

Sports

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Falcon harriers win 4th straight title

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Unlike past years, Farmington went into Tuesday's Western Lakes boys cross country championship race unsure of what might take place.

But the result was the same as it has been the previous three years with the Falcons taking their fourth straight league crown at Schoolcraft College.

Farmington was the not the runaway winner it has been in other league meets. The Falcons edged Walled Lake Central by two points, 85-87.

Plymouth Salem, the only team to beat Farmington in the dual-meet season and the Lakes Division champion, was third (100). Plymouth Canton finished fourth (102) and Western Division champ Livonia Franklin took fifth (130). (See complete scoring summary on statistical page.)

"We came into this not knowing what we were going to do," Farmington coach Jerry Young said. "Other years we'd come into the conference meet knowing we were going to win it. Today we knew we were in a dogfight."

BRANDON LONDON finished lower than expected, but was still the Falcons' top runner with a 10th-place effort. Teammate Matt Walter was 12th, Brad Moore 17th, Rob Holloway 22nd and Ron Smedley 24th. The latter held the key to Farmington's repeat performance. Steve Quenneville didn't run because of a knee injury, and Smedley was running his first varsity race after missing much of the season with either an injury or illness.

Young was counting on either him, Greg Endres or Eric Crawford to balance the team in the No. 5 spot. Smedley responded by running 50 seconds faster (17:32) than he previously had and leaving just 17 seconds between Farmington's Nos. 1-5 runners.

"I told them 'One of you guys has to do it, or we're not going to win it,'" Young said. "(Smedley) ran his heart out and saved the day. One of them had to stay with (Rob) Holloway; two of them did and we were all right."

— Jerry Young
Farmington boys coach

boys cross country

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Holloway 17:28 with Smedley finishing off the victory. The Falcons underscored the word team in that London didn't have his best of days. But enough of the others did and the Falcons prevailed once more.

"We had kids come in and pick up for Brandon, who just could not get his wheels going," Young said.

"Unfortunately, London had a hard day — and the other kids supported him. Salem had their troubles, too. So did we but we were able to hold together better than they did."

The Rocks, who were led by third-place Doug Vergari and bolstered by Bill Atwell in 15th and Brandon

Masteron in 19th, had hoped to have five men in the low 17:30s, but it didn't work out that way. Salem's Nos. 4-5 were 31st and 34th.

"It was nice to come in having beaten them in the dual, but a meet like this is up for grabs," Salem coach Geoff Baker said. "If one guy runs bad it can blow your whole score."

"FARMINGTON came back and showed its strength, and Walled Lake Central put it all together today. I'm sure Jerry (Young) had a long talk with (his Farmington team) after our meet and told them what they had to do."

Jay Swiecki captured fifth place to lead Canton, which gained a measure of revenge for a pair of dual-meet losses to Livonia Franklin and Walled Lake Western, which had the top individual runner in Brian Grosz (16:14).

Franklin had won the Western Division championship and was 7-0 in dual meets. Charlie Olshanski led the Patriots with a sixth-place finish.

"If we didn't run our best, we knew we could slip that far," Franklin coach Bob Holmes said. "This was a decent performance, but not like our last two (dual meets)."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer
Brandon London was first-place Farmington's No. 1 runner in 10th place.

Mercy dethrones coach's former team

Steve Servais has coached another girls cross country team to the Catholic League championship.

Make that another school, too.

Farmington Hills Mercy captured its first league title in nine years Saturday and dethroned Servais' former team, Harper Woods Regina, in the process.

Servais had guided the Saddlelites to three straight league championships, but he was told at the end of the 1986 season he could no longer coach at Regina after he had taken a teaching job with the Detroit Public Schools.

"I didn't really want to leave there," Servais said. "Yeah, there was a little added incentive to spur (the Mercy runners) on and beat Regina." The Marlins had the second-place runner in Melora Kordel, who was 10 seconds off the pace set by the individual winner, Michelle Gayney of Bishop Borgess, at 21:42 on the Marsh Bank Metro Park course.

BARB CIEANEY, a senior co-captain along with Kordel, was 10th at 22:21, and Mercy wrapped up when sophomores Wendy Knight and Brigitte Dery and senior Elizabeth Galvin finished close together in the Nos. 18, 20 and 21 places, respectively. Knight was clocked at 22:41, Dery 22:56 and Galvin 22:57.

Mercy's seven-runner contingent included junior Debbi Cool in 24th place at 23:00 and sophomore Sande Taylor in the 26th spot at 23:08.

girls cross country

The Marlins recorded a 71-point total, Birmingham Marian took runner-up honors in a close duel with Allen Park Cabrini (the Mustangs had 94 points, the Monarchs 95) and Regina was fourth with 105.

The dual meet between Mercy and the Saddlelites finished in a tie, but several of the Marlins placed higher in the league meet, which had been Mercy's No. 1 goal from the start of the season.

Kordel moved up one place from the dual meet and beat the two Regina girls to whom she had lost earlier, and Cheaney defeated another whom she had previously finished behind on Regina's flat course. The Marsh Bank course, with its hilly terrain, provided a better test of cross country, Servais said.

WHILE THE top five Marlins crossed the line within 1 1/4 minutes of each other Saturday, Regina had three of the top 11 runners but its next two were in the 40s.

Servais said he never counted on Kordel doing so well since she turned an

ankle last Wednesday, but added she ran a "gutsy race."

The Marlins never worried about dual-meet results this fall, concentrating their energies on league meet and Saturday's regional at Royal Oak Kimball, he added. Having accomplished its primary goal, Mercy hopes to be among the top three regional teams and then finish among the top 15 at the state meet.

"The kids planned on it, and all our workouts were built around running well the next two Saturdays," Servais said.

The first year Servais coached at Regina, 10 of the 18 girls on the team were freshmen. But he has seven seniors on this Mercy outfit, and the added experience and maturity helped make the team successful and led to a smooth coaching transition.

"IT WAS really unusual to just come in from nowhere and have them follow me," he said. "Since they're seniors, they've been coached by another person for three years."

"Plus, I've had good kids at each school. They seem to buy into what I say, and they work hard at it."

Servais added the Mercy administration has been more supportive of the team and program, noting the principal and athletic director both attended meets this fall. The school also treated the runners to breakfast Wednesday and designated it "spirit day" in honor of the cross country team.

Making parents, athletes alert to substance abuse

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Any ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

That bit of time-honored wisdom can apply to anything with dreadful consequences, including substance abuse.

At a time in American sports history when college and professional athletes are dying from cocaine use and entering drug and alcohol treatment centers, the North Farmington School District is responding to the problem at large.

In conjunction with Farmington Families in Action, which promotes parental involvement with teens and young adults, North Farmington tackled the problem head-on Monday night.

In an attempt to reduce and/or prevent its athletes from stumbling into the pitfall of drug and alcohol use, it took the initiative and conducted a seminar on the subject of substance abuse awareness.

THE PROGRAM was mandatory for athletes playing a fall sport, but was aimed as much at the parents, hoping to make them aware of the tell-tale signs and heftier their awareness of possible problems with their sons or daughters.

"Kids are way more sophisticated than parents give them credit for," said Al Dicken, who deals with such problems as coordinator of student services and district health coordinator in the West Bloomfield School District.

"As a parent I want to believe my son (or daughter), and I'm going to accept that he's got a drug problem?"

Besides listening to Dicken's presentation about the various drugs available today and their effects, the near-capacity audience of 500 in the near-auditorium heard a wrenching, first-hand account from Ed Lynch, a former Birmingham Brother Rice athlete who overcame his addiction to alcohol and drugs.

Tom Negoshian, North's varsity boys basketball coach and chairman of the committee that organized the

'Thank God, (the substance abuse awareness seminar) is not a reaction to a death.'

— Al Dicken
WB health coordinator

See Ed Lynch story, 5D

seminar, said the program was not the result of any particular or increased problems at North, but rather a response to the problem in society as a whole.

"IT'S A pat on the school district's back, because they're the ones who are willing to support (the seminar) with the monetary backing and saying, 'Yes, we're going to deal with this problem in our society,'" Negoshian said.

"Thank, God, it's not a reaction to a death," added Dicken.

There is no A-B-C approach to preventing drug and alcohol abuse, Dicken said, because of the individual choice involved. But education and bringing parents more to the center of the prevention movement are ways to curtail the problem.

"It's like a learning disability," Dicken said. "You can't make the learning disability go away," because kids are still going to use drugs and alcohol.

But a percentage can be reached, and all can be assured that help is always available. The latter is the big difference between the way such problems were handled years ago and today, Negoshian said.

"IN THE old days, they used a little prevention and suspended the kid (from school)," he said. "Now we've gone to a lot of prevention, dealing with the problem and getting help for the kids."

Dicken added suspension in itself

was not a cure and professionals such as himself are now treating substance abuse as a disease.

"Ed Lynch was a good kid, but he was sick and he went five years (without help)," he said. "He might be playing pro ball if he had a program like this."

"That's why I don't feel bad turning in a kid like Ed Lynch," Negoshian added. "Because you're not just going to kick him out of school. You're going to help him."

The problem, however, is much more serious and the enticements more prevalent today than they were 20, even 10, years ago, both said. And the danger is increased when one considers, as Dicken noted, the marijuana sold on the street today is 100-200 times more potent than when it was part of the 1960s counter-culture.

"If I polled the parents (attending Monday's seminar) and asked what drugs were available when they were growing up and if they knew who to ask for the drugs, they'd say no," Dicken said.

"A young person today can tell you who to ask or find out pretty quick," he added.

But, while North Farmington acknowledges some of its own students have, will or could fall into the trap of substance abuse, it is a problem that pervades society and can't be successfully dealt with by just the schools, which are merely part of the larger community.

"The only way you're going to stop it is to get to these kids (through education) and change the attitude of this country," Dicken said.

"When a (school) district feels there's a reading problem, it does something about it," Negoshian said. "If our district feels society has a drug and alcohol problem, we want to do something about it."

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