

Sports

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Marlins off and running

By Steve Kowalski and Darren Nichols staff writers

One of the team strengths Farmington Hills Mercy softball coach Suzanne Brown talks about might also be considered a weakness.

Let Brown explain: "My outfielders (Jennifer Banish, Kathleen Berrigan and Kathy Mistravich) are very fast; all three are slap hitters who do great things on the base paths," said Brown, the sixth-year coach. "But a major problem with them is they're so fast, they run into each other in the outfield."

If they can avoid such collisions, look for the Marlins' outfield to be a steady force as the team tries to improve on last year's disappointing 16-18 record. The 1990 team was the first to finish below .500 under Brown's guidance.

The Marlins, who were 6-4 and third in the Catholic League's Central Division, lost to eventual Class A runner-up Livonia Franklin in the Class A district final.

Outfielders Amy Miller and Jenny Shalla were the only seniors playing last year for the Marlins, and Brown believes that's why the team struggled overall.

"We didn't have a real dominant upperclass and lacked leadership," Brown said. "To be honest, I thought we'd have a winning season, but we'd have double-headers where we'd mercy a team, then they'd come back in the second game and beat us. We couldn't make a closure. We had a scrimmage last Tuesday (against Novi) and I had high hopes before then, but they're a lot higher now."

"Things we didn't accomplish last year and lost games on are taken care of. If things go as planned, we can be pretty tough."

Mercy figures to be solid on the mound where senior pitcher Maureen Paulin returns after turning in an 11-11 record a year ago. Pushing Paulin for time will be Krista Miller, a sophomore who was 5-7 as a freshman. Paulin also is the Marlins' third batter.

"Maureen will be my No. 1, but Miller will throw in some second games of double-headers," Brown said. "I'm very pleased with what Maureen has done. She's not a natu-



Maureen Paulin was Mercy's main pitcher last year and will have that role again in 1991.

ral pitcher but has learned and is very dedicated. She's always working on it.

"She has a very strong bat, too (batting over .300 a year ago), and when she's not pitching, she can play anywhere."

Catching for Mercy will be senior Kim Reichard, who batted around .250 a year ago and "either smacks it out of the ballpark or not hit it at all," Brown said. "But I think she's really worked on it and I am real pleased with her behind the plate. She has a strong arm and calls all the pitches and pick-offs. She knows what's going on."

First base will be shared by junior left-handed batter Marcy Eastman and senior Colleen Nowicki, who played third base last year. The second base position also will be split

between senior Maurs Phenev and junior Andrea Thibodeau.

The Marlins appear to be set for quite sometime at shortstop with sophomore Katie Heffernan returning to bat second in the lineup after hitting above .300 a year ago. Third base is anchored by Angela Mastroloni, who will also lead support on the mound if needed, Brown said.

Key reserves include junior catcher Cindy Knuth and junior outfielder Carrie Quint.

"We have people who can really hit the ball and get on base," Brown said.

NORTH FARMINGTON

Half of the 16 varsity players are returning veterans, which includes the all-senior battery of pitcher Jennifer Lydon and catcher Eve Clear.

Lydon, a tri-captain along with senior Terri Gruca and Dana Botwick, was the No. 1 pitcher last year and also doubles as a dependable hitter, batting in the clean-up position.

She was 9-5 with a 1.58 earned run average, and she had 58 strikeouts and 35 walks in 93 innings. Lydon also hit .297.

Clear was an all-star in basketball and signed to play for Central Michigan University, but she could have a future in softball, too.

"I always felt, if Eve wanted to, she could make it in college in softball," North coach Dave Brubaker said.

"She's a natural at catcher. She has a great arm and hits for power. She drives the ball and plays good D. I'm looking forward to a big year from Eve, not only defensively but at the plate as well."

Gruca, who had only four errors last season, will play second base again. She improved her hitting, according to Brubaker, and will hit in the No. 3 position.

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Miller makes right move in new league

By Dan O'Meara staff writer

John Miller is playing football again and enjoying it.

The former Farmington Hills Harrison and Michigan State University star has also answered his critics, letting his performance for the Birmingham Fire 50 the new World League of American Football do his talking.

Miller's 99-yard interception return for a touchdown Saturday night broke a 10-10 tie and enabled the Fire to defeat the visiting Sacramento Surge 17-10.

Miller, who spent the 1989 season with the Detroit Lions but was cut at the end of training camp last year, is happy to be where he is following a tenuous relationship with the Lions.

"That didn't work out and, in a way, I'm glad it didn't," he said, "because I got an opportunity to come down here and play again."

"I'd practice hard all week (with the Lions) but wouldn't get a chance to go out and show what I could do. It was tough because I was only on the special teams. Now that I'm starting again, it's brought the fun back into football."

While he was with the Lions, Miller's speed was supposedly a question mark, but his interception return — a record, to be sure, in the fledgling league — was a way of responding to any doubters.

"That never bothered me," he said. "I never questioned my speed. That was always something in the minds of other people. I think I play faster on the field than I run a 40 for the scouts."

"In my four years at Michigan State, I covered Andre Rison every day in practice. Some of those guys who came out are supposed to be all-world but aren't half as good as him. Those (receivers at MSU) helped to make my job easier today."

Furthermore, Miller is playing a relatively new position with the Fire — free safety, a position that presumably requires more speed.



John Miller former Harrison griddier

For much of his career, Miller has played strong safety. He played free safety for only a brief time at MSU when he was needed to cover for an injured teammate.

"Actually, I think of myself as a strong safety," he said. "This is really the only time I've gone full time at free safety. I've been watching film of Steve Atwater of the Denver Broncos and getting hints to see how he plays it. It will take time to adjust but I'm making the adjustment slowly and surely."

"At strong safety, there's more room for error. If you come up on the run, you're not going to hurt the team as much. As a free safety, you're the last line of defense. You have to make sure it's a run before you come up."

"It's more of a coverage position than strong safety. You have to be aware of what everyone on the field is doing."

Miller, always known for his hard hitting and tenacious tackling, is making use of that ability at free safety, too.

He was named Birmingham's most valuable player on defense after the Sacramento game, in which

football

he also made 10 solo tackles, assisted on another, knocked down a pass and recovered a fumble.

Miller is averaging seven tackles in two games for the Fire, which is 1-1 after losing its first game to the Montreal Machine.

"I still feel I'm a good run-support player," he said. "I'm using my knowledge as a strong safety to help out as a free safety."

The 24-year-old Miller, who played at Harrison from 1981-84 and State from 1985-88, was married in June and was reluctant to pack his bags so soon and move to Alabama for another try at professional football. Miller will live in Birmingham until at least the end of the regular season (May 25), but his wife, Julie, who remained in Michigan, gave her blessing to the venture.

"She didn't know anything about the new league," Miller said. "When I was invited to apply I said I wasn't going to play, and that was out of respect for her."

"But her father called and asked her if I was going to play in this new league. She came to me and asked why I wasn't. I said I didn't think it was fair after we just got married. She said 'That's silly because you know you'll be miserable if you don't try.' So she really was the one who forced me into it and got me excited about it."

Miller has made an immediate impact in the league, with his interception return being the crowning achievement thus far.

The decisive play occurred with six seconds left in the third quarter with the Surge facing second-and-six at the Birmingham 17-yard line and driving for the go-ahead TD themselves.

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Sarsfield to teach English?

By Steve Kowalski staff writer

If and when Chris Sarsfield begins packing his bags to head for England, he'll remember to leave the suitcase full of home in Farmington Hills.

The London Youth American Football League, located in Clapham-Hampshire, England, is searching for a young American to teach American football to its players, and Sarsfield is one of three finalists nationwide.

Sarsfield, a 1990 Farmington Hills Harrison graduate, expects to hear before April 15 if he's the one chosen to take the three-month, all-expenses paid trip. Although he's never been overseas, Sarsfield knows what to expect.

"A bunch of my friends from school have been there and they said it would be a lot cooler and said not to worry about getting a tan there," said Sarsfield, a freshman at the University of Michigan. "I'd like to go but it's not my life or anything."

WITH THREE European teams, including one in London, England, awarded franchises in the new World League of football, education on the sport is important. If he gets selected, Sarsfield will teach the sport at the beginner level (showing stances and basic techniques) to high-school aged kids, he said.

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Chris Sarsfield would-be English teacher



Farmington freshman Jennifer Sever will start at second base for the Falcons.

Adray League out of business

By Brad Emons staff writer

Mike Adray, the Dearborn appliance dealer who has sponsored a sandlot baseball league for college-age players for more than three decades, has pulled the plug.

The Detroit Adray Baseball League, which has produced nearly 100 major league players including Wayne Memorial High's Pat Sheridan and Livonia Franklin's Bernie Carbo, will cease operations immediately.

It is too early to tell how the decision will affect the rival Livonia Collegiate Baseball League, which begins its season May 26.

NEW NATIONAL Collegiate Athletic Association regulations, effective Aug. 1, put severe restrictions on Adray's franchise league, Adray said. The franchise league is a mem-

baseball

ber of the All-American Amateur Baseball Association based in Johnstown, Pa. (site of the annual AAAABA tourney).

The new NCAA ruling affects college coaches and players from the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan, Wayne State and the University of Detroit Mercy.

Coaches from those schools will not be able to work with more than three of their own players during the summer league season. The league normally attracts top high school seniors and college underclassmen ages 20 and younger.

The Detroit League consisted of teams and players made up primarily from area colleges including

Adray Sound (U-M), Adray Photo (EMU), Adray Sound and Dearborn Vacuum (WSU) and Adray Appliance (U-D Mercy).

MIKE ADRAY also cited the deterioration of interest in sandlot baseball and the lack of appreciation by big leaguers toward his sponsorship of the league for folding his tent.

"The NCAA came up with a rule that made it difficult to continue the college teams we've had in the past. They've made it tough to operate."

"We were all set to go (in June), but when the NCAA rule came down, I said to myself, 'It doesn't make sense.'"

"I decided, 'why spend the money? I'd be spinning my wheels, and the turnouts had been disappointing. People just don't go out and watch the games anymore so I threw in the towel after 20 years.'"

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