

Unbeaten Marlins are best in Central

The dual-meet record stayed perfect for Farmington Hills Mercy's girls swim team, which swam previously unbeaten Birmingham Marquette 25-78 Tuesday at Oakland Community College, handing the Marlins their first Catholic League Central Division loss.

Polly Tenuta won two individual events for Mercy, the 200-yard (2:05.62) and 500-yard (5:31.60) freestyle. Other Mercy winners were Liz DeMattia in the 100 butterfly (1:00.80), Michelle McCaffrey in the 100 free (58.39) and Katie Westhoff in the 100 backstroke (1:05.92).

Karen Neyer, Katie Nipper, DeMattia and Becky Wiquist won the 200 medley relay (1:55.08).

The win improved Mercy's dual-meet record to 7-0 overall; their 4-0 mark clinched the Central Division title.

LAST FRIDAY, the Marlins whipped Birmingham Seaholm 103-63 at Seaholm. Double-winners were Wiquist in the 200 (2:04.28) and 100 (55.71) free and DeMattia in the 200 individual medley (2:20.45) and 100 fly (1:00.2).

Neyer was best in the 50 free (25.71). Westhoff won the 100 backstroke (1:05.44) and Nipper finished first in the 100 breaststroke (1:09.10). Westhoff, Nipper, DeMattia and Erica Smith captured the 200 medley relay (1:55.59) and Michelle McCaffrey, Mary Quinn, Wiquist and Neyer took the 400 free relay (3:51.25).

"We just have more depth than they do," said Mercy coach Chuck McClune of the Seaholm meet. "I was surprised we were able to win so many events. They have a good team, we're just a stronger team."

DEARBORN CAPTURED the final three events in Monday's dual meet against visiting Farmington, and that was enough to propel the Pioneers to a 46-37 victory.

The loss dropped the Falcons to 3-4 in duals; Dearborn is 3-6.

Jill Hawkins and Katie Hobl each won two individual events for Farmington. Hawkins' triumphs came in the 50-yard (26.7) and 100-yard

swimming

(57.74) freestyle. Hobl finished first in the 200 (2:09.2) and 500 (5:33.16) free.

Other Falcon winners were Tonya Slicker in diving (195.6 points) and Missy Kendall in the 100 butterfly (1:05.15).

Farmington had six firsts to Dearborn's five, but the Pioneers closed out the meet with wins in the 100 backstroke, 100 breaststroke and 400 free relay, and that proved to be the difference.

Farmington swims at Plymouth Salem Thursday.

NORTH FARMINGTON improved its dual-meet girls swimming record to 8-0 Thursday when it trounced host Walled Lake Central 144-20.

The Raiders, 4-0 in the Lakes Division, won every event. The Vikings dropped to 0-4 against division opponents.

North's Amy Duthie, Natasha Kuberski, Carrie Worthen and Colleen Harrison won the medley relay in 2:08.45, and three of them also had individual wins.

Worthen won the butterfly (1:10.15), Duthie the 500 freestyle (6:21.43) and Kuberski the breaststroke (1:18.91).

The four members of the freestyle relay team — Anna Palmer, Sara Norton, Jennifer Wagner and Julieanne Markay — won individual events before swimming in the relay.

Palmer won the IM (2:22.42), Norton the 100 freestyle (1:03.45), Wagner the 200 freestyle (2:14.77) and Markay the backstroke (1:05.30).

North's Carrie Adams was the 50 freestyle winner in 27.29. Michelle Starrs won the diving with 174.20 points.

The Raiders conclude their dual-meet schedule Thursday at home with Westland John Glenn.

Salem's luck still rotten

THERE'S A THEORY, concocted by whom I don't know, which maintains that for every bad break there's a good one. In the end, it all balances out.

If so, the guys who've played football at Plymouth Salem are waiting still for the scales of fortune to start tipping in their favor.

It's hardly news anymore, hearing the Rocks missed the Class A football playoffs by the narrowest of margins. In fact, after examining their playoff history, could anything else have been expected?

Salem has qualified for the playoffs once — 1977. Old-timers might remember. The Rocks' best player was quarterback Rich Hewlett, who went on to play at University of Michigan. Hewlett was knocked out of action in the last regular-season game; he never played against Portage Central.

SINCE THAT '77 appearance, Salem has had two 8-1 records. Neither was good enough to qualify. Of course, the Rocks can still boast the highest computer playoff point total ever accumulated for a Class A team.

Unfortunately, it was in 1974, the year of the "paper playoffs." The computer system was just being tested; there were no playoff games that year.

Typical.

But just when it seems one school has suffered enough disappointment and heartache, enough to plead "Stop already!" to whomever controls the fates, another lump of coal is dumped into their Christmas stocking.

THIS TIME Salem missed because their rival, Ann Arbor Pioneer, played a team with an eight-game schedule (Ann Arbor Huron). That gave Pioneer, which beat Huron, three additional bonus points, points Salem coach Tom Moshimer hadn't figured on.

Moshimer thought Salem had edged Pioneer by three. When those points were added in and the tie was forged, Moshimer knew his team didn't have a chance in the tiebreaking format because it had more wins than Pioneer.

Hub?

Let me explain. Pioneer is 7-2. Salem was 8-1.



C.J. Risak

Because Salem had more wins, it obviously had more points. For Pioneer to even catch up to Salem would take a lot of bonus points, and the only way to get those bonus points was to hope your opponents won a lot of games.

Pioneers' foes did. The tie brought into effect the tiebreaking formula, which begins with head-to-head competition. Pioneer and Salem didn't play each other.

NEXT WAS total wins for each team's opponents. Since Pioneer had to make up all those points because it had one less win, it's obvious the Pioneers' foes had a lot more wins. Bingo — they're in the playoffs.

What bugs Moshimer is nowhere does the tiebreaking format mention better records. He thinks a team's record should be considered first or second, either before or after head-to-head play.

"I'm pretty sure they were thinking that if there were two teams with equal records, this would be a fair way of breaking the tie," said Moshimer, referring to those in charge of making up tiebreaking options.

It's right, said Jerry Cveugros, assistant director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association: "I believe it was designed to consider the team's strength of schedule."

TRYING TO be fair about it — and there isn't much doubt the Pioneers played a tougher schedule, so if they'd missed out they'd be asking similar questions — doesn't much ease Salem's agony. As Moshimer noted, "This team's been snake-bit all year."

Remember, the Rocks' only loss came in the final five seconds to Westland John Glenn, 7-6. After having shut out the Rockets the entire

game, Salem surrendered a 37-yard completion on third-down-and-38 in the game-winning 82-yard drive (Glenn, by the way, is in the playoffs).

After that loss, Moshimer figured his team's playoff chances were slim at best. But then Northville pulled a major upset, jolting Novi in the final week of the season. And suddenly, Moshimer and the Rocks had hope.

"I told them Friday night the chances of us making it were not very good," said Moshimer. "But Novi gets beat and we beat a 7-1 team (Canton), and I start to think we've got a great chance."

HOW CRUEL can fortune be? Like a carrot on a stick, the Rocks could see the playoffs dangling in their sights, teasing them. But then . . .

"Then Pioneer's opponents win seven of eight games in the final week," said Moshimer. "That's how they caught us."

"They're down," he said, in reference to his players. "The only thing I feel bad about is the kids. I'm still planning on being here next year. They won't be."

Salem used 12 to 14 players as starters (depending on how many went both ways), and all but one is graduating. There will be no second chance for them.

"I'm going to do everything in my power to make sure this doesn't happen again," vowed Moshimer. Of course, his promise won't help the 89 Rocks. As the Salem coach noted, "The sad part about this is, the only time a rule is changed is after it hurts someone."

THERE ARE alternatives. Cveugros said a committee responsible for the football playoffs meets every January to consider possible changes. "I can tell you this," Cveugros said, "this will be on (our agenda) this year."

Options include Moshimer's idea to consider a team's record in the tiebreaking formula. Or how about altering the regional concept? Instead of taking four teams from each of four regions, take the top two teams per region and then the next eight teams with the most playoff points as wild cards.

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