

Sports

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(P10)

MacDonald's hot bat lifts 10-0 South

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

With every run he drives in, Rob MacDonald makes his brother a little prouder and his South Farmington Connie Mack baseball team more successful.

On a team loaded with talent, MacDonald has become one of its stars. He has emerged as one of the leading hitters and the top RBI man. MacDonald's plate production is a big reason South, coached by his older brother, Mark, and Dave Turnquist, is 10-0 and leading the Little Caesars Connie Mack League.

With four RBI in a 2-2 victory Thursday over Livonia Re/Max, he raised his season total to 20, and he kept his batting average well above .500 by going 2-for-4 in the process.

"I'M DEFINITELY proud of him and what he's done," Mark MacDonald said. "He's accomplished a lot this season, and it's rubbed off on the rest of the players."

"Being my brother also puts more pressure on him. So what he's accomplished he's done on his own."

Rob MacDonald, who will be a senior at Farmington Harrison in the fall, has been known more as a defensive catcher until this summer when he's been red hot with the bat, resulting in him getting the clean up duties in the South order.

In the team's two previous games, he had a grand slam and a three-run homer. Nobody else on the team, which blends a combination of players from Harrison, Farmington, Novi, Clarenceville and Catholic Central, has more than eight RBI.

"I feel less pressure here, because everybody here can hit," MacDonald said. "There's less pressure to produce, because if I don't the guy behind me will."

"OVER THE WINTER, I practiced a lot in the garage, hitting off a tee. I thought once I got my confidence I could be a good hitter, because I had good form."

And how does he like playing for his brother?

"He expects a lot out of me, because he knows what I can do," said MacDonald, adding "I'm the one who



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Rob MacDonald had two hits and four RBI to lead South Farmington.

always gets yelled at for not bringing the baseball, or the equipment."

MacDonald played a key role during a six-run surge that broke open Thursday's game in the third inning, sending South into a 7-0 lead. His bases-loaded single knocked in two runs to make it 4-0.

Joe Jentzer, who got an RBI when walked with the bases full, followed by demonstrating some daring-do by stealing home against losing pitcher Brian Wisniewski.

Dave Skown, who was in a 3-for-22 slump going into the game, broke out of it by going 2-for-3 with three RBI.

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He capped the third inning with a two-run single.

HE ALSO DROVE in the game's first run in the second, hitting a shot down the third-base line for a double that scored Joe Willefoot, who got on base with a strikeout/wild pitch and moved up on two more wild pitches.

South's big inning chased Wisniewski, who went 2 1/3 innings. In addition to the seven runs, he allowed five hits, walked three, hit a batter and struck out two.

Steve Owens entered and struck out the only batter he faced in the third to get Re/Max out of it. He went on to finish the game, scattering four hits and striking out two.

"We should have made the change sooner," Remax coach Bob Craver said. "Wisniewski kept getting nicked, nicked."

"(After Skown's hit), I knew he was grooving it at that point and somebody was going to get ahead of it."

THOUGH OWENS held the South bats down, MacDonald wasn't through and drove in his team's last two runs.

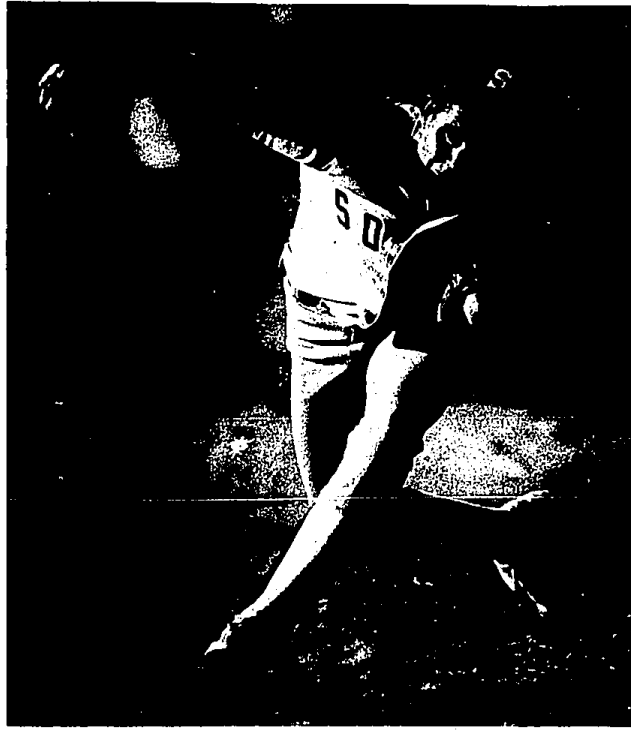
He reached base on an error in the fourth, but Scott Wladischkin was heading for the plate regardless. His sixth-inning single scored Jentzer.

South also got excellent pitching from starter Jason Hicks, the winner, and reliever Craig Murray.

Hicks went five innings, scattered six hits and struck out nine. He also walked three. Murray gave up two hits in the last two innings. After Remax put two men on in the sixth, he struck out the last two batters.

"Hicks did a fabulous job," Mark MacDonald said. "He gets ahead of the batter and comes in with the curve ball. He keeps them off balance constantly."

Wisniewski scored Remax' first run on a single by Jeff Hittsopolis and his seventh-inning single knocked in Jeff Pendell with the second.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Jason Hicks lets fly with a curveball en route to picking up the victory Thursday against Livonia Remax. Hicks worked five innings and

struck out nine as South won its 10th straight game.

2 state champs?
No shootout rule
makes it possible

PLYMOUTH CANTON and Livonia Churchill state co-champions in girls soccer.

How does that sound? Has a different ring to it, doesn't it? A hollow ring, perhaps?

Under a new Michigan High School Athletic Association rule set to go into effect with boys soccer this fall, co-championships could become a reality.

In fact, if the rule had been in effect for the recent girls season, Canton would not be the state champion. The Chiefs would be reigning co-champs with Churchill.

The rule change eliminates the use of a shootout as the last alternative in breaking a tie in a state championship game. Shootouts will continue to be used in tournament games leading up to the final, however.

As in the past, teams will continue to play two 10-minute overtime periods followed by two five-minute, sudden-death overtimes. But instead of going to the shootout, the teams will be declared co-champions if no overtime session produces a winner.

This change in procedure was a major topic for discussion when Jack Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA, stopped in Livonia to meet with the Observer & Eccentric sports staff on Wednesday, June 22, as part of his media tour through southeastern Michigan.

THE IMPETUS for the rule change came from an 11-member coaches committee that recommended its adoption by the MHSAA Executive Council, which promptly did so between the 1987 boys and 1988 girls seasons.

Roberts admitted some surprise that such a suggestion would come from a group of prominent coaches but said he was pleased it did.

According to Roberts, the posi-



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tion of the coaches on the committee that studied the matter was "What difference does it make educationally?"

Furthermore, he added Nick Archer, coach of the East Lansing boys team that defeated Grand Blanc 2-1 via a shootout in the state final last November, was a member of that committee.

In a MHSAA press release, Roberts said: "The shootout method, while it is exciting in some respects, is not the best way to determine a winner. If two teams can battle to a tie after 110 minutes, then both deserve to be called state champions."

While we acknowledge the merits of the educational argument and regardless of whether or not a shootout is the best way to determine a winner, we don't believe the decision to allow for co-championships is the right way to go.

QUITE SIMPLY, it sounds like a copout. Such a policy seems flawed by inconsistency and contradiction. Coaches contacted by the Observer indicated they would still prefer to see a winner decided by some other means if not by a shootout. They suggest a change in the overtime format.

THE MHSAA is in the business of conducting state championships, and the soccer tournament shows he just that, too. Nobody has pushed the idea of co-championships.

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Planning ahead
Olympic hopefuls train for spot on teamBy C.J. Rieak
staff writer

Training has already begun for a race that won't take place for 14 months — for the lucky, and most-talented, athletes.

For others, this training is more likely aimed at a race more than four years in the future.

If that sounds like over-preparation, remember that this race only comes around every four years — in the Olympics. And when the sport you're talking about is swimming, it must be understood that there is no bigger race.

Swimming is virtually ignored by the American public at any other time. Only U.S. dominance in the sport brings it to center-stage during the Olympics.

The worldwide attention focused on the Olympics, and swimming, is what often makes one race the most important in a young athlete's life. And just getting to that race is a struggle.

FOUR MEMBERS of Oakland University's

swimming

mens swim team are spending several hours a day trying to scale each of the obstacles separating them from that September race in Seoul, Korea.

One of the team members — Hilton Woods, a native of the Caribbean island Curacao — already has a reservation in the Olympic Village; another — Mark VanderMeer — has "as good a chance as anybody" of making it, according to OU coach Pete Hovland.

The other two, junior Jim Surawicz of Farmington Hills (and Redford Catholic Central) and senior Erik Strom, still must reach U.S. Olympic Trial qualifying standards in their events. If and when they do, there remains rugged competition between them and a berth on the U.S. team.

"(Training) is going well," said Hovland, who recently returned from Kenyon (Ohio) College where 15 Olympic swim hopefuls (including all four OU prospects) were working out. "Jim Surawicz looks good, and Erik Strom is strong."

"Mark (VanderMeer) has been working very hard and has looked very tired, but he's starting to break through some barriers, and his attitude is positive."

VANDERMEER, ACCORDING to Hovland, could be one of the favorites to win a berth on the U.S. team in either the 100-meter or 200-meter breaststroke. In 1986, VanderMeer traveled to Moscow for the Goodwill Games and returned as the top U.S. finisher in both.

After winning each at the NCAA Division II meet last March, he went to the Division I final and finished fifth in the 200 breast and won the consolation final in the 100.

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Summer league enters 6th year

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

The league has undergone a name change, but the quality brand of hockey remains the same in the Metro Summer Hockey League.

Many of the top amateur players who reside in Overland, as well as some from as far away as Europe, will compete once again in the league, formerly known as the Midwest Summer Hockey League.

A.J. Baker, who organized the eight-team league six years ago, still serves as the commissioner and is excited about the season that got under way with five games last week. The Plymouth Ice Arena will serve as the home rink again, also.

"It really has grown in popularity," he said. "We had 100 fans away last game."

As a result, the MSHL has expanded. The players who didn't make a first-division unit will get a chance to compete in the new MSHL II. The new league will consist mostly of high school players, according to Baker.

The league has its veterans, too, and Dan Phelps and Mike Stanley, both of Livonia, have been competing since the circuit's inception. Nearly 70 percent of the roster are filled with returning players, Baker said.

hockey

And that talent is top notch, too. It includes players who have distinguished themselves at all levels — bantam, midget, junior, senior, college and high school.

"Plymouth and Canton alone could make up an all-star team that could cruise across the state and tear up anybody," Baker predicted. "There's a very strong pool of hockey talent in this area."

One of the best, Neil Carsons of Plymouth, was expected to play this season, but he will sit out after having arthroscopic surgery on both knees. Carsons, who was the top-draft pick of the Montreal Canadiens this year, had the surgery done more as a precautionary move, according to Baker.

After the first week of play, the Lakers are sitting atop the Bakers Conference with a 3-0 record. Their latest triumph was a 10-4 win over the Spartans on Thursday, which followed a 7-3 defeat of the Wildcats on Tuesday.

LAKERS 10, SPARTANS 4: The Lakers played with only seven skaters and two goalies, but that was

enough. Craig Mooney provided excellent third-period goaltending when the Lakers outscored the Spartans 4-1. Tim O'Brien scored five goals, including two in the finale when the Lakers pulled away from a 6-4 lead.

Rob McDonald notched three goals and Dan Phelps six assists. Larry Pilel had a goal and two assists for the Lakers.

HUSKIES 16, FALCONS 3: J.P. LaRoche knocked in four goals and assisted on three others Thursday as the Huskies opened with an impressive win.

The rest included a three-goal, four-assist night by Mark Hernandez and a two-goal, six-assist game from Rishley. Tony Ewer scored twice for the Falcons.

BULLDOGS 3, SPARTANS 3: Jeff Smith tallied three goals and an assist on Wednesday as the Bulldogs pulled away with a 3-1 advantage in the final period.

Shawn Piestack supported with one goal and two assists, and the Spartans' Ken Chaput had a goal and two assists.

WOLVERINES 3, BRONCOS 3: Chris Burger and Jim Burns scored third-period goals as the Wolverines rallied from a 3-1 deficit Wednesday.

Cam Kabanek and Brian Russell had staked the Broncos to a 3-0 lead in the first period. Both teams are 0-4-1.

LAKERS 7, WILDCATS 3: The Lakers were trailed after going up 3-1 in the opening period. John Smith recorded two goals and two assists, O'Brien one goal and a pair of assists.