

CC to face Avery, for sure

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Redford Catholic Central didn't have to face pitching whiz Steve Avery during its march to the Class A baseball championship last year.

There will be no such luck this time, however, when the teams meet in a rematch of that first-round regional game Saturday at Plymouth Salem.

The Shamrocks, 23-10, take on Avery and his Taylor Kennedy teammates, 22-3, at 11 a.m., and the winner meets the survivor of the Westland John Glenn-Salem game, also slated for 11 a.m. on the Plymouth Canton diamond, in the 1:30 p.m. final.

Avery, as everyone knows by now, is the prep phenom who was the No. 1 pick — third overall of the Atlanta Braves in last week's major league draft.

He is waiting until after graduation to decide between a scholarship to Stanford University or turning pro, according to his coach, Wayne Hamilton.

IN FACT, THE 6-foot-4, 185-pound southpaw will miss graduation to play in the regional tournament. Furthermore, it was a graduation-related matter that kept Avery from pitching against the Shamrocks a year ago.

Pedro Fuentes, the No. 2 man on Kennedy's staff in 1987, wasn't going to miss graduation ceremonies since his family was flying in from Puerto Rico to witness the occasion.

"I was going to take a gamble and decided to throw Fuentes against CC in the first game since he wouldn't be around for the possible second game."

But that meant leaving the best pitcher unable to do his thing to get the Eagles to the championship. The Shamrocks won 1-0.

"That was the only choice I had," Hamilton said. "But how can I complain when Pedro throws a one-hitter and loses on an error. I don't think Steven could have done any better."

But it was as much a part of Hamilton's strategy to hold Avery in reserve after he took the advice of other coaches and thought Fuentes could handle CC.

baseball

"I HAVE A different philosophy this year," he said, making it clear he'll go with Avery right away. "You gotta win one game at a time."

The Shamrocks will face a pitcher who has compiled amazing statistics. Avery is 11-0 and has an incredible 0.29 earned run average. In 7 1/3 innings, he has 160 strikeouts and 20 walks.

"I don't think you need too much incentive more than just being in the regional," CC coach John Salter said, "but it will help get the kids fired up, knowing they're facing probably the best high school pitcher in the country."

"We can't give them too much, because he's only given up a couple of runs (3) all year. The key will be holding them down and to see if we can scratch out a run or two."

"If you play good defense and get good pitching, you've always got a chance," he added.

CC will counter with either junior left-hander Leo Hutchinson or senior right-hander Mike Dorocak.

HUTCHINSON IS 6-5 with an impressive 136 strikeouts but has given up 94 hits. He has issued 55 walks in 93 innings. Dorocak has a 6-3 record, 78 strikeouts and 31 walks in 31 fewer innings. Their ERAs are 4.04 and 2.79, respectively.

"(Hutchinson) has struggled a little with that (hits)," Salter said, "but he's won some big games this year, too."

Salter knows the key will be holding down the Eagles, who have relied as much if not more on their hitting than Avery's pitching, according to Hamilton.

The top three men in the Kennedy lineup — Chris Donahy, Chris Bronis and Avery — are the most dangerous hitters.

Avery is the leader at .520. He has a school-record hitting .520. Hamilton has struggled a little with that (hits), Salter said, "but he's won some big games this year, too."

ROB MOWERY AND Bronis, the Nos. 2 and 3 pitchers, have a combined record of 11-2, but they're "just good high school pitchers, not outstanding like Steve," Hamilton said. "Hitting is what's been carrying us."

While Avery gets all the attention, Hamilton points out the Eagles have seven others "who play just as well as he does." Seven of the nine regulars have hit over-.300 since homers.

The Shamrocks are led by shortstop Kevin Rogers (.369) and third baseman John Gotsis (.355). Both have 38 hits apiece, seven for extra bases, and 18 and 30 RBI, respectively.

Sophomore right fielder Paul Pirronello, who played on the JV team until the tournament, has given CC a lift by going 7-for-16 in post-season play.

Salter noted that playing 3-2 ball in the Catholic League seemed to help the team's hitting when the state tournament rolls around. The Shamrocks have scored 30 runs in three district games and are averaging six per game.

"We don't strike out too much," he said. "We put the ball in play, and that puts pressure on the defense."

THE TOUGH LOSS to CC last year was disappointing, but the Eagles, with a veteran team this year, hope to accomplish what the Shamrocks eventually did after that victory.

"Our kids loved it when they saw CC go all the way and win it," Hamilton said. "It gave them incentive for this year, because we only lost two kids from that team. They want to go all the way now."

While it remains the Class A kingpin until being beaten, CC will no doubt be the underdog Saturday with Avery on the mound.

"We like the role of being the underdog. If we are," Salter said, "the defending champion is a little misleading, because we graduated nine guys, and this is a whole different team this year."

FGS Radiator 2nd in tourney

If it weren't for the Miami Ballbusters, FGS Radiator would have brought home a winner's trophy from the 50-team BP's Invitational for modified fast-pitch softball Memorial Day Weekend in Atlanta, Ga.

FGS PLAYED TWO games Sunday, winning 18-6 in the day's opener over Lakeway, a team from Morris-town, Tenn., and 7-1 over The Tribe, from New York City.

In the win over Lakeway, Madsen, Campbell and McManaway went 3-for-4 apiece. Scott Collins had two hits and Johnson crushed a solo homer. In the romp over the Tribe, Richards tossed a one-hitter, retiring 29 batters in a row. Brubaker was the hitting star with three hits.

FGS lost both games it played against the team from Miami, including the final game of the double-elimination tourney, 8-1. FGS trailed 2-1 in the sixth inning when the Miami team put the championship away.

FGS won three of the five games it played Monday, the tourney's final day. In all, FGS won six games and lost two during the three-day tournament.

FGS blanked the Los Angeles Suns 14-0 in the fifth game behind McManaway's grand slam and six RBI. Madsen and Brubaker had three hits apiece. Richards tossed a one-hitter and struck out five.

In Game 8, FGS won 4-0 over American International of Miami on a forfeit. FGS led by the final outamer in the fourth inning when American International chose to forfeit after an argument between its catcher and the plate umpire.

FGS fought back into the championship with an 11-6 win over BP's of Atlanta, the host team. Madsen and Dan Price had two hits each. Richards recorded his 300th career win against 28 defeats in eight years. Richards is a 1974 graduate of Livonia Bentley.

"Throughout the tourney, Madsen, a shortstop and Bricker, the second baseman, turned seven double plays.

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Despite coming up short in the championship, several players earned individual honors. Keith McManaway, Mickey Madsen and Charlie Johnson were named to the all-tournament team.

Madsen led the team in hitting with a .680 clip. McManaway, Scott Bricker and Dave Brubaker hit .500 each. Johnson batted .470 and Jeff Campbell finished at .461.

The tournament's most valuable player was FGS pitcher Curt Richards, who won the honor for the third time in the last four out-of-state tourneys.

FGS opened the tournament Saturday with a 13-2 romp over Atlanta as Madsen and Johnson collected three hits each. Bricker had two hits and Brubaker hit a home run and drove in three runs.

Blue Jays run away with 'A' crown

By Mike Rosenbaum
staff writer

The area's dominant boys track squad became the state Class A champions last Saturday at Eastern Michigan University as Southfield stung its rivals from across Michigan.

The Blue Jays scored 58 points while second-place Jacksonville had just 34, followed by Kalamazoo Central and Detroit Croley (32), Monroe and Rochester (26) and Cass Tech and Wayne Memorial (25).

"We're thrilled beyond belief," Southfield coach Tom Eschmann said. "It's an experience that everyone should have sometime in their career."

THE SEEDINGS did not foretell a Southfield rout. For example, its victorious 400 relay team was seeded only fourth. Jeff Reynolds was a relatively low seed in the 200, which he won.

If the Blue Jays' runaway surprised the forecasters, it also surprised Eschmann.

"Yes, I'm surprised at the margin of victory," he said. "I thought there were a number of teams that would be equally matched, point-wise. I'm not surprised at the number of points we accumulated, though."

boys track

THE JAYS won three events. Reynolds took the 200 in 21.6 seconds, a new school record. The 400 and 800 meter relay teams, both made up of Bobby Johnson, Reynolds, Ron Hairston and Jason Becker, won in 42.5 and 1:27.4, respectively. The two teams, plus the second-place 1,600 relay team of Cassidy Wright, Becker, Johnson and Reynolds (3:18.9) all set school marks.

The relay teams "ran 'em at the right time in the right place," Eschmann said.

Wright also placed second in the high hurdles (14.6) and third in the intermediates (38.9). Johnson was sixth in the 100 (10.9) and Rickey Duncan leaped to sixth in the high jump (6-6). David Ardalyo did not place, jumping 6-3.

"The performance that stands out was the performance of Jeff Reynolds," Eschmann said.

"It WAS the overall effort (that won the state meet), which is the way it's been all year long. "The way we've been operating all

"The chemistry has to be correct also."

Other things were also important to him, such as good grades and good behavior, he said.

"People tend to look at our times and say, 'Oh my, those guys are great, those guys are talented.' But we have a real good group of boys who know how to conduct themselves on and away from the track."

THAT "GOOD GROUP" will return virtually intact next season. Among Saturday's point scorers, only Booker and Hairston are seniors.

Can Southfield repeat as state champs?

"I'd like to take the next 10 days and enjoy this one," Eschmann responded. "Next year, we'll take a look at the West Bloomfield Invitational, take a look at a couple other ones, and see what the competition is like."

If next year's competition stacks up the way this year's did, Eschmann's well-behaved group may cause some frustrated coaches to forget their manners next season.

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800 meters best event

The 800-meter run was the event in which Farmington athletes made their best showing in boys state track and field competition Saturday.

In the Class B meet at Sturgis High School, Harrison's Chad Burgess captured second place with a 1:56.0 time.

Farmington's Brandon London, the Oakland County champion, was fourth in Class A. He ran a 1:55.94 time on the Ryneerson Stadium track at Eastern Michigan University.

Rick Gledhill of Mount Clemens Chippewa Valley set a Class A record by winning that event in 1:56.63.

Harrison's 3,200 relay team of Chris Hart, Burgess, Dave Foss and Pat Runk also was second at 8:00.9. The 1,600 relay squad would have taken third place in 3:23.9 but was disqualified.

Farmington's Class A record in the 3,200 relay lasted only one year. Monroe won the event Saturday with a record time of 7:41.29.

The foursome of Chris Inch, Al Stebbins, Ron Smedley and London set the old record of 7:48.5 in the 1987 meet. The Falcons qualified for the event again this year but failed to place.

Plymouth Canton's Roger Trico, the Western Lakes long jump champion, was seventh in Class A in that event. He placed with a jump of 22 feet.

The high jump was the event for area athletes in the Class A girls meet. In addition to Canton's Angie Miller repeating as state champ, Farmington's Julie Lawton tied for seventh place at 5 feet.

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