

Sports

Dan O'Meara editor/591-2312

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(F10)



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Jon Houser of North Farmington attempts to take control of the ball while Harrison's Mark Lebovitz moves up on the play. The Raiders

scored a second-half goal Monday to force a 1-1 tie with the Hawks.

Harrison-North battle results in no decision

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

An indecisive outcome — a euphemism for a tie — is always such a semimuddled, mixed-feeling affair.

Being that there's no clear winner and loser, each team can point to certain positives to soften the reality of its shortcomings.

Such was the case Monday when Farmington Harrison and North Farmington battled to a 1-1 draw in their 1988 soccer meeting.

The host Hawks could point to a defensive effort that stood its ground time and again, but they had to wonder where the offense had gone.

North had in its favor a relentless attack that, at least, prevented defeat; however, the Raiders might have asked what a full game played with that kind of offensive pressure would have produced.

THE RAIDERS, 0-6-3, dominated the second half like no team has, but

soccer

the defense was nothing short of terrific for Harrison, 4-6-1.

Besides goalkeeper Grant Hubbard, the Hawks got big plays from Chris Yoerg and Matt Rippen, both on clearing kicks in front of the goal, and Jay Boger, who used his body to make another save.

"We were lucky to get away with one," Harrison sweeper Todd Whittemore said.

It was on an indirect kick resulting from a penalty that the Raiders eventually tied the score. Tim McMinn angled the pass around his blockers and into the corner of the net with 14:59 left in the game.

"We went to the ball (in the second half)," said North coach Jim Dugan, comparing his team's play in the two halves. "That was a major

difference, and we passed the ball to our own team.

"We didn't come to play in the first half and it cost us. The first half was the worst we've played all year."

THE RAIDERS had chances early in the game but didn't take advantage of the numerous times they had the ball in front of Harrison's net.

The play eventually shifted in favor of the Hawks, who led 1-0 at halftime on Rippen's goal at 4:55. Ben Plinsky fired a shot from the left side, which North goalie Roger Johnson stopped. But Rippen responded quickly with a rebound shot to the right, and Johnson was unable to get back in time.

Johnson was a lonesome player in the second half, however. The action stayed within the Harrison 20-yard line 90 percent of the time. Johnson didn't have to make a save in the first 32½ minutes.

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Hawks still rate in Class B

YOU WON'T FIND Farmington Harrison playing for the Western Lakes Activities Association boys soccer title later this month.

But the Class B state championship? That's a different matter.

It may seem contradictory that the Hawks, who have no chance in their own league, would be a contender for a bigger prize.

Harrison, despite a 4-6-1 record, is rated No. 5 in the latest statewide coaches poll. But, as paradoxical as it might appear, this is not without precedent.

We need only refer to the 1987 season when the Hawks, who finished as an also-ran in the rugged WLAA, were a Final Four team in Class B.

No doubt this year's high rating is based, to some extent, on that performance and the knowledge the Hawks compete against the best throughout the regular season.

"I THINK A lot of it is," Harrison coach Glenn Bruchan said. "People have been saying we have a pretty good Class B team."

"I don't think we're quite as good as last year, because we have more inexperienced players. Our seniors have been keeping us in there."

Two of those seniors are Thierry Bersot and Todd Whittemore, both holdovers from the team that went 5-5-1 in the WLAA and 12-2-2 overall. They expressed surprise at being ranked in the top 10 but can understand why they're there.

Like coaches around the state, they realize Harrison is the lone 'B' school in a Class A league, one



Dan O'Meara

that is undoubtedly the toughest in the state when it comes to soccer. The WLAA includes the Nos. 1 and 2 teams in Class A, Livonia Stevenson and Plymouth Salem.

"We've been playing a lot of 'A' teams, and that's going to prepare us for the 'B' tournament," Bersot said. "When we start playing 'B' teams, we'll be ready for them."

"If we work hard from here on, we should be ready by the time districts come around," Whittemore said.

BESIDES HAVING a lesser record, the Hawks are without three outstanding players who dominated the '87 team — former goalkeeper Gary Wegner, forward Craig Bailey and sweeper Peter Van Vliet, whose position Whittemore has taken over.

"Record-wise, with a few breaks, we would have been right where we were last year," Bruchan said. "I think we had all the breaks last year."

That fine line between the last and the present Harrison teams includes a pair of last-minute, 1-0 losses to Dearborn and Walled Lake Western.

The Dearborn game, in which the deciding goal was scored with 19 seconds remaining, may be the best gauge for the '88 baillieub. The Pioneers are rated No. 4 in the state, one spot ahead of the Hawks, who beat Dearborn 1-0 a year ago.

In the district tournament last year, Harrison beat three teams that had far superior records, a reflection of the differences in regular-season competition. Two of those vanquished foes, Orionville-Brandon and Madison Heights Bishop Foley, are rated No. 2 and 3, respectively.

THE TEAM THAT handed the Hawks a semi-final loss on a cold, rainy night in Oxford last November, East Grand Rapids, is ranked sixth, and the defending state champion, Mount Clemens Lutheran North, eighth.

"We're playing much better, so I'm hoping we peak out for the districts," Bruchan said.

The Hawks still have enough veterans, which includes eight seniors, to pull it off. Ed Dzyngel, a midfielder and tri-captain along with Bersot and Whittemore, is one.

Bruchan added that Whittemore has done an exceptional job of filling Van Vliet's shoes and has solidified the defense, which includes senior Chris Yoerg, sophomore Jay Boger and freshman Ben Plinsky.

Bruchan hopes his younger players will be experienced enough by the time district play starts the week of Monday, Oct. 24, to mesh with the veterans and make possible another impressive tournament run.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Roy Otani of North redirects the ball with a header as he is bumped by Harrison's Todd Boger. The Hawks are 4-6-1, the Raiders 0-6-3.



BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Liz DeMatteis gave the Marlins first place in the 100-yard butterfly and helped Mercy hold off Plymouth Canton in a 45-38 victory. The Mar-

lins handed Canton its first defeat in four dual meets.

Hard-training Marlins equal to dual-meet task

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Farmington Mercy swimmers will excuse coach Chuck McClune if his methods seem cruel.

McClune put the Marlins through two rigorous workouts Tuesday and, after all that, sent them out to swim a dual meet against unbeaten Plymouth Canton in the evening.

But, all is well that ends well for Mercy, rated No. 10 in Class A. The Marlins survived everything thrown at them and emerged with a down-to-the-wire, 45-38 victory.

Mercy is in the middle of what swim teams call "bell week" — a period of intensive midseason training — and McClune, due to a scheduling mixup, wasn't aware the Chiefs were

swimming

on the horizon until last Friday. "I thought we had 10 days when I could beat the girls up real bad and do some hard training," said McClune, who conducted a two-hour morning session and oversaw an additional 2½-hour practice in the afternoon.

"IT GAVE ME the opportunity to see how tough the girls could be. I wasn't going to change my schedule, so I thought we'd see how they could do on an hour's rest."

Canton coach Hooker Wellman

upped his bat to McClune, though he also would like to build his team's endurance except an excessive number of illnesses prevent it.

"He planned it real well," Wellman said. "He was able to get through both things; he got in a good workout and won the meet. If we were able to do it, we would have, but we have too many sick kids."

The Chiefs, 3-1, have a key Western Division dual meet Thursday with Northville, and competing against a team of Mercy's caliber was good preparation, according to Wellman.

"We just want to get healthy again," he said. "I'm not real disappointed. They're ranked in the state,

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