

RU plans to honor trackmen

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

Former Redford Union track star John Morrison accepted an invitation earlier this month to attend Saturday's 22nd Annual Observerland Boys Track Relays.

But prior to Monday night, Morrison thought he was showing up to hand out an award, not accept one. "I thought I was coming down to give an award to (former RU coach) John Mackenzie and that would have been an honor for me just to present an award to Mac," said Morrison, now the girls track coach at Brighton High School. "He had some outstanding teams, outstanding runners and he had a knack of getting people in the right events. This is really nice to share an honor with (Mackenzie). Really unexpected."

Mackenzie was the head coach and Morrison the All-American runner in 1969 when RU won the Class A boys track championship. The pair will be honored in a short ceremony prior to the Observerland Relays finals, which began at 7 p.m. on the all-weather track at Redford Union's newly-renovated Howard Kraft Field.

RU ATHLETIC director Jim Gibbons will present each with a brass plate taken from the cement curb off the cinder track which was replaced last fall. Mackenzie will receive a "100-yard dash" brass plate, while Morrison will be given a brass plate for "hurdles."

Mackenzie retires in June after spending 34 years as a coach, teacher and counselor at RU.

"I think it's important for Jim to get this kind of recognition from his peers," Gibbons said. "In the early years he brought RU to state class level. And when you say '110 or 120 hurdles,' the first person who comes to my mind is John Morrison."

Mackenzie not only took RU to the elite class of track programs in the state, it also was his idea in 1970 to start the Observerland Relays.

"I called up Eddie Edgar (the late Observer sports writer) and told him I thought this would be a neat meet to have in our area," recalled Mackenzie. "Eddie didn't ask me to do the office, he asked me to his home, and said 'I like the idea. I think the Observer will go for it.' Three days later he said, 'We're in business.'"

THE OBSERVERLAND Relays were held from 1971 through 1982 on the cinder track at Howard Kraft Field. A bad rain storm in '82 turned the weathered track into a quagmire and coaches decided to move the site to Livonia Churchill every year since.

The installation of the new \$49,000 all-weather track at Kraft has brought the meet back for this year, anyway.

"It's a dandy, as good as any in the area," Mackenzie said. "If we had a cinder track, with all the rain we've had, we'd still not be able to get on it. If it rained, my God, we'd have a mud pile."

Morrison, who also was a star hurdler in the early 70s at Michigan State University, is looking forward to seeing the new track.

"We called (the old surface) a cinder track, but it was basically a dirt track with a bunch of rocks," said Morrison, who has won about 90 percent of his dual meets in 15 years as Brighton's coach. "There was a big old cement curb near the first lane and you'd always worry you'd step on it and break an ankle."

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als (Novi and Milan Relays) and is undefeated in three dual meets.

"We're looking forward to it, knowing we'll get the best competition around," Harrison coach John Schumacher said. "Our athletes respect the heck out of that meet and look forward to going there, seeing what we have."

Wayne Memorial, the Observerland Relays champion in 1988, placed third last year. The Zebras have more numbers with the "pay to play" policy being dropped in the school district and coach Floyd Carter is anxious to see what that means.

"I think we could still finish pretty strong," Carter said. "Our four by 800 relay will be very competitive along with our sprint relay."



Hawks regain relays title

In the 10-year history of the Novi Relays, Farmington Hills Harrison has won the championship six times.

But the Hawks had not been so dominant in recent years after winning five straight times from 1984-88. However, the drought ended Saturday when Harrison regained the title.

Harrison scored 86 points, Milan 90, Dexter 77, Novi 65, Walled Lake Western 57, Livonia Franklin and Redford Union 11 apiece.

The Hawks, who also won the Milan Relays in early April, won two events and scored in all 13. Harrison had six seconds and four thirds.

"We were really short-handed, but you could say that for almost every team there," Harrison coach John Schumacher said. "Walled Lake Western had a real power house and didn't do very well, and I'm sure that was because they had kids on vacation."

Schumacher cited the individual efforts of Mark Ferguson, Gil

track

Chavez, Mike Deans, Jason Zdyrski and Brock Gove as being essential to the team's success.

THE HAWKS won the high jump as Todd Wood, Ferguson and Steve Brunl combined for a 15-6 total. Brunl also was part of the winning shuttle hurdle relay unit that included Pat Rowland, Andy Dulinda and Jason Ryman and had a 1:06.9 time.

Ferguson and Chavez teamed with Jason Dreyer to take second place in the long jump (53-10).

Gove was on runner-up relays in the throwing events. Gove, Tim Barnes and Dave Gloetznitz had a combined total of 107-5 in the shot, and Steve Shaleb, Djordje Radulovic and Gove had a 319-10 total in the discus.

Dreyer, Chavez, Ferguson and Dan Millar were second in the 400 relay (47.2) and third in the 800 (1:38.2). Chavez and Millar also combined with Wood and Zdyrski to finish second in the sprint medley relay. Wood ran 400 meters, Chavez and Millar 200 and Zdyrski 800.

Zdyrski also anchored the second-place distance medley team. Millar the third-place 1,600 relay. Todd Haney, Wood, Deans and Zdyrski ran the medley in 11:41.4. Wood, Matt Zimmerman, Dreyer and Millar were clocked at 3:48.6 in the 1,600.

Haney, Deans and Zdyrski comprised three quarters of the 6,400 relay unit, which was anchored by Justin Koonce and finished third with a 19:52.9 time.

Without benefit of a third member, Gloetznitz and Zimmerman gave the Hawks third in the pole vault (17-0). Aaron Hild, Chad Koonce, Rob Bollin and Steve Quarterman were fourth in the 3,200 relay (9:31.2).

Mercy runner-up in girls track invite

Farmington Hills Mercy experienced the highs and lows of competition in girls track during the last week.

Following a fine, runner-up performance in the Jackson Invitational on Friday, the Marlins lost a Catholic League dual meet Tuesday to Dearborn Divine Child at Mercy, 75-53.

Dawn DiPonio won the 800-meter run (2:33.5) in the dual and also helped the Marlins win the 800 and 3,200 relays.

Kristin Lewis, Kathy Cook, DiPonio and Nicole Pryor ran the 800 relay in 1:53.2 while the 3,200 team of DiPonio, Pryor, Ellen O'Connell and Cook turned in a 10:45.1 time.

Pryor and Lewis also had individual wins — Pryor in the 400 dash (1:02.5) and Lewis in the 100 dash (13.3). Other Mercy winners were Teasa Copprue in the discus (92-3), Heather Noll the 1,600 run (5:45.5) and Amy Freund the 3,200 run (12:45.5).

The Marlins received a team trophy for finishing second at Jackson. Kalamazoo Central won the eight-team meet with 139 points while Mercy scored 106. Jackson Lumen Christi 85, Flint Northern 62, Jackson and East Lansing 32.

PRYOR WON the 400 dash (1:02.5) and DiPonio the 800 run (2:35). Both were part of the second-place 1,600 and 3,200 relays and helped the Marlins get third in the 800 relay.

Cook and Amanda Northeros comprised the other half of the 3,200 team (10:51.8). Lewis and Cook were

on the 1,600 and 800 teams that posted 4:28.1 and 1:51.8 times.

Noll was second in the 3,200 run (12:11.2) and third in the 1,600 (5:45.7). Mercy also got second from Renee Arceno in the shot put (31-11.5). Dana Wade was third in the high jump (4-6) and Freund in the 3,200 run (12:11.4).

The 400 relay team was third (54.8) with Lewis, Northeros, Jennifer Worth and O'Connell making up the foursome.

"I thought we performed well and learned some things," Mercy coach Gary Servais said. "Some younger kids are going to replace some of the veteran kids, because the older ones aren't moving fast enough and the younger ones earned the right to move into those spots."

North Farmington lost a pair of Western Lakes Activities Association dual meets to Walled Lake Western Tuesday. The Western boys won 102-34 at home while the Warriors won the girls meet 98-30 at North.

The Raiders had three winners in the boys competition. Brad Pawlowski won the shot put (42-6.4), Mike Poinsett the discus (116-2) and Devon Richardson the pole vault (9-0). Tony Catchings was second in the high jump (5-9) and the 400 dash (52.3).

Keegan Keefeover had the only firsts for the North girls, winning the high jump (4-7) and 800 run (2:30.1). Cathy Benson was second in the discus (84-6), Jenny Garzynski the 400 dash (1:07.7) and Emily Shively the 3,200 run (11:48.9).

Rochester's Murphy retains WB race title

By Marly Budner
staff writer

Bodies were looming around nearly every corner of the West Bloomfield High School gymnasium prior to Sunday's 16th running of the West Bloomfield half-marathon race.

Defending women's champion Laura Murphy of Rochester was among them. Suddenly, as all those antsy runners were preparing to tackle West Bloomfield's hilly thoroughfares, one person caught Murphy's attention.

One of Detroit's most reputable female road runners — Ella Willis — was entering the race. It was at that moment Murphy realized her odds to become the first woman in history to defend her half-marathon title could be in serious jeopardy.

Murphy, however, need not have worried. The 28-year-old, defended her crown with a time of 1:19:13.3. Willis was behind her all the way, finishing a distant second by more than five minutes in 1:25:08.8.

The overall men's winner was Dale Hart of Detroit who won in 1:12:12.4. Rick Shaple of Auburn Hills placed a close second with a time of 1:12:41.6.

THE HALF-MARATHON race, which took place under overcast skies, cool weather and a slightly bothersome wind, attracted 671 registrants. Another 204 entered the inaugural 5K race that started some 10 minutes after the half-marathoners straggled out of the West Bloomfield parking lot at 12:30 p.m.

Murphy said she got a good start and managed to stay in front through most of the race. There were times when she heard bells from Willis' shoes approaching from behind, but she managed to fend off each passing attempt and hold the lead the entire 13.1 miles.

"It's always good to come back and win again," said Murphy shortly after the race. "But when I saw Ella Willis at the registration I changed my goals drastically."

"I didn't know she was going to be there. Back at the eight mile mark I knew she was about two minutes behind me," she said. "I knew (Willis)

had just done (the) Boston (marathon) so I couldn't blame her if she had a bad race."

Although she won, Murphy wasn't really satisfied with her overall performance Sunday. Her winning time this year was slightly slower than last year's winning time.

"I was hoping to do better, but I'm not disappointed," she said. "I really wanted to run a good time. I didn't have significantly high expectations, but the ones I did have I didn't meet."

HART, MEANWHILE, broke the three-year stranglehold Doug Kurtis enjoyed as the men's winner. Kurtis, arguably the state's best distance road runner, was expected to show up and defend his title. But there was a collective smile among all competitors when he failed to show at the starting line.

For the first couple miles, Hart ran head-to-head with two other runners. He started to break away around the four-mile mark and managed to stay ahead of the pack for the remainder of the race.

Hart, who always has managed respectable half-marathon showings without ever having won, realized his chances of winning this year were much stronger without Kurtis around.

"I figured without Kurtis here I had a good chance of winning, although there were a lot of other good runners out here," said Hart. "But I admit it, there was a bit of a void without all the elite runners here, but there were some good local and state runners. If Kurtis was here and running well, I probably wouldn't have beaten him."

Hart has competed in the half-marathon since 1988 when he placed second to Paul Aufdenberg of Detroit. The 28-year-old maintenance worker at Henry Ford Hospital was very happy to finally bring home a winning medal.

"IT WAS VERY important to me. This was one of my top races I wanted to win this year," said Hart. "For me, because I'm a Henry Ford employee the race is co-sponsored by Henry Ford Hospital and because I find this course very challenging."

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