The Farmington Observer

Sports

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Stingrays get new coach

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

The highly successful Michigan Stingrays, the Farmington Hills-based competitive youth swim club, are in transition with the organization undergoing a recent coaching change.

Peter Leonhardt ended his 6½-year association with the Stingrays when he resigned as coach to devote more time to the pursuit of a second college degree.

Replacing him is former Oakland University All-America Jeff Cooper, who was assistant men's and women's coach at Louisiana State University in his latest assignment.

Under the guidance of Leonhardt, the Stingrays won seven state titles — three in long-course meets, one each in girls and boys short-course events and two in combined 13-and-over short-course meets.

"I felt very satisfied with what we had accomplished," Leonhardt said. "It was a great six years, and I felt it was time to go on and do some other things."

THE 29-YEAR-old Leonhardt, who plans to continue coaching the Redford Catholic Central varsity, is four classes short of earning his degree in education from Wayne State University.

He previously received a criminal justice degree from WSU but would like to teach social studies in the secondary schools and coach swimming.

"Once I get certified to teach, I'd like to combine that with swim coaching," he said. "Once I accomplish that, it will mean a more stable living.

"I didn't leave the Stingrays to get out of the sport. I didn't think I'd be able to do both — finish my degree and coach the Stingrays, too."

Leonhardt, a native of Pleasant Ridge and 1979 graduate of Ferndale High School, expressed his confidence in Cooper and assistant Greg Patrell and the continuation and quality of the program.

"The Stingrays are loaded with a fine group of athletes of all ages," he said. "Under the leadership of two fine coaches, I'm confident the Stingrays will stay at their present level or reach an even greater level."

The 25-year-old Cooper captained the 1988 team at OU and was named an All-America 13 times during his four-year career in the 1,650-yard freestyle, 400 individual medley, 500 freestyle and 800 freestyle relay.

At the conclusion of his collegiate career, Cooper served as OU women's assistant coach for three years before moving to LSU for one year.

HE ALSO WAS head assistant for the LSU Bengal Tigers, an age-group team, and has coached the Orchard Valley Swim Club team in the Northwest Suburban Swim League for the last five years.

Cooper, who was Leonhardt's assistant with the Stingrays in 1989-90, will rejoin the OU women's program as an assistant.

"My main goal is to develop the younger part of the (Stingrays) program," he said. "It's not that it has been neglected, but it was a lesser part of the program.

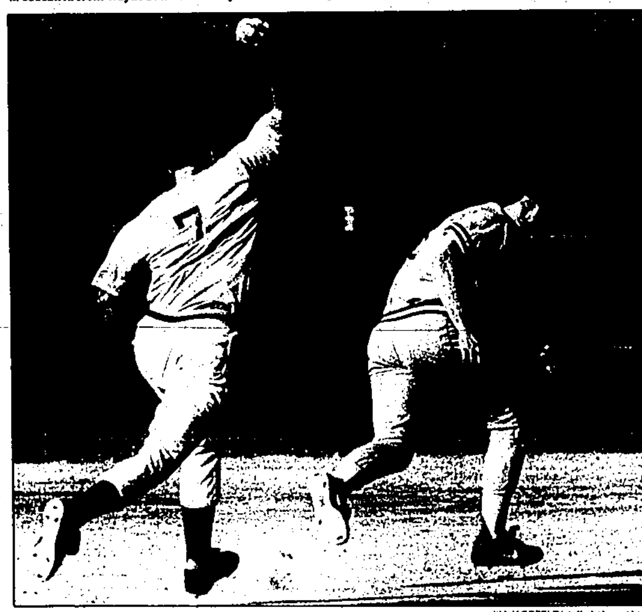
"The program needs a shot-in-the-arm at the younger levels so by the time they're older the program will be all set. I hope to get them to where the 12-and-under program will be one of the best in the state."

Cooper, a 1984 graduate of Swartz Creek High School, hopes to pick up where his predecessor left off.

"Peter took over when the Stingrays were in need and has brought them to where they are now," he said. " I have enough coaching experience to know I can do the job, and I definitely want to maintain that, keep it going.

"We have some tremendous talent, some junior and senior national qualifiers. We have some up-and-coming talent that is ready to be tested and tapped."

Jeff Cooper (right) takes over the coaching reigns of the Michigan Stingrays from Peter Leonhardt, who stepped down after 6½ years.



JIM JAGDFELD/staff photographer

Leo Devine of Farmington Hills-based Total Travel is chased back to second base by Walter's Home Appliance third baseman Jeff Pendell Wednesday. Total Travel lost the game 14-4.

Relief pitching lifts Walter's past Total

Walter's Appliance, which has relied on its offense the entire year, got strong relief pitching Wednesday from Craig Overaitis to beat Total Travel, 14-4, at Livonia's Ford Field.

Overaitis (Livonia Franklin and Henry Ford Community College) allowed one run on five hits and struck out one Total Travel batter in 3⅓ innings of relief.

The win improved Walter's Livonia Collegiate Baseball League record to 10-3-1 overall.

As is usually the case, Walter's bats worked overtime as coach Mike Keller's team collected 13 hits and rallied for eight runs in the fifth to prevail. Chris White led Walter's with two hits, two sacrifice flies and four RBI. Joe Brusseau had a pair of doubles and two RBI.

Eric Stover stroked two hits and drove in two runs, while Jerry Koester and Jay Gabel collected a pair of hits each.

REDFORD LITTLE Caesars whipped the Windsor Canucks team, 12-2, in the second game of Wednesday night's doubleheader at Ford Field.

Caesars, 9-4-1 overall, scored in every inning but the fourth. Jeff Miller was the winning pitcher, allowing two runs over five innings. Don Sikora pitched the last inning of the game, which was called after six innings because of a mercy.

Jeff Bates, who was 3-for-3 with five RBI, led Caesars' 11-hit attack. Adam Havey and Earl Johnson each went 3-4 for Caesars. Johnson had an RBI and stole two bases for Caesars.

Concealed gets back to winning

Concealed Security was back on the winning track Thursday, defeating Quality Construction/Plymouth Elks 9-3 in the Little Caesars Baseball Federation.

After defeating Livonia 21-4 in the first of two games Tuesday, Concealed suffered its only loss in league later that evening, dropping a 2-1 decision to Ypsilanti I.

Mark D'Antonio pitched a complete game against Quality/Elks, a team composed of former Plymouth Salem and Plymouth Canton players. He scattered eight hits over seven innings, struck out seven and walked three.

Scott Kennedy was the losing pitcher in relief. He entered the game with the score tied 3-3 but allowed six runs on three hits and seven walks.

JIM SOLAK and Shandel Currie had two hits apiece for Concealed. Ed Wolkind had two RBI with a pair of bases-loaded walks and Matt Fennelly added an RBI single.

Mike Wougamon was 3-for-4 with a double and two singles for Quality/Elks.

In the second game Tuesday, Randy Gierczak scored Concealed's lone run on a wild pitch in the bottom of the seventh inning. The losers had the tying run called out at the plate.

Solak struck out 11 and walked two in a losing effort. Sean Kenny was the winning pitcher, striking out eight and walked three. Both teams had three hits.

In the Livonia game, D'Antonio was 4-for-5 with four RBI and Fennelly 3-for-3 with five RBI. Eric Miller drove in two runs and Ron Hollis one.

Jermaine Burley pitched five innings and earned the win. He allowed two runs, two hits and seven walks. Phil Woods was the starter and loser.

Gibson, Dudley among area standouts

all-area soccer

ALL-OBSERVER SOCCER

First team

Name	Class	Position	School
Jennifer Emmett	Jun.	Keeper	Salem
Lori Godlewski	Sen.	Defender	Stevenson
Stephanie Speen	Sen.	Defender	Churchill
Gwen Gibbish	Jun.	Defender	Salem
Ragen Coyne	Jun.	Midfielder	Stevenson
[illegible]	Jun.	Midfielder	Franklin
[illegible]	Sen.	Midfielder	Salem
Sue Gibson	Jun.	Forward	Farmington
Erin Harvey	Sen.	Forward	Salem
Kathryn Dudley	Sen.	Forward	Mercy
[illegible]	Sen.	Forward	Churchill

Second team

Name	Class	Position	School
[illegible]	Sen.	Keeper	Mercy
[illegible]	Jun.	Defender	Canton
[illegible]	Sen.	Defender	Churchill
[illegible]	Jun.	Defender	Farmington
[illegible]	Jun.	Midfielder	Stevenson
[illegible]	Sen.	Midfielder	Canton
[illegible]	Sen.	Midfielder	Churchill
[illegible]	Jun.	Midfielder	Farmington
[illegible]	Sen.	Forward	N. Farm.
[illegible]	Sen.	Forward	Mercy
[illegible]	Jun.	Forward	Stevenson

Honorable Mention: [illegible]

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

IT'S DIFFICULT to believe, really, but understand it's long been accepted that in sports, results are what matter.

Based upon that premise, the Observerland region had an off-year in girls soccer.

How can that be, with all the talent packed into this area?

Look at the final results. For the first time since the sport offered a state championship sponsored by the Michigan High School Athletic Association in 1983, a Western Lakes Activities Association team was not in the final.

Prior to this season, in every year except 1989 (Northville vs. Troy Athens) an Observer-area WLAA team reached the Class A championship game and in three of those seasons, *both* finalists were from the state's premier soccer conference.

THERE'S A reason this year is different, of course — the MHSAA. The state's governing body has decided to pack a few districts with WLAA teams and have them all come out of the same region — meaning no more than one could reach the Final Four.

It's hardly representative when the state's best teams (indeed, three of the top six-ranked squads were in the Northville district) knock each other off in the early rounds of the state tournament.

The draw was a decisive factor in this year's tourney.

The end result is soccer fans across the state missed a chance to see the best players and best teams, which is what a statewide tournament is supposed to feature.

One final opinion: It's an even bet that the following athletes chosen to the all-Observer team could match any team of all-stars picked from the remainder of the state.

FIRST TEAM

Ragen Coyne, junior midfielder, Livonia Stevenson: What better way to open an all-Observer team than with the player selected as the state's best.

So much has been already said of Coyne that her coach at Stevenson, Mary Kay Hussey, could only add, "What could I say that hasn't been said before? Whatever I say will sound like I'm just repeating what everyone else has said."

Facts first, though. Coyne played more rover than midfield, roaming the field and usually wearing down the defenders attempting to mark her. And there was almost always one, or two, or three players taking turns at shadowing her.

Still, she earned notice as the state's top player; last year, she was ranked in the top 18 in the nation for her age group (under 16½) in the Olympic Development Program.

What does she do best? "Create opportunities," answered Hussey. "For herself or her teammates. She knows she can't do it alone. She plays her game and then gets everyone involved. And she takes abuse better than any player in the state."

Besides improving her strength and speed, which Hussey attributed to her growth, Coyne has "become a bit more aggressive going to goal. She's such a threat."

Jennifer Emmett, junior goalkeeper, Plymouth Salem: Emmett was a key factor in Salem's 16-2-1 season. How big a role did she play? Opponents scored just nine goals against her in 19 games. She had 14 shutouts; in her three-year career, she has 32 shutouts (a school record) in 51 games and has a 39-7-5 record.

No wonder she was all-WLAA and all-state — again. She was all-state as a freshman, too.

"Jenny Emmett is a ccaches dream," said her coach at Salem, Ken Johnson. "From the day she joined Salem as a starting freshman goalie, she has given her team 100 percent, both in practices and in games. Luckily, we will have her back one more year."

Stephanie Speen, senior defender, Livonia Churchill: The question at Churchill now is, who will anchor the defense?

Speen has been back there a while. She's started four-consecutive seasons, and for the past two she was the team's captain and most valuable player. Those were distinctions she earned; Speen was also all-WLAA twice and all-state this season, and was ranked as the state's fourth-best player.

"Stephanie has tremendous quickness," noted Churchill coach Nick O'Shea. "She has the ability to read the play and make correct decisions in an instant.

"She's a real competitor with a never-say-die attitude."

Gwen Gibbish, junior defender, Plymouth Salem: Gibbish was a co-captain for Salem, mainly because — like Emmett — she was a pivotal part of a very stingy defense.

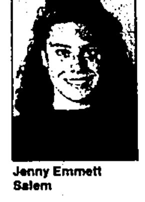
Gibbish played sweeper for the Rocks and earned co-most valuable player honors.

Sue Gibson
Farmington

Stephanie Speen
Churchill

Kathryn Dudley
Mercy

Ragen Coyne
Stevenson



Jenny Emmett
Salem

Erin Harvey
Salem

"Gwen is a great leader," said Johnson. "She has led our defense for two years, leading with confidence and skill, and organizing her teammates to a two-year record of 21 shutouts in 32 games.

"I am very glad she will be back next year with out entire starting defense."

Lori Godlewski, senior defender, Livonia Stevenson: Like Coyne, her Spartan counterpart, Godlewski moved around a lot, shifting from sweeper to forward — and performing well wherever she was.

An all-WLAA and all-state selection, Godlewski possesses one of the most

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