

Rocks solid under coach Balconi

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

GARY BALCONI, who led Plymouth Salem to three invitational titles and the Western Lakes Activities Association championship, is the Observerland Coach of the Year.

Balconi also doubles as the school's athletic director.

The Rocks were the top team in the area during a year not highlighted by many stars at any state meets. Salem won the Observerland, Elks and Tiger relays, and also took the WLLA Lakes Division crown.

Only three performers from Observerland placed in the state meet, but the all-area team is still well represented. Following are profiles on each member of the first team.

FIELD EVENTS

Tony Shaleb, shot put, Farmington Harrison: Shaleb leaves Harrison with a school record shot put of 52 feet, 10 inches. A WLLA champ this spring, Shaleb also had the best throw in three years at the Observerland Relays. Shaleb qualified the last two years for the Class A state meet and this spring took third at regional.

"Tony was an extremely coachable young man," coach John Schumacher said. "He showed great dedication and had an outstanding work ethic."

Dean Benedict, discus, Plymouth Canton: Benedict made enormous strides his senior year, setting a school record at the Class A meet with a toss of 165-7 for third place. His best toss in 1990 was 145-3. Benedict won the WLLA crown last year, and took second this spring. He was a member of the 1990 team that won the Class A regional at the 134-0. Benedict scored 181 points for the Plymouth Canton team.

"Dean is an excellent example of how hard work and dedication helps you reach your goals in life," coach Bob Richardson said. "For only throwing as a junior and senior Dean made fabulous progress."

Randy Calcaterra, high jump, Churchill: Calcaterra's springs have helped him in two sports. A first-team member of the All-Observerland basketball team, Calcaterra also is the area's best high jumper. He won the WLLA meet, clearing 4-4, four inches higher than any other competitor. He was second in the Class A regional at 5-1. He cleared 6-3 at the state meet.

His best jump this spring was four inches better than his best from last year. Calcaterra signed a letter of intent to play basketball at Wayne State University.

"He is very coachable and a great student-athlete to work with," coach Fred Price said. "I don't think you can find a nicer young man in sports today."

Leon Hister, long jump, Plymouth Salem: Hister leaped at least 20 feet 10 times this season, including a 21-3/4 effort, which won the WLLA meet. He finished second in the event as a freshman. Hister also is the lead-off man on the Chiefs' 400-meter relay team.

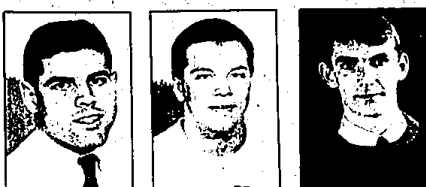
"Leon is a great all-around athlete who is very coachable," Balconi said.

Al Barbarich, pole vault, Catholic Central: Barbarich, a senior, won the Class A regional with a clearance of 13-5. He placed third at the Oxford Invitational (12-8) and fifth at the Jackson Invitational (12-6). Barbarich also was one of the area's top discus throwers, recording a personal best of 116-10.

"Pole vault is not an event in the Catholic League, but with Father McKernan's individual coaching, Al Barbarich improved each week," coach Tony Magni said.

RUNNING EVENTS

James Grady, 110-meter hurdles,



Tony Shaleb
Harrison



Dean Benedict
Canton



Randy Calcaterra
Churchill



Leon Hister
Salem



Al Barbarich
Catholic Central



Randy Seach
John Glenn

all-area boys track

1990 ALL-AREA BOYS TRACK TEAM

FIELD EVENTS

Shot put: 1. Tony Shaleb, Farmington Harrison; 2. Blazo Saricewich, Farmington Harrison; 3. Todd Pawowski, North Farmington. Discus: 1. Dean Benedict, Plymouth Canton; 2. David Arbous, Westland John Glenn; 3. Jason Key, Westland John Glenn. High jump: 1. Randy Calcaterra, Livonia Churchill; 2. Jason Tucker, Farmington; 3. Mike DeJuretti, Plymouth Canton. Long jump: 1. Leon Hister, Plymouth Salem; 2. Brandon Buck, Westland John Glenn; 3. Karl Wake, Plymouth Canton. Pole vault: 1. Al Barbarich, Catholic Central; 2. Chris Manning, Farmington; 3. Tony Connelly, John Glenn.

RUNNING EVENTS

110-meter hurdles: 1. James Grady, Wayne Memorial; 2. Joe Miller, Farmington; 3. Jim Ramsey, Plymouth Salem. 200 hurdles: 1. Jeff Robertson, Redford St. Agatha; 2. Todd Jacobs, Garden City; 3. Jason Lembach, Lutheran Westland. 100 dash: 1. Randy Seach, Westland John Glenn; 2. Steve Gionnessi, Livonia Franklin; 3. Shawn Ma'azza, Wayne Memorial. 200 dash: 1. Alan Buford, Wayne Memorial; 2. Roy Granger, Farmington Harrison; 3. Anthony Hough, Bishop Borge. 400 dash: 1. Eric McKeon, Catholic Central; 2. Andy Roper, Plymouth Salem; 3. Joe Dumont, Wayne Memorial.

Wayne: A versatile runner, Grady won the 110 and 300-meter hurdle championships at both the Wolverine A meet and Class A regional. Grady also was a member of the winning 800 and 1,600 relay teams at the Observerland Relays.

He also competed in the long jump and high jump events. "James is a hard-working, unselfish athlete," coach Floyd Carter said. "He has an excellent work ethic and I feel he will be very successful in college. I'm sure he will do well wherever he goes."

Jeff Robertson, 300 hurdles, St. Agatha: A senior, Robertson set a school record with a 38.8 finish at the Operation Friendship meet. Robertson was a Catholic League and regional champion, and was half-mile in the Class C state meet.

"Jeff was the heart and soul of our team and I am very happy that his hard work has paid off," coach Mike McCollum said. "I know the whole school is proud of his accomplishments in track."

Randy Seach, 100 meter dash, John Glenn: Seach, Westland John

Glenn (49.9), and fifth at the Oxford Invitational (51.1). "Eric is a very aggressive runner, and is at his best when coming from behind," Magni said. "Although only a sophomore, he was our top point scorer and was voted the team's Most Valuable Runner."

Rodney Westlake, 800 meters, Stevenson: The Spartan senior placed second in both the WLLA and Class A regional meets, and was undefeated in the 200, 400 and 800 meter races in dual meets. He took fifth place in the 800 race at the Class A meet. A member of the 800, 1,600 and 3,200 relay races, Westlake also participated in the winning 1,600 relay team at the Observerland Relays.

Bound for the University of Michigan, Westlake also is a member of Stevenson's student senate.

"Rodney is extremely versatile," coach John Gores said. "He could win in four different ways."

Eric Curnow, 1,600 meters, Franklin: A senior, Curnow was a WLLA champion in 1990, and he took third at Observerland and fourth at the Class A regional. Curnow prepared himself for the track season by being an All-Observer first-team cross country choice.

Ben Goba, 3,200 meters, Farmington: An appendicitis injury sidelined Goba the last half of the track season, but he made his mark early with a second place finish in the West Bloomfield Invitational (9:39.6). He also placed 11th in the Mansfield Invitational. Goba, one of the most highly-regarded senior cross country runners last fall, is headed to the University of Tennessee on a track and cross country scholarship.

400-meter relay (Leon Hister, Todd Forbes, Jim Ramsey and Matt Perron), Plymouth Salem: The four-some had the area's best 400 relay time, 45.0, and won the WLLA meet. The group will have to break up next year, considering both Ramsey and Perron are graduating seniors.

"They're a group of athletes who have learned up all year for the conference championship," Balconi said. "All were competitors and fine young men."

800-meter relay (Alan Buford, Joe Dumont, Ken Craig and Shawn Ma'azza), Wayne: A pulled hamstring suffered by Ma'azza limited the team's potential to do very well at the regional or state, but the foursome was sound when healthy. They won the Observerland 800 relay race in 1:31.2.

"The 800 team, I thought we could have qualified for the state meet, but because of injuries..." coach Floyd Carter said. "One of the keys to the 800 team was they worked real hard on the exchanges."

1,600 meter relay (Alan Buford, James Grady, Joe Dumont and Michael Hooks), Wayne: The Zebras' foursome recorded identical 3:24.1 times in winning both the Observerland and Wolverine A League 1,600 relay championships.

"All four did a tremendous job," Carter said. "We're down in numbers because of 'pay to play' and all of them ran in four events."

3,200 meter relay (Aaron Shepesh, Rob Valentine, Scott Balwinski and Steve Witek), Catholic Central: The foursome's most impressive finish came at the Catholic League championship where they took second place in 8:11.4. They were third at the Class A regional (8:19.3) and fourth in the Operation Friendship (8:13.7).

"Aaron did a great job getting us into position for a competitive race and Rob Valentine keeps us in the race by concentrating on the team's position so as not to lose contact with the leaders," Magni said. "The relay team started to come together when Balwinski's addition. Witek is an intelligent runner and holds off the opponents or goes after the leaders in a conservative, but aggressive manner."

Eric McKeon, 400-meter dash, Catholic Central: McKeon was runner-up at the Catholic League meet and the Jackson Invitational with identical times of 50.7. He took third in both the Class A regional (50.7) and the Operation Friend-

ship meet. "Eric is one of the most determined, confident runners I have ever coached," coach Jess Shough said. "He is a very deserving champion."

Alan Buford, 200-meter dash, Wayne: Buford had the area's best times in both the 100 and 200-meter dashes, and also in the long jump. Buford is undecided on what college to attend.

"Alan is a very strong and fast athlete," Carter said. "Alan was willing to run just about anything I asked him to and did not complain. He has the ability to be a fine quarter- or half-mile runner at the college level."

Chad Wrona, the Water's starter, pitched three innings, allowing three hits and three walks, while fanning three to pick up the victory.

PLAYER OF THE WEEK: The LCHL's Player of the Week for May 24



Alan Buford
Wayne



Eric McKeon
Catholic Central



Rodney Westlake
Stevenson



Eric Curnow
Franklin



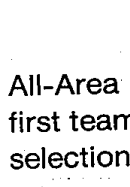
Ben Goba
Farmington



James Grady
Wayne



Jeff Robertson
St. Agatha



Jim Ramsey
Salem



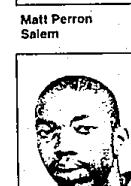
Matt Perron
Salem



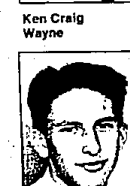
Ken Craig
Wayne



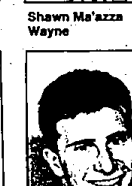
Shawn Ma'azza
Wayne



Michael Hooks
Wayne



Aaron Shepesh
Catholic Central



Scott Balwinski
Catholic Central



Steve Witek
Catholic Central



Todd Forbes
Salem



Gary Balconi
Coach of the Year

Delwal's Hutchinson one-hits Little Caesars

Leo Hutchinson, a Redford Catholic Central High product, pitched a one-hitter Wednesday, leading Delwal to a 1-0 triumph over Little Caesars in Livonia Collegiate Baseball League action Wednesday at Novi High.

Hutchinson, a sophomore at Eastern Michigan University, lost his no-hit bid with two-out in the sixth inning when he gave up a bloop single.

The left-hander struck out seven and walked four to even his record at 1-1. He was in serious trouble only once — the second inning — when he walked the first two batters before bouncing back with a pair of strikeouts and a fly out.

Meanwhile, Delwal managed only three hits against Madonna University's Lou McKaig, who also went the distance.

Delwal tallied its only run of the game in the third when Billy Hardy (University of Michigan) scored on a wild pitch.

Ron Hollis, Jason Valente and Todd Bruce collected the only Delwal hits.

The loss drops Caesars to 4-2 overall. It snapped the Livonians' four-game winning streak.

WALTER'S 13, WENDY'S 2: Walter's Appliances scored eight times in the first inning and unloaded for 14 hits on Wednesday, romping past Wendy's of Ann Arbor in a game played at Ford Field.

Jeff Pedwell, the Livonia Churchill High product now playing for Madonna University, led the assault, going 3-for-4 with one RBI.

Michigan added two hits, including a double and four RBI.

Delwal's starter, Jeff Koester (Westland John Glenn and Henry Ford Community College) and Paul Pirronello (Redford Catholic Central and Henry Ford CC) added two hits apiece.

The game lasted just five innings be-

cause of the 10-run mercy rule.

Chad Wrona, the Water's starter, pitched three innings, allowing three hits and three walks, while fanning three to pick up the victory.

PLAYER OF THE WEEK: The LCHL's Player of the Week for May 24



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M-F 9-6
SAT. 9-4

DO-IT-YOURSELF Air Conditioner PACKAGE
Cash and Carry
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Regular \$869.95
387G Series
2 Ton.....\$894.95
2.5 Ton.....\$1069.95
3 Ton.....\$1225.95

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