

Defense pre-season concern for Mercy

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Mercy soccer coach Gene Fogel's dilemma is just the opposite of the one he faced last year.

The Marlins were a strong defensive team a year ago, but they had trouble scoring goals. In fact, four of Mercy's five losses were decided by one-goal margins.

Now it appears Fogel will have a more productive offense, and defense becomes the question mark in the 1988 pre-season.

Mercy lost a pair of excellent defenders, Margaret DeMatia and Leigh Clancy, to graduation, leaving some big shoes to fill.

"Defense is my big concern, because we have a lot of girls who are natural offensive players and defense doesn't come naturally to them," Fogel said.

THE MARLINS do return senior Maureen Scullen, an All-Catholic sweep, and Fogel

is taking what looks to be a big gamble by moving senior Stacy Nolta, the leading scorer the last two years, to the stopper position.

"If there's a problem with anybody taking over the center/forward position I wouldn't hesitate to move her up," Fogel said. "She's a natural center/forward, but she's also an intimidator."

"I took some convincing that was how she should help the team best. But she's a real hard worker and put the team ahead of herself."

Sophomore Anne Scullen has moved from halfback to fullback to help shore up the defense, and either one of two juniors, Erica James or Leigh Ann Gallagher, will be the fourth defender.

The lineup could change when sophomore Liz DeMatia returns in several weeks from a broken ankle, and sophomore Sue Marshall also will see plenty of playing time in the rotation of fresh players.

soccer

FOGEL THOUGHT he could afford to move Nolta to defense because of his confidence in a trio of newcomers, freshman Dana Lehnkuhl, Michelle Geyer and Kathryn Dudley. All three have played competitively on select teams and bring considerable experience to their high school debuts.

"It's been amazing the last 5-6 years what the level of competitive soccer for girls has been," Fogel said. "The kids are playing top-notch soccer from age 12 on."

"It's not as big a difference for 13-year-olds with two years of Little Caesars soccer going into high school as you might think."

Sophomores Kathy McDonald and Rachel

DeMaseo are back from last year's team and will either start or see a lot of playing time. Fogel believes the five young forwards will give Mercy the complete offense it lacked last year and offset Nolta's move to defense.

"It looks like we'll be able to score some goals," he said. "I'm beginning to believe the best defense will be a strong offense."

"WITH THE number of offensive players we've got, we'll be looking to attack, attack, attack and keep (the opposition) out of the goal one less time than we're in the goal."

The Marlins return seniors Colleen Rattery and Karen Baldas at halfback, and sophomore Carrie Bowler and junior Lisa Kulha will either start or play a lot.

In the net, Mercy has an experienced goalkeeper in senior Kelly Beaudry, with freshman Renee Larabell backing her up.

The Marlins were 4-5-5 last year, marking the first time in four years of playing the

sport Mercy didn't win a minimum of 12 games or make it to the Catholic League final. The Marlins were beaten in the league semifinals by eventual winner Birmingham Marian.

Mercy, which won two league championships and was runner-up once, had a combined record of 38-9-2 in its first three years of competition.

WITH WHAT could be Mercy's best freshman class, Fogel hopes the newcomers can mesh with the veteran players and make the Marlins a winner again.

"We're playing our toughest schedule ever in non-league games," he said, adding he hopes it will toughen up his team and prepare it for the main goals, the Catholic League playoffs and state tournament. "I'd rather have a 1-1 loss to a good (non-league) team than a 10-0 win over a weak team."

Mercy opens its season Monday with a 7 p.m. game at Livonia Stevenson.

Defending champs still loaded with talent

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Plymouth Salem no longer is just another good team in girls soccer.

The Rocks truly arrived in the sport last year, emerging from the shadow of other Western Lakes powers to win their first league and state championships.

To its WLLA opponents and Class A ballclubs across the state, Salem is no longer just Plymouth Salem. It's now PLYMOUTH SALEM.

As the defending state champs, the Rocks are certain to draw out the best in the opposition, and duplicating last year's feat won't be easy.

But no one doubts the fact Salem, 17-2-2 overall and 11-1-2 in the league, has the players and talent to possibly win it all again.

WITH MANY key players returning, including All-American junior Jill Estey, the possibility of another successful season would seem certain.

"They definitely have the passion to win it again," said coach Ken Johnson of his players. "They're proud of being champions; they're all returning players."

"They have all the incentive to do it. But it will be tough, because we sneaked up on a couple people last year."

The Rocks expect to be challenged by Plymouth Canton, Farmington and Livonia Churchill again in the league, and Canton will be in the same district tournament with Salem again.

The Chiefs gave Salem one of its toughest games en route to the state title when the Rocks eked out a 3-2, overtime victory in the district final.

"I SAID THEN, if Canton had beaten us, they would have gone all the way, too," Johnson said.

The Rocks will probably be ranked among the state's top five teams in the first statewide poll, and



BILL DRESLER/staff photographer

Michelle Minton is expected to be one of Salem's top offensive threats once again after an outstanding freshman season that saw her score 25 goals, second only to All-American Jill Estey on Salem's state championship team. With juniors Estey and right forward Teri King returning, the Rocks keep their starting front-line unit intact and will do so again next season.

Salem lost only three starters to graduation from its 17-2-2 ballclub.

striker and right forward, respectively.

JOHNSON EXPECTS Minton, who scored 25 goals in her first year, and King to share the scoring load even more with Estey, and Minton could possibly become the primary scorer since Estey is likely to be a marked player.

"They're usually looking for Jill," Johnson said. "If you double team her, Michelle or Teri are going to get open."

"(Estey) will still have a ton of assists. She's always there when you need her, but she might be more of a playmaker, like a guard in basketball."

Estey, of course, has been the point guard on Salem's championship basketball teams for two years, and she has proved to be as adept at passing as she is at scoring in soccer.

King had 13 goals and nine assists

last season and Minton, whom Johnson said has made a 150 percent improvement over her impressive debut, six assists. Junior Andre Owers has been moved from a halfback position and will provide back up at forward.

The midfield area suffered the most losses with the graduation of Jennifer Belhart and Lisa Hysko, but Salem has three who gained considerable experience last year.

SENIOR RACHEL Thiet, junior Missy Smith and sophomore Sarah Hayes contributed to last year's success, and junior Kim Larner went up to the varsity for the tournament.

"All of them were good last year, but all have improved, too," said Johnson, adding any three could start.

Junior Michelle Bright, another halfback, is temporarily sidelined after having arthroscopic knee surgery and is expected to miss the first two or three weeks of the season, Johnson said.

The Rocks also lost All-Area defender Nicole Stojeba to graduation, but they have plenty of experience on defense, too.

Sophomore Jennifer Marshall will replace Stojeba at sweeper, and senior Tracy Krajewski will mark the other team's best player from the stopper position.

Salem returns juniors Melissa Uhl and Maria Wordhouse and sophomore Jennifer Degenhardt at fullback, and the Rocks have a key addition in sophomore Tracy Shough, a transfer from Churchill.

"ANY ONE OF those six can go in, so we'll have fresh legs out there," Johnson said.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, Salem returns its goalkeeper, senior Ellen Schnackel, and her backup, junior Jamie Royston.

"(Schnackel) could be the edge in a lot of games," Johnson said. "She had a good fall and indoor season."

"A lot of coaches in the area have talked about how they admire her. She could be in the running for some honors."

Johnson will carry 17 players on his roster, three fewer field players, instead of 20 like last year. With such a veteran varsity team, Johnson thought it would be hard for underclassmen to get much playing

time. Furthermore, Salem has many good young players who will get that playing time on the junior varsity, he said.

"We have ninth and 10th graders on the JV who could play on any other varsity," Johnson said. "To get a squad strong, I wanted them to get playing time."

"THE SQUAD WE have returning is so experienced they deserve to play a little more. So we're giving quality players more playing time, and we can bring JV players up in key situations."

Salem opens its season at 5:30 p.m. Monday with a home game against defending Catholic League champion Birmingham Marian.

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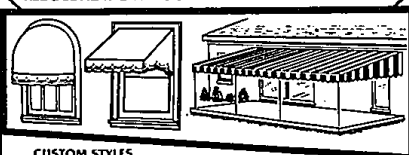
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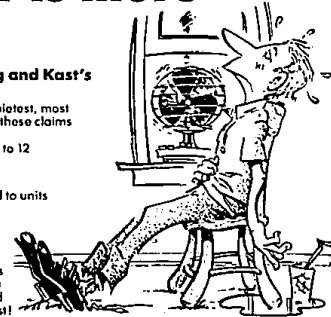
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