

Salem gets large turnout for tennis

By Mike Stewart
staff writer

If the 1990 Plymouth Salem boys tennis team can't repeat last year's impressive, 10-1 league slate, no one can blame it on a lack of interest. In fact, said 12th-year coach Judy Braun, based on turnout alone — 82 players showed up in hopes of making the team — there's never been more interest.

"I'm pretty sure that's a record for us," Braun said. "I don't ever remember that many kids trying out."

Unfortunately, as impressive as the turnout is, it hasn't made Braun's job any easier. Not only does she have the unenviable task of telling some 38 of the hopefuls they won't make the team, but she still isn't sure if the remaining players can fill the shoes of last year's graduates.

But don't interpret that as a criticism of this year's squad. Because the Rocks are forced to practice outside in less than perfect spring conditions, Braun hasn't been able to accurately assess the talent — though the Rocks open their season Saturday at the Bay City Tournament.

"WE'RE NOT really seeing the guys play at their best yet," Braun said. "We're really struggling with the weather."

Gone from the 1989 squad, which finished second in the Western Lakes Activities Association tournament, is Rich Cundiff, last year's No. 1 singles player, and Matt Lore and Scott Hobbs, the No. 1 doubles team.

Also missing are the Nos. 2 and 4 singles players, Wade Garrard and Chris Marschak, as well as Jeff Elliot, half of the No. 3 doubles team. But the Rocks return some strong players, and the squad looks to have a very solid freshman crew coming through the ranks as well.

Returning from last year's varsity team are senior Ryan Bannan and juniors K.C. Kirkpatrick, Prakash Chinnalany and Jeff Reasick. Up from the JV ranks are Matt Mistry, Doug Bender, Kevin Clough, Wilson Lee and Lou Manillas. Plus, junior Mike Mulder will be returning to this year's squad after competing two years ago but missing last season.

In addition, Braun said the freshman class is so strong; it will seriously compete for slots on the varsity team. The freshman class includes Fred Stetin, Jason Grimm, Joe Perron, Kevin Laber and David Bell.

Harrison maintains perspective

By Mike Stewart
staff writer

Farmington Hills Harrison softball coach Mike Teachman isn't trying to pull the wool over anyone's eyes.

He isn't making any outrageous claims that his inexperienced Hawks squad is suddenly and miraculously going to turn around last year's winless season. No, he's being very realistic.

"We really don't have any feeder system for these girls," Teachman said. "They come to the varsity level at Harrison with no fast-pitch experience. That makes it very hard, especially for the pitchers."

What that means is that, where most of the opposition has players with four or five years of experience, much of the Harrison squad is still learning the fundamentals.

But don't start feeling sorry for the Hawks. Teachman says they have things in perspective.

"WE'RE JUST out to relax and have fun," he said. "Realistically, we're looking at maybe being

softball

able to compete with some of the teams by Easter. We have good athletes here, but we just don't have the experience or depth."

True enough. In fact, the Hawks had just 14 players turn out this year. That includes two sophomores and a pair of seniors who have never played a fast-pitch game.

Add to that the loss of last year's four-year varsity starter, catcher Lisa Donovan, and things don't look a whole lot more encouraging.

But there is good news. The loss of Donovan is offset by the return of sophomore backstop Andrea Najarian, who saw some time behind the plate last year.

In addition, the left side of the infield will be strong with the return of three-year starter Karen Najarian at shortstop and two-year starter Nancy Ballard at third base. Teachman looks to the sen-

ior duo for much-needed leadership.

Further, the Hawks have their ace, junior Shelly Bouwens, returning to work the mound. Bouwens started or pitched in every game last year and in the off-season attended the Wayne State pitching camp.

"SHE'S WORKED really hard," Teachman said. "She has a really strong arm but still needs to work on her control."

Add to the list junior Eileen Hayner, a strong-hitting outfielder and back-up catcher, as well as promising sophomore pitcher Lisa Geary, and it looks as though Harrison is working with a pretty strong core group.

While that's true, there are still holes to fill in the outfield and right side of the infield. That will take time, Teachman said.

"We're going to struggle for a while, the girls know that," he said. "But we're going to have some fun. If we can do that and pick up a couple of wins along the way it'll be great."

The Hawks open their season at Plymouth Salem on Thursday.

Pitching holds key for Farmington

By Ray Setlock
staff writer

Every spring, softball coaches say they need solid pitching in order to be successful.

Farmington girls softball coach Rich Roy is no exception. If the Falcons are to improve on last season's 7-13 record, pitching will have to play a major role, Roy said.

"Pitching is the key for us this season," he said. "If we don't get good pitching, we aren't going to win many games."

Leading the Falcons on the mound this season is senior Lisa Gale. Juniors Cory Wojcik and Patty Hensen

are also expected to contribute.

"THOSE GIRLS are going to have to throw strikes," Roy said. "They have been working real hard in practice, and I'm sure they'll be ready for the challenge."

Farmington will boast two top-notch catchers behind the plate in seniors Mary Birch and Jennifer Curtis.

"They make up a solid unit," Roy said. "If we need to we can always stick one of them in the outfield. They are versatile."

The Falcons have two good shortstops in seniors Lisa Raffle and Jennifer McGlinch, according to Roy.

"Raffle and McGlinch are very talented," he said. "We can move one or both of them around."

Junior Rachel Cannon will manage second base for Farmington, while third base will be handled by either Angela Farr, who has good power with the bat, or Kerry Finlayson.

With the outfield positions still undecided, Roy says Kim Owczarzak is a leading candidate.

"Kim is a good player," he said. "She is one of the returners from last year's team."

ROY IS pleased with the team's

attitude but said it will need more than that to improve on last season.

"We have to improve our offense over last year," Roy said. "Most of the girls did not have a good year with the bat. Hopefully, that will change. The girls are working hard, and I think good things are going to happen."

The Falcons will need better defense, too.

"We made a lot of errors last season," Roy said. "Hopefully, we can clean things up in the field."

The Falcons open their season Wednesday when they travel to Novi.

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