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Marlins 2-peat as volleyball champs

By Dan O'Meara staff writer

Farmington Hills Mercy managed to subdue an inspired Livonia Ladywood opponent and win its second straight Catholic League volleyball championship Wednesday.

The Marlins, who defeated the Blazers in last year's final and have beaten their rival three times this season, won the first game 15-10 but trailed 11-13 in the second.

Mercy (37-4-2) rallied to tie the score at 11. The Blazers edged in front 12-11, but the Marlins surged again to take the title with a 15-13 victory.

"It made for a dramatic match," Mercy coach Tim DeBeliso said. "From a purist point of view, it was not a pretty match, but we rose to a level needed to win the game."

"TO A COACH on the bench, you think 'We're going three here,' but maybe the kids had more confidence in themselves than the coach. It got to 11-9 and then it was anybody's ballgame."

Ladywood, making its fourth consecutive appearance in the final and having won in 1986-1989, learned from its earlier losses (15-4/15-3 and 15-8/15-5) and was well prepared.

"We had looked over the tapes and found out where some of their weaknesses were," Ladywood coach Tom Teeters said.

"We're going up against a team that has more well-rounded talent than we have, and the only way we can beat them is to outsmart them. We have to find out where we can single block and where their weak zones are along the net."

Unforced errors cost the Blazers (39-10-2) in the first game with the score tied 10-10 and a combination of hitting and serve reception miscues caused Ladywood to lose its momentum late in the second, according to Teeters.

"We knew they were not out of it (when the Blazers led 11-3), but our problem has always been inconsistency," he said. "We still lack in passing and consistency, but that's improved as our sophomore players have improved."

DeBeliso acknowledged Ladywood errors helped the Marlins, but he credited his team's defense for turning the second game in its favor. Maureen Paulin led the Marlins with 11 digs in the match. Nara Hand had 10 and Shannon Goff eight.

"WE HAD some great defense at the end, and I thought that was the deciding factor,"

DeBeliso said. "We were able to get the ball up off the floor, get an attack and force them to play defense."

And it took that kind of defensive effort to overcome the Blazers, who played their best match of the season against the league's premier power.

"They were tremendous," DeBeliso said. "They were at the top of their game."

"That was the most emotional and intense game I've seen from a Ladywood team in a while. Ladywood had total control (in the second game), and we were back on our heels."

The Marlins began their comeback behind the serving of Nora Hand. Mercy got timely hitting from Maureen Paulin and good back row play from Goff and Hand. DeBeliso said, and suddenly the Marlins had a 14-12 lead.

"We played pretty good volleyball, too," DeBeliso said. "I don't want to discount our effort. I thought we rose to the level we needed in a very high-pressure situation."

MERCY WAS not at the top of its game but still performed well enough to prevail under trying circumstances, even if the individual statistics don't reflect it, according to DeBeliso.

Paulin had seven kills and was 25-of-27 attacking. Karen Pinkerton five and 20-of-23. Gail Murie three and 15-of-20. Murie also had 10 blocks. Laure DeMattia six and Pinkerton four.

"They don't sound like the kind of stats that tell you we won the game," DeBeliso said. "But sometimes it's more perseverance and determination that win a match for you."

DeBeliso praised his team's serving, a team strength and area consistency all season. Hand (15-of-15), Pinkerton (11-of-11) and Murie (6-of-6) were perfect on the service line, and Hand, Pinkerton and Paulin (11-of-12) had two aces apiece.

Val Adzima was able to keep the Marlins off balance with her short-serve delivery, according to Teeters, who attributed much of Ladywood's better showing against the Marlins to the improved play of sophomore setter/hitter Mary Jo Kelley.

Kelli Haeger led the Blazers with nine kills and was 17-of-22 hitting. Rebecca Willey recorded six blocks and six kills, and Jannel

Hemine blocked six Mercy spikes.

Julie Wilson was Ladywood's top defensive player with eight digs, and she was 14-of-17 on serve reception. Liz Gunn added four digs. Kelley three kills and Adzima two aces.

THERE IS A parallel between last year and this season. Mercy defeated the Blazers four consecutive times, the last in the league final, before Ladywood upset the Marlins in the Class A semifinals.

Teeters hopes history will repeat itself, but the Blazers will have to get past powerhouse teams such as Livonia Churchill and/or Stevenson before that meeting could take place.

"We've taken a similar path," he said. "We've had two good matches with them and got blown out once. If we have two good matches, we can figure out something that works. Hopefully, we'll see them again down the road."

"But it still comes down to execution, and again we have to play good teams before we get to Mercy."

The Marlins will play Detroit Central at 6:30 p.m. Monday in the Operation Friendship match at Harper Woods Bishop Gallagher High School.

Kavanaugh returns to Ladywood

By Brad Emmons staff writer

With an overall record of 245-42, two state Class B championships and two runner-up finishes, Ed Kavanaugh established a strong foundation as Livonia Ladywood's basketball coach.

But Kavanaugh left coaching three years ago, resigning as Schoolcraft College's part-time athletic director to devote time to his building endeavors, his new family and his full-time teaching job.

What appeared to be a permanent sabbatical ended abruptly last week when Kavanaugh was named Ladywood's basketball coach for the second time.

He succeeds Toni Gasparovic, who resigned after a rocky two-year tenure and 17-22 record.

"I don't know much about last year and I really don't care to know," Kavanaugh said. "I did not attend one full game last year, but I missed coaching. It's the adrenaline you get from coaching. It's the game-time feeling that you can't replace. You can't get it out of your blood, no coach ever does."

KAVANAUGH wanted to make it clear that he isn't returning because his daughter, Kelly, played as a freshman on the Ladywood JV squad last year.

"I have a daughter in the program, but that has nothing to do with it," he said.

Sister Mary Alexander, Ladywood's principal said Kavanaugh is involved with a fund-raising project for the school's proposed new gymnasium where ground-breaking is expected to take place in mid-March.

"We were looking for somebody and I said to him, 'Are you interested?'" said Sister Alexander. "We hired him because we're building a new gym and he's part of the development project. He's going to oversee much of the building process because he's been involved in that business."

Sister Alexander, now in her sixth year as Ladywood's principal, has worked with Kavanaugh in the past and has nothing but high praise for the new coach.

"He's very cooperative, no matter what I ask he'll always do," Sister Alexander said. "He's fair with the girls and he works hard. He's tactful, he's nice to get along with and he's friendly. And he's good at it (coaching). He's one of the best."

KAVANAUGH, a math instructor at Schoolcraft, spent two years as coach of the Oecleis and two years as athletic director before stepping down.

He was succeeded as Schoolcraft women's coach by Jack Grenan and at A.D. by Marty Nowak.

Ken Bechard, an assistant under Kavanaugh at Ladywood, coached one year at the varsity level, going 16-7, winning the Class District and regional titles in 1988.

But after only one season, Bechard resigned and Ladywood hired Gasparovic, an assistant from Marian.

Ladywood finished a dismal 12-8 in 1989 and 5-14 last season. Gasparovic resigned shortly after the season, citing philosophical differences.



Todd Farabee won the 200- and 500-yard freestyle races Wednesday to help Harrison defeat Walled Lake Western in a Western Lakes Activities Association dual meet.

Swim teams rip dual foes

Jason Barringer and Todd Farabee led Farmington Hills Harrison to a swimming 117-61 victory Wednesday over Walled Lake Central, and Farmington swept the relays Thursday to defeat Walled Lake Western 113-71.

Harrison is 2-4 in dual meets. Farmington 3-5. Both meets took place in the Western Lakes pool.

Farabee won the 200-yard freestyle in 2:08.49 and the 500 freestyle in 5:45.98. Barringer's successes came in the 100 freestyle where he had a 54.17 time and the backstroke with a 1:01.56 finish.

In addition, both swimmers participated in a relay victory for the Hawks. Jason Schwalm, Farabee, Craig Dixon and Mike Wright won the 400 freestyle in 4:00.29, and Barringer, Wright, Dixon and Schwalm combined for a 1:39.58 time in the 200 freestyle.

SCHWALM ALSO had three firsts, taking top honors in the 50 freestyle at 23.65. Harrison's Ryan Koonce had the best diving score with a 234.25 total, and Peter Metz won the butterfly with a 1:08.94 time.

Scott Frump, Tom Bonner, Mark Scanio and Don Boyer were instrumental in Farmington winning all three relays.

"The Falcons won the medley relay with Frump, Kevin Yoder, Bonner and Scanio comprising the team. Dave Kandt, Bonner, Boyer and Scanio combined for a 1:38.65 time in the 200 freestyle, and Scanio, Bonner, Boyer and Rob Stauffer finished the meet with a winning effort of 3:43.97 in the 400 freestyle."

Bonner, Boyer and Frump also had individual victories: Bonner won the butterfly in 59.32, Boyer the 100 freestyle in 55.38 and Frump the backstroke in 1:02.77.

Farmington's other winner was Diver Brandon Richardson, who compiled a 203.85 total.

Central had a double winner in Tony Coppola, who was first in the individual medley (2:24.42) and 500 freestyle (5:31.79). The Vikings also had firsts from Chris Kurmaniak in the 200 freestyle (2:07.07), Larry Albright, 50 freestyle (24.49), and Mike Sprinkling, breaststroke (1:08.27).

Smith's basket clinches Harrison win

By Ray Setlock staff writer

Farmington Hills Harrison forward Andrew Smith ducked his head to avoid the bitter wind Friday night as he walked to the team bus following a basketball game at Northville.

"There was a lot like the move he made a short time earlier as he drove the baseline for the game-winning shot."

Smith's layup with three seconds remaining gave the Hawks a 71-68 Western Lakes Activities Association victory over the Mustangs.

"I really didn't know that time was running out," Smith said. "I just knew when I got the ball that I was going for the basket."

Smith tallied a game-high 26 points, converting six of six free throws. Northville trailed 68-66 with under a minute remaining, but the Mustangs Ryan Huzjak hit a jumper with 39 seconds left to tie the game at 68.

"WHEN THEY tied it up, we wanted to go inside to Andy Fitzpatrick," Smith said. "We couldn't get it to him. I'm sure glad a lane opened up for me."

Harrison improves to 12-4 overall and 7-3 in the W.L.A.A. The Mustangs fall to 11-6 and 7-4.

Senior forward Paul McCreadie scored a team-high 21 points in the Mustangs' Junior forward Chris Lehr chipped in 18 and senior center Mike Lang 12.

The Hawks dominated the first quarter with a successful press and the accurate shooting from junior guard Don Hight. He finished the game with 15 points and had three first-quarter triples to lift Harrison to a 23-12 lead.

"Hight played a good game for us," Harrison coach Mike Teachman said. "He has been sick all week. In fact, most of our guys have been ill."

Northville rebounded in the second quarter, outscoring the Hawks 10-2 midway through the period. The Mustangs led 40-33 at halftime. Harrison went on an 8-2 run in the third quarter and led 50-48 going into the final period.

"I THINK that had second quarter we had may have helped in the third quarter," Teachman said. "During the second quarter, we had a chance to rest a list of our starters. That made them more effective in the third quarter."

The Hawks outscored Northville 21-20 in the final quarter and won the game on Smith's layup.

"It is a disappointing loss for us," Northville coach Omar Harrison said. "They did a nice job and may have slowed our offense down with their press."

The Hawks' press caused numerous turnovers in the second half, limiting the Northville offense.

"Even if we weren't getting turnovers off our press, we still disrupted their half-court offense," Teachman said. "That is something we wanted to do."

"I am real happy with the way my team played considering the kind of week we had. A lot of our guys have the flu. We only had nine guys at practice last night, and four of those guys were sick. I had to use my assistant coach just so we could scrimmage."

Fitzpatrick, a junior forward, contributed 10 points for the winners.

"Andy is like my coach on the floor," Teachman said. "He had a fine game tonight."

Rocks defense Raiders

By Dan O'Meara staff writer

Of all the things Plymouth Salem's basketball team does well, its defense is the one most easily overlooked, according to North Farmington coach Tom Negoshian.

"There's no question they're big and they're good," said Negoshian after Salem routed the Raiders 64-63 Saturday afternoon at North. "but I don't think people give (Salem coach) Hof (Brodie) enough credit for the defense they play."

"That's where they're an exceptional ballclub. Yes, they do all of the other things, but they are very tough defensively."

The Rocks used their defensive ability to build a 22-10 lead in the first quarter and set a pattern of dominance for the entire game. Salem frustrated North's shooters early while getting the quick outlet for transition baskets.

"They do a very good job rebounding defensively. They get the ball out and run very well."

"I'VE ALWAYS said they're probably the class of the league. They have good players, they're well prepared and they play very hard."

The Rocks, who finish 11-1 in league play and are 15-2 overall, will be the top seed and host for a first-round game in the Western Lakes Activities Association playoffs Friday night.

North, which plays a makeup game Tuesday with Farmington Hills Harrison, is 4-6 in the W.L.A.A. and 6-10. The Raiders must beat visiting Harrison to qualify for the playoffs as the No. 8 seed.

"We're playing probably as well as we have all year, which hopefully will carry over to the tournaments," Brodie said. "Now it's compressed into a one-game season. Every game is meaningful, and you have to be ready every game."

"But right now (Livonia) Stevenson is the defending champ, not Salem. We're a good team but we've felt the sting of defeat, and we have to come in focused or we know it could happen again."

The Rocks were upset by Stevenson in the league final last year, and the Spartans are the only W.L.A.A. team to beat Salem this year.

IN THE LAST pre-tournament tuneup, all-state forward Jake Baker scored 11 of his 14 points in the first quarter Saturday, but teammate Mike Mulder had a game-high 24 to lead the Rocks. The senior guard hit three of his four triples in the second half.

"Mike has gone through some hard times," Brodie said. "He scored 28 against Northville and has not been in a scoring threat in the last eight or nine games. But it looks like he's back."

Salem stretched its lead to 41-24 at halftime with a balance of scoring.



Mark Temple of North (right) challenges Salem's John Hoffmeyer for possession of the basketball.