

New coach leads North track team

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

North Farmington's answer to the University of Michigan's Steve Fisher is Mark Bechard, the Raiders' new boys track coach.

After four years as an assistant at North, Bechard assumes the head coaching responsibility this spring, though it's doubtful he can produce the same magic Fisher did with the U-M basketball program.

But he's willing to try. "I've been around most of the kids for a long time," Bechard said. "I look at it as a challenge. North Farmington hasn't had a big track program the last three or four years. I'm trying to get it back."

The Raiders stumbled to a 3-4 dual-meet record last year in the Western Lakes Activities Association, where they finished last at the league meet.

BECHARD SAID a solid contingent of underclassmen returns from last year's team, making him optimistic for the upcoming campaign. North hosts its regular season today as well as for the Farmington city meet.

"I expect a little improvement," Bechard said. "I'm counting on more of our sophomores and juniors to come through, then our seniors, of course. I'd like to see a lot of all-area performances out of a few people like (runner Jason) Kocembo and (thrower Zalm) Cummins and maybe have a few other surprises."

North likely will score points in the field events, due to the return of

Cummins, also a football and wrestling star. Cummins' throws in the shot put and the discus, and he already has improved on last year's performances with a shot put of 46 feet, 6 inches last month at the Huron Lakes.

Cummins is a dedicated athlete in practice, Bechard said. "Zalm is capable of being one of the best in the area, but I don't want to put pressure on him," Bechard said. "He's out there (at practice) every day until 5 or 5:30, so that shows a certain amount of dedication."

ALSO, WHILE most schools struggle to find one pole vaulter, North has the luxury of two: seniors Brad Armstrong and Allen Ferreira. Armstrong missed most of last year with a knee injury, but as a sophomore he cleared 11-0. Ferreira had a fine '88 campaign, clearing 11-6 once.

Senior Brad Ellis is North's best bet in the high jump and long jump events.

"I'll be pretty good in the field," he said. "I'll be our best bet."

Kocembo, who will run the 1,600 meters, is Bechard's best returning distance runner. Other distance runners include seniors Jeff Simpson, Joe Schmidt and Jim Nader and sophomore Craig Stoe. The Raiders will miss Warren Johnson, a versatile runner, who graduated last June.

North is thin in the sprint events, returning no seniors of major impact. Junior Jerry Dolak and sophomores Ryan Kalunzy and Brad Hirsman will be counted on to score points, Bechard said.

Area matman gets his due

DARIN DUDEK IS OWED an apology.

The Livonia Churchill senior should be the All-Observer wrestler at 119 pounds.

Redford Catholic Central coach Mike Rodriguez should give the people at Churchill a call after committing a grave mistake when he knowingly allowed his own wrestler, Mike Gentile, to illegally compete at 119 pounds during the state individual district tournament at Plymouth Salem High School.

Gentile, who beat Dudek 4-0 in their only meeting for the district title on Feb. 4, never wrestled the required one match (during the regular season) at 119 as Michigan High School Athletic Association rules stipulate.

He wrestled the entire season at 125 although he was certified and met the 119-pound limit for the district meet.

Rodriguez now has to live with the consequences after admitting that he lied and covered up the fact the Gentile wrestled at 119 against a team from New York in a match just before Christmas in Cleveland, Ohio.

THE CC COACH held Gentile out of individual regional competition, citing injury. Rodriguez said Gentile's shoulder was indeed banged up, but added he could have competed. The CC coach, however, said



Brad Emonso

that he couldn't allow his wrestler to continue on in the tournament knowing he violated the rules.

Rodriguez said the reasons were selfish, hoping to enhance his wrestler's chances of getting a college scholarship by competing at a lighter weight class. He pointed out that Gentile had come very close to winning a state title before, and more or less, deserved to win a title because of his four years of hard work.

Rodriguez felt Gentile was better suited at 119 although he was already one of the state's best at 125, having tied eventual state champion Greg Paiz of Grandville in a match earlier in the season.

The situation is sad because it not only affects Catholic Central High, but it also affects another area school. What we have here is a district champion who wrestled at the wrong weight and an All-Area candidate who belongs in the 125 category instead of 119.

But before public school league people read this with glee, the violation should not be a reflection on the entire CC athletic program or

hands of the MHSAA to determine his fate.

But if the CC coach wants to wipe the slate clean, it would be a Christian gesture on his part to apologize to Dudek and the Churchill wrestling program.

DUDEK, LIKE Gentile, worked hard for four years and had a fine senior season, going 34-12-1. He won the Western Lakes Activities Association meet at 119, placed fourth in the regional and qualified for the state Class A meet.

His coach, Melvin Richendollar called Dudek "a wrestler with a lot of desire, determination and heart."

Dudek is a deserving first-teamer and should be given his due. Meanwhile, Rodriguez's fate is yet to be determined.

The MHSAA has to consider that Rodriguez, although late in his admission, finally came forth. The violation affected one wrestler and nobody in the team standings.

But the violation is severe and a slap on the wrist may be too light.

This is not the first time or will be the last time the MHSAA will have to deal with something like this.

It's in their hands, as Rodriguez contends, but I feel the CC coach could take another step. CC shouldn't have to apologize for his mistake.

MHSAA to review rules infraction

Continued from Page 1

tournament in Medina, Ohio. However, he never did wrestle at 119 prior to the individual district.

Rodriguez said he altered the results of a quadrangular meet at Cleveland St. Edward on Dec. 23 to indicate Gentile had wrestled at 119 against Doug Shaffer of Waverly, N.Y. Results of the CC-Waverly Central dual match obtained by the Observer from Ed Decker, the Waverly athletic director, show Gentile and Shaffer competed at 125. Wrestlers had until Jan. 30 to meet the one-match requirement.

"He just didn't wrestle," Rodriguez said. "I waited too long to wrestle him at that weight."

In the district tournament at Plymouth Salem, Gentile won all three of his bouts by decision at 119, defeating Noel Williams of Southfield Lathrup 5-3, Jim Horvath of Garden City 15-1 and, in the final, Darin Dudek of Livonia Churchill 41-0. Gentile was subsequently placed on the All-Observer team at 119, Dudek the second team.

Rodriguez said he put Gentile at 119 for the tournament, because he



thought he had a better chance of winning a state championship and, thereby, receiving an athletic scholarship.

"It was not good judgment," Rodriguez said. "I was only thinking about his chance of getting a scholarship, because I knew he could win it. I didn't think about the Churchill kid or anyone else he had to wrestle."

"I WASN'T" thinking about having another state champion or putting another face on the wall," he added. "I was just thinking about Michael, and I let it go on. Now it's all over and everything is there."

Grandville's Greg Paiz was the defending state champion at 125 and eventually won it again. He and Gentile had battled to a draw earlier in

the season, but Rodriguez said he was concerned about the outcome of a rematch in the tournament. Following the district, Rodriguez told the Observer he withheld Gentile from the regional because of a shoulder injury.

"It was an authentic separation, but he could have been strapped up and gone on," Rodriguez said. "I pulled him out for the sake of his health and my conscience. I knew it was wrong. I shouldn't have let it go that far."

"I think he would have met Paiz in the semis, but I just felt nobody would have touched him at 119. I didn't look at the draw sheets to see where he was going to meet this kid."

I just knew he would hit him."

Rodriguez said he will wait until the MHSAA reviews the matter and rules on it before commenting on a possible penalty.

"To be honest, I'm waiting to see what the state is going to do, and then I'll tell you that," he said. "Covers said CC officials did the right thing by taking it upon themselves to report the matter to the MHSAA."

"The association is predicated on a self-policing policy," he said. "We asked them to put it in writing and then we'll substantiate it, although it's a pretty good source when the AD calls you on it."

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Hawks drop 2 meets

There was a wide margin in the final scores, but Farmington Hills Harrison was on the losing end in boys and girls dual meets Tuesday.

The boys were soundly beaten 104-30 by unbeaten Westland John Glenn, while the girls were edged 65 1/2-42 1/2 by the Rockets.

The Hawks, defending Western Lakes Activities Association champions, won only three events in the boys meet at Harrison.

Blaze Sarcevic was first in the shot put with a toss of 44 feet, 4 1/4 inches, and Joe George won the throw of 130-5. Jeff Barringer ran 10:32.8 to capture first place in the 3,200-meter run.

Dave Ryan and Andrew Dobbins were double winners for Glenn, which swept the relays. Ryan won the 800 and 1,600 runs, Dobbins the 100 and 200 dashes.

Harrison's girls helped their cause by winning three relays but fell short in the final tally. The Hawks were first in five individual events, and Jayne Peters won the 100 and 300 hurdles in 17.89 and 50.9, and she also anchored Harrison's 800 and 1,600 relay teams.

Heather Conley, Nicole Adda, Hakim Niven and Peters took the 800 in 1:54.0, and it was Maria Chlogiannis, Andra Cockerham, Niven and Peters winning the 1,600 in 4:32.3.

Amiee Jarvenpaa threw the discus 81 feet, 3 1/4 inches to win that event, Cockerham won the open 400 in 1:07.72 and Alice Chu was the 800 winner with a 2:54.0 effort.

Harrison's Tracy DeBussio, Sonja Magdevski, Joanna Hannawa and Chu combined to win the 3,200 relay.

Glenn's Mary Ann Gabany won the 100 and 200 dashes and Yvonne Waddell the 1,600 and 3,200 runs.



Girls track coaches within the Observer coverage area are urged to call in their best individual results to Redford Bishop Burgess coach John McGreevy from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Sunday. McGreevy can be reached at 439-1217.

Schools that should call in their individual bests are Livonia Stevenson, Franklin, Churchill, Ladywood and Clarenceville, Plymouth Canton, Plymouth Salem and Plymouth Christian, Farmington's Mercy, Harrison, North and Farmington, Redford's Union, Thurston, Bishop Burgess and St. Agatha, Westland John Glenn and Lutheran Westland, Garden City, and Wayne Memorial.

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