercise (8.7). Her all-around score of 34.4 was tops in the meet.

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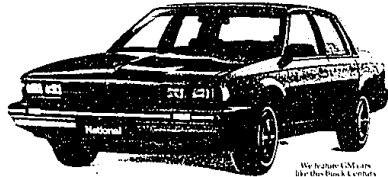
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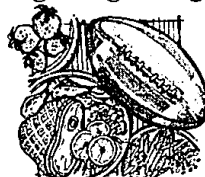
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