

Sports

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THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer



Area players steal spotlight in all-star tilts

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

basketball

In a star-studded event designed to showcase Michigan's top basketball talent, a pair of Observerland players shined the brightest Saturday in the annual high school all-star games.

Plymouth Salem's Dena Head, as might be expected of the player named Miss Basketball, was voted the most valuable player of the girls Class A contest in Eastern Michigan University's Bowen Field House.

Observerland was 2-for-2 in MVP honors after Pariah Hickman of Redford Bishop Borgess put his skills on display in the following game for Class B-C-D boys.

Head, who helped the West team to a 71-61 victory with her early playmaking and late scoring, finished with a game-high 18 points, seven rebounds and four assists. "This is one more trophy I can set aside from my high school years," said the widely recruited Head, who eventually decided on Tennessee. "I will always believe good things continue to come to you with hard work."

JAN HERBERHOLZ of Farmington Hills Merry and Kathy Phillips of Birmingham Marian joined Head on the winning side, while Livonia Ladywood's Katie McNulty played for the opposing East squad.

Hickman, the 6-foot-7 center for the runners-up in the Class B state tournament last March, was a dominant force in the East's 111-91 rout of the West.

He was an obvious standout en route to posting game-high totals of 19 points and 13 rebounds. His four assists matched the West's Joe Mid-

dleton (East Grand Rapids) for high number, to boot.

"It makes me feel good, that all the hard work I've been doing is showing," said Hickman, who was one of five Michigan State recruits playing in either the boys Class B-C-D or A games.

In fact, he could have excelled — and undoubtedly in terms of talent belonged — in the A game. Having played in the Catholic League's rugged Central Division, Hickman was a cut above most of the others on the court.

Coming from a program that likes to run and with teams restricted to playing man-to-man defense, the free-lance style of play suited him well.

HICKMAN, THE biggest player in the B-C-D game, hooked up with future MSU teammate Mark Montgomery of Southgate Aquinas for some dazzling plays.

"It was like an open-gym type of situation," Hickman said. "I was just having fun."

"My size had a lot to do with it. I don't think most of those guys are used to playing against someone as big as me or someone who moves like me."

In the Class A boys game, Redford Catholic Central's Bill Villi scored 12 points, cleared seven rebounds and blocked three shots as the East won a shootout, 128-108.

Head, who played in the same

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Guest appearance

Detroit Tigers pitcher Don Heinkel (above) signs autographs for Little League players from the South Farmington organization Saturday at City Park. Heinkel, who gave an inspirational talk to the youngsters, also conducted a baseball clinic (below) for the aspiring athletes. The Second Annual Baseball Fest was sponsored by the New Hope Presbyterian Church of Farmington Hills.

Miracle Maples present veteran skipper with title

By Marty Budner
staff writer

DON SACKETT has tutored some outstanding talent in 25 years as Birmingham Seaholm High School's baseball coach.

It started in the early '70s with people like Jerry Keller and John Bugardichian, C.J. Beachke, Greg Lotzner and Rick Ziegler — all of whom gained full-ride college scholarships — teamed to give the Maples a Southeastern Michigan Association (SMA) title in 1981.

And there have been other standouts — Jim Hakeman, Jeff Peterson, Joe Holland and Marc Spencer, to name a few.

But despite their individual brilliance, none of them can lay claim to what the 1988 Birmingham Seaholm baseball team accomplished.

The "Miracle Maples" — dubbed so because of their amazing comeback ability — won their first Class A championship Saturday by beating Taylor Kennedy, 11-9, at Michigan State University's Kobs Field.

Although the town is still abuzz in amazement, Sackett said the meaning of capturing the state title is finally starting to seem real.

"I'm just starting to come down from cloud nine. It's all sinking in and it's a good feeling," said Sackett on Tuesday. "It's a once in a lifetime thing and it came in the twilight of my career. I'll take it."

"It was a long time coming, but it was certainly worth the wait," he said.

SEAHOLM PEAKED this year at the perfect time.

The Maples finished second to Royal Oak Kimball in the Southeastern Michigan Association (SMA) standings. But a crushing doubleheader loss to Kimball may have been the key to Seaholm's turnaround.

"We were just a mediocre team to begin the season. We had good hitting, but average pitching and below-average defense," said Sackett. "As the season went on, the hitting stayed the same, but the pitching got better and the defense started to tighten up."

"After a double-header loss to

NF-WB rips Oak Park in doubleheader

North Farmington West's Bloodfield's latest victories were achieved the easy way.

The Combs Mack ballclub recorded a pair of merry-go-round wins Saturday, defeating Oak Park 12-3 in six innings and 14-3 in five.

Rick Racher, the winning pitcher in the opener, scattered six hits in a complete game of four. More impressively, he struck out eight and didn't give up a walk.

Shawn Wall had two doubles in a 2-for-3 performance and two RBI and Jack Herberholz, Brian Miller and Jay Marcoux had two hits apiece with four, three and two RBI, respectively.

Herberholz and Marcoux were the stars in the nightcap. Herberholz had a pair of doubles and knocked in three runs, and Marcoux also was 2-for-3 with one RBI.

Two Runners won the game and also contributed three RBI, and winning pitcher Bob Petty had two hits in three trips to the mound.

Petty pitched four innings and held Oak Park 1-0 to two hits. He struck out four and walked five. Miller pitched the last inning.

NF-WB takes a 1-1 record into tonight's game at Southfield's Little League.

Kimball we were really feeling down. We had lost a tough first game in extra innings and we couldn't bounce back in the second game," he said. "We got on the bus afterwards and I told the guys to cheer up, that we'd win the rest of our games."

Well, Seaholm didn't win all its remaining games, but won 14 of 15, including seven straight in the state tournament.

If the Kimball loss was the key to

baseball

the season turnaround, the spectacular pre-district victory over state-ranked (No. 2) Southfield-Lathrup was the spark to Seaholm's impending state title.

The Chargers held a 2-0 lead through the first six innings behind the superb pitching of John Collias, who needed just three outs to advance S-L to the districts. They never came.

SEAHOLM STUNNED the Chargers by scoring three times in the bottom of the seventh for a 3-2 victory. And Seaholm's string of victories continued through district and regional action.

The "Miracle Maples" won in their last turn at bat against both Birmingham Brother Rice and Troy to claim the district title — the first in Sackett's career. The miracles continued in the regional as the Maples secured last-inning and extra-inning victories over East Detroit and Warren Mott.

"Those first five state-tournament games were incredible — I've never seen anything like that," said Sackett. "Some of the players were starting to say at that time that we were destined to win it all."

The regional title qualified Seaholm for its date with destiny — the state semifinals at Michigan State University's Kobs Field.

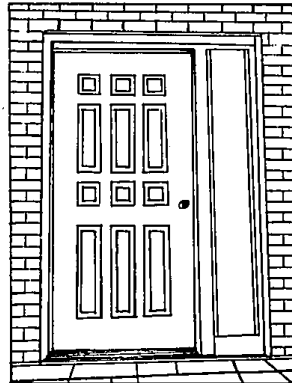
The Maples, ironically, had their easiest games at state. Seaholm took early leads in both games at MSU and never trailed in either. So no miracle comebacks were necessary.

Seaholm had little trouble with Port Huron in the semifinals, posting a methodical 7-2 victory over the Big Reds behind the two-hit pitching of junior Matt Newton.

THE MAPLES banged out 15 hits against Taylor Kennedy in the finals — their best-hitting game of the tournament. Seaholm scored to an 11-7 lead thanks to a trio of three-

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