

Sports

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Catholic champs

Mercy takes league title this time

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Kathryn Dudley was operating under a tight schedule Saturday, but she arrived in time to help Farmington Hills Mercy nail down the Catholic League A-B Division soccer championship.

The senior forward was a bridesmaid in her sister's 11 a.m. wedding and missed the first half of the 11:30 a.m. game at Oakland University.

Dudley's second-half contribution included an assist and a goal as the Marlins defeated Madison Heights Bishop Foley for a third time this season, 3-0. Mercy is 14-2-2.

"It was so hard the past week, because Kathryn had a family commitment and family comes first," Mercy coach Deepak Shivraman said. "It was a tough decision. Kathryn called me last night and said she didn't know what to do. She wanted to play in this game!"

"Having her on the field is such a plus physically because of her speed but also in terms of motivation. In her absence, Carrie (Dadados), Colleen (O'Connor) and Dana (Lehmkuhl) stepped in and kept the communication going."

AFTER LOSING 4-3 to Birmingham Marian in the championship game last year, the Marlins had plenty of motivation, however.

"We don't want to talk about that game," Dudley said. "We'll just forget that one and remember this one."

Mercy led 2-0 at halftime a year ago. So when the Marlins took a 1-0 lead Saturday on freshman Erin Porth's first-half goal, they remembered that it would take two halves, even though they had beaten Foley 7-0 and 4-2 previously.

"We were really pumped for this game," Mercy goalkeeper Renee Larabell said. "We felt it was stolen from us last year. We knew not to get too cocky, because Foley is a great team and they could come back. Last year was a lesson."

Though Dudley had an impact in the second half, the goal of winning the league title had been such a high priority all season the Marlins might have won regardless of who played, according to Shivraman.

softball

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Mercy goalkeeper

"Even if we were missing a few other girls, through sheer determination they were going to walk off the field as winners because they came so close last year," the first-year coach said. "From day one, the girls were ready to play for the championship."

"A LOT OF these girls have been together since they were freshmen, and I would have felt so bad if they had lost this game and not achieved their goal."

Porth scored the only goal Mercy would need in the first five minutes, and the score stayed that way until 14 minutes remained in the game.

Dudley brought the ball up on the right side and, when she drew the opposing goalkeeper toward her, fired a cross to Lehmkuhl, also a senior forward, on the left. Lehmkuhl had an open shot at the net to make it 2-0.

"I saw (the goal) coming out, and I knew Dana would be down on the other side," Dudley said. "It was just an easy pass. Ever since we've played together, we read each other and know where the ball is going. The goalkeeper did the best she could in that situation."

Dudley scored her goal in the last three minutes, lofting a floater that had just the right arc on it to prevent the Foley keeper from touching the ball before it dropped under the crossbar.

For periods of time in the first half and early in the second when Mercy clung to its 1-0 lead, the Marlins relied on defense and the stellar netminding of Larabell to preserve their advantage.

"THEY DOMINATED a lot of the game," Larabell said. "It was real frustrating and it seemed we were tired. The defense played well but not as well as it could have. We did what we had to do and came through."

Larabell stopped a pair of straight-on shots by Foley's Gina Fratarcangeli at the start of the second half. A short time later she two-handed another shot from Fratarcangeli, who next tried to tip a roller past Larabell following a corner kick by Karen Williams. The Mercy keeper smothered the ball.

"That shows you a good goalkeeper when she can make a save on a point-blank shot," said Shivraman, who also had praise for the play of senior halfback Courtenay Lyons. "But we have to work on it; we have to work on the defense, because she shouldn't have to face those point-blank shots in the first place. She's a spectacular goalkeeper and she proved it today."

The Marlins will have a rematch of last year's district tournament game with Farmington at 4 p.m. today on the Mercy field.

Mercy defeated the No. 1-rated Falcons in a shootout in the championship game a year ago, and the Marlins eventually reached the state semifinals. Farmington is unranked but 6-6-2 overall.

"They're underdogs this year, and they're going to come at us," Larabell said. "They lost a lot of great players and they might not be as good as last year, but they're still a great team and we'll have to work hard to win."

"WE BEAT them last year, but it was not an easy win," Dudley said. "I think we know we're in for a tough game, so we have to start preparing ourselves mentally. We'll have to be focused to play a tough game."

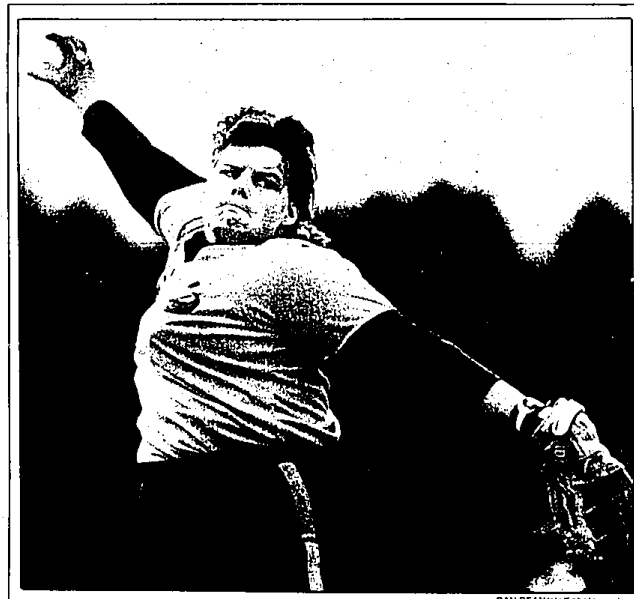
The winner goes to the final game on Friday at Southfield High against either North Farmington, Redford Union or the tournament-host Blue Jays. That game will be played at 4:30 p.m.



JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

Soccer action

Carey Perkins of North Farmington makes an extended effort to keep the ball away from Livonia Franklin's Patli Shea Thursday. The teams tied 2-2. See game story on Page 2C.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Raiders share title

North Farmington pitcher Jennifer Lydon had the right combination of pitches again Wednesday when the Raiders beat Livonia

Stevenson 9-8 to clinch a tie for the Lakes Division title. She walked only two batters. See story on Page 3C.

7th-inning rally lifts Mercy in semifinals

By Darren A. Nichols
staff writer

On one of the coldest nights of spring, it took the bats of Farmington Hills Mercy a long time to heat up.

After going hitless through 6½ innings Friday, Mercy rallied for five runs in the top of the seventh to defeat Dearborn Divine Child 5-1 in the Catholic League semifinals at Dearborn's King Boring Field.

The Marlins, 21-7 overall, will play Riverdale-Gabriel Richard, a 4-0 winner in the other semifinal with Harper Woods Regina, for the championship at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 28, at King Boring. Divine Child dropped to 21-9.

"I wish it was a little warmer, (but) I'll take a win any way I can," Mercy coach Suzanne Brown said. "We pulled it out in the seventh, and it's been that way all year long. It's real easy to buckle under pressure (and) I'm very pleased we pulled it all together in the seventh."

"Was I worried? I'd be lying if I said I wasn't. But I trust and believe in my team."

Pitcher Maureen Paulin improved to 17-4 overall and went the distance for the Marlins. She struck out two and allowed five hits.

"MOE PITCHED very well," Brown said. "She had the wind with her. She has worked real hard to become the No. 1 pitcher (for us) and to

softball

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— Suzanne Brown
Mercy softball coach

become an excellent hitter and ballplayer."

Sophomore Dawn Barszczewski, who is 15-6 overall, suffered the loss for the Falcons. She struck out 12, allowed four hits and walked two.

The Marlins scored four of their five runs on a pair of singles. With one out in the seventh inning, center fielder Kathleen Berrigan walked. Paulin singled, sending Berrigan to third base to give the Marlins a first-and-third situation with one out.

After Paulin stole second base, third baseman Angela Mastroianni reached first on an error by the catcher to load the bases. Shortstop Katie Heffernan knocked home Berrigan and Paulin on an infield single to the left side.

Second baseman Maura Pheny

grounded out to the second baseman for the second out before catcher Kim Reichard hit an infield single down the first-base line to score two more runners.

Another run scored on a wild pitch and the inning ended on a strikeout by Kathy Misteravich.

"I WAS SUPER confident with one out in the seventh inning," Divine Child coach Marylou Jansen said. "I was a little nervous, but Dawn was pitching her best game yet. How we lost is still a mystery to us."

The Falcons scored their only run of the game in the bottom of the third on a bizzare play.

With one out, shortstop Cindy Lehnis hit a double down the right-field line that scored catcher Sarah Sarb from second base.

While trying to score on the same play, second baseman Rhonda McCallister was thrown out at the plate by Berrigan, and Lehnis was thrown out at third by Reichard to end the inning with a double play.

Brown looks forward to the Catholic League title game against Richard, a team the Marlins have beaten twice this season.

"Playing in the state tournament is fine, but playing for the Catholic League championship is our reality," she said. "We can't take them for granted. They were here (the league championship) and won it. It's gonna depend on the weather, and it's gonna be a ball game."

Devine does it all for Hawks in 4-3 win

Gary Devine made himself the winning pitcher with the game-winning hit Thursday in Farmington Hills Harrison's 4-3 baseball victory over host Walled Lake Western.

The game was suspended after two innings Monday because of bad weather. The score was tied 1-1.

Both teams are 6-3 and tied for second place in the Western Division of the Western Lakes Activities Association. The Hawks play first-place Plymouth Canton today.

Harrison had won six consecutive games, seven of its last eight, through last week and was 13-6 overall. The Hawks play host to Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook in a pre-district game at 4 p.m. Thursday.

With his team behind 3-2 in the top of the seventh inning, Devine slammed a three-run homer to give the Hawks a victory. He had

two of Harrison's six hits.

Dan Hight and Daryl Ferguson had reached base on errors and were awarded when the 5-foot-6, 155-pound Devine lowered the boom on the Warriors.

Devine also pitched a complete game, scattering five hits, striking out five and walking four. His record is 4-2.

Harrison tied the score in the first inning Monday when Mike Pesci ripped the first pitch for a 390-foot, solo homer.

NORTH FARMINGTON ripped Livonia Stevenson 12-2 Wednesday in a Lakes Division game.

Mike Powers worked four innings on the mound and got the win. He struck out six and walked six. Mark Temple pitched three

baseball

Temple played a big role offensively, too. He reached base four times with two doubles, a walk and an error, and he scored four runs.

The Raiders finish 6-4 in the division and stand 9-7 overall. North plays at South Lyon in a pre-district game at 4 p.m. Thursday.

REDFORD CATHOLIC Central scored 12 runs in the last two innings Wednesday to break a 1-1 tie and defeat Plymouth Canton 13-1 in a non-league baseball game.

Canton resident Scott Kapla pitched six

innings to get the victory and helped his cause at the plate by going 3-for-4 and scoring two runs.

Kapla (6-3) held the Chiefs to four hits, an earned run, and one walk. He struck out four. Steve Ross was the closer for the Shamrocks, 14-13 overall.

CC, having loaded the bases with walks, went ahead in the sixth when two runs scored on Aaron Rumberger's ground ball. The Chiefs got the forefront at second base, but the attempted double play went awry with an errant throw to first.

Joe Vondracek had a two-run single in that inning and was 3-for-5. He also hit a three-run homer in the seventh and finished with five RBI. Matt Roney also was 3-for-4

and scored two runs.

Canton's Chris James had two hits and scored a run. Brian Tiedl singled home the only run in the first, and Brian Stidham had the other hit.

Frank Learned pitched four innings and scattered seven hits, but Jason Riggs suffered the loss after working the last three.

The Chiefs are 15-5 overall. They play Farmington Hills Harrison in their last Western Lakes Activities Association regular-season game today and Romulus in a pre-district game Thursday. Both games are 4 p.m. at Canton.

CC visits Allen Park Cabrini today and plays Livonia Churchill in a pre-district game at 4 p.m. Thursday at Capitol Park in Redford.