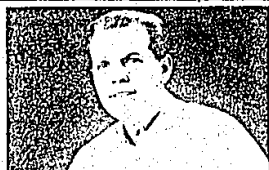


SPORTS

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MONDAY, MAY 25, 1992



BRAD EMONE

Shooting ruins Bentley courts

Those were my courts that were padlocked and my rims that were removed from the back-bounds May 12 at the Bentley Center.

A source of joy for neighborhood basketball players is no more, thanks to a senseless shooting that occurred May 11 night.

Yes, somebody was shot in the head that night for whatever reason. It happened on two of the most popular pickup basketball courts in the suburbs.

When I was a high schooler, Bentley's lighted outdoor courts became my second home.

This is where you could have your game, enjoy camaraderie and forget about your troubles, afterwards at the nearby Dairy Barn on Five Mile Road.

In the early '80s, guys from the Franklin neighborhood would pool over to Bentley and find some competitive action.

That's where guys like Ronnie B., Dave Veach, Tom Guilfoyle, Tim Bullin and Lou Lovett were holding fort, ready for action.

There wasn't trash talking back then, just playground ball the way it was meant to be. When the games ended and the lights went out, everybody was on one team, some became friends for life.

It's a place where such players as Rick Drezitz (University of Kentucky), Lovett (Livonia of Chicago), Bullin (Idaho), Kevin Kaseta and Greg Wendi (University of Detroit), Carlos Briggs (Bayler), Tim Dietz (South Florida) Catholic Central's Rob Kummer (headed for UNC-Charlotte) and Chad Varga (Richmond-bound) also hung out during the summer.

Yes, even our own sports stuffer, Steve Kowalski, played many a night on the smooth, blacktop surface.

The neighborhood courts, however, expanded beyond Five Mile and Hubbard over the years.

Bentley became kind of a regional site, players driving in from everywhere.

I feel sorry for cousins Mark and John Kalaj, a couple of players from Livonia Clarenceville High. They looked forward to playing at Bentley, but now they must look elsewhere.

"There are not many full-court basketball courts where you can play," said Mark. "Now I don't know where to play."

"We'd go there because it's good competition," said John. "Everybody was surprised, but I'm not surprised they closed it down."

What happens now?

It's doubtful the Bentley courts will be re-opened because central office personnel of the Livonia Public Schools plan to study and review all outdoor recreational facilities.

Bentley principal Jim Newman, a high school basketball referee and athlete himself, recommended that the courts be closed for the time being.

Who could blame him?

Newman also has to think about the 800 to 1,500 people who use Bentley at night for adult community education activities and extended learning services.

Neighborhood people also have to be concerned.

"I've gone out and watched many a night myself and seen nothing out of the ordinary," Newman said. "I hate to see it happen."

"I've seen some good players out there. I don't know what will occur."

La. Mike Murray of the Livonia Police told me that there have been no major incidents at the Bentley courts. Being a lifelong resident of Livonia, I can't ever remember a big problem there in over 20 years.

But since the shooting, I've heard two different stories about guns being brandished on the courts (although not reported to the police) on previous occasions. I haven't been able to verify it, however.

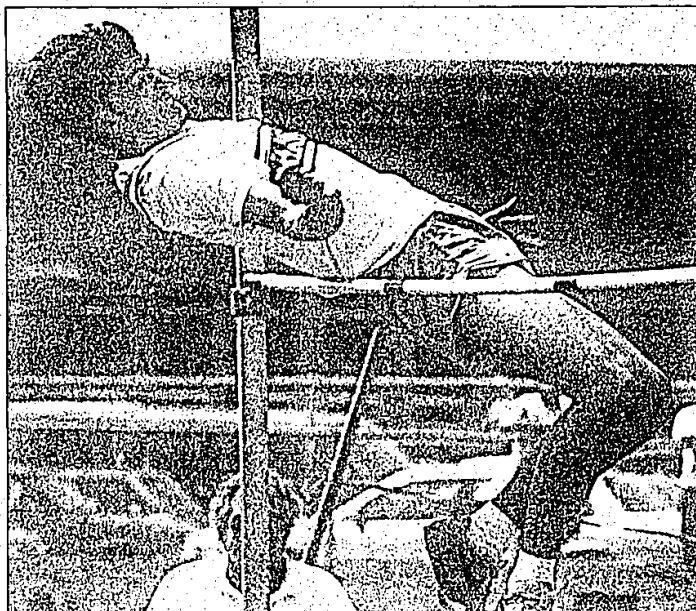
"Usually everybody is cool," said John Kalaj. "Nobody ever felt threatened."

Until the shooting.

I understand that basketball can be an emotional game on the playground, a heated game at times.

But that certainly doesn't justify what happened in our neighborhood.

I'm glad because a piece of our neighborhood appears to be gone for good. It only takes one incident to ruin a good thing.



SHAWN LEMLEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Back breaker: Steve Bruni of Harrison tries to clear the high jump bar Wednesday in the WLAA championships. The Hawks had the best finish among the Farmington schools.

Marlins extend district success



BY MARY HUNTER
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Mercy took a quick 2-0 lead five minutes into Friday's district championship girls' soccer game against Birmingham Seaholm.

But the Marlins' coaching staff remained concerned.

"The best Marlins had rebounded from early deficits to win two previous district games against Birmingham Marian and North Farmington.

Mercy coach Deepak Shivaraman constantly reminded his players of Marian's ability to battle from behind.

"We were concerned because we saw the way they (Seaholm) come back

against Marian (a 3-2 sudden-death victory after trailing 2-0 with three minutes left in regulation)," said Shivaraman. "We knew they were capable of keeping their composure and coming up strong at any time. And they never gave up. They kept coming hard at us even in the final few minutes."

But the Marlins' run out of luck against Mercy.

The Marlins added another second-half goal and eventually pinned a 3-0 defeat on Seaholm. Mercy takes a 14-3, 3 overall record into regional action Wednesday at Fraser High School.

"We got the two quick goals and that

surprised us because we've had to come back the last few games to win," said Shivaraman. "But I thought we played brilliantly overall. We were in total control — on offense, defense and at midfield."

Mercy's front-line tandem of Tanja MacInnes and Margaret Wirth accounted for the quick lead. MacInnes scored three minutes into the game and added another goal five minutes later. Wirth was credited with setting up both goals.

Seaholm tightened up and played Mercy scoreless for the rest of the half.

The Marlins added their third tally at the 29-minute mark of the second half when Wirth left-footed an easy shot into a wide-open net. She was assisted by Anita Wilhelm and Wendy Wahl.

"We really started slow, and that was nothing new. But we were exceptionally slow today," said Seaholm coach Christopher Courage, whose team finished

Hawks 3rd in WLAA boys track

BY MIKE ROSENBAUM
STAFF WRITER

Led by double-winners Jeff Brust and Bill Crosby, Walled Lake Western finished a strong second place in Wednesday's Western Lakes Activities Association boys track meet at Farmington.

"This is the best I've ever finished," said Warriors' coach Dennis Keeney. "That's the best Western has finished in 10 years."

Western's 116 points were second only to Northville's 131.

Farmington Harrison was third with 93 points, although Hawks' coach John Schumacher was not nearly as happy with his finish as was Keeney.

"It was a good meet (for Harrison), but it was far from being our best and far from being a great performance," Schumacher said.

Livonia Churchill was fourth with 81 points, followed by Plymouth Canton (76), Westland John Glenn (66.5), Farmington (65.5), Plymouth Salem (61), North Farmington (28.5), Livonia Stevenson (25.5), Walled Lake Central (11.5) and Livonia Franklin (11).

Western boasted the most individual winners. Brust won both hurdles events, taking the 100 in 15.11 — edging Salem's Don Johnson by 0.1 — and the 300 with a time of 40.32. Crosby

See WLAA TRACK, 2C



JIM JACOBUS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Happy Hawks: Harrison players greet teammate Kelley West (14) at home plate after West hit a two-run homer in the predistrict softball game.

3 Farmington teams gain softball district

Farmington Hills Harrison will be the Cinderella team in the Class A softball district tournament at the Southfield Civic Center Saturday.

"That's better than being the ugly step-sister," coach Mike Teachman said Thursday after the Hawks upset host Bedford Union 14-10 in eight innings in a pre-district game.

Harrison takes a 4-15 record into the district, which will include all three Farmington public school teams.

North Farmington (11-11) and Farmington (5-10) also won pre-district games Thursday and would be candidates for Cinderella status if not for the Hawks being in the show, also.

Harrison turns table.

The Hawks, who will play Livonia Churchill in the district tournament, avenged a 22-0 loss to RU, which had upset Farmington Hills Mercy in an earlier qualifying game.

"Truthfully, I don't think we were ready to play (the first time)," Harrison coach Mike Teachman said. "We were into it mentally, and they might have been a little less into it because they had beaten us and Mercy."

She also had seven assists and several putouts.

"She's a great fielding pitcher," Teachman said. "Even though she's not a strikeout pitcher, she gives us an extra infielder up the middle, and that allows the second baseman and shortstop to play wider."

The Hawks had 22 hits off losing pitcher Tracy McManmon, who fanned eight and walked two.

Harrison scored four runs in the top of the eighth to win the game. Andrea Najarian, who was 5-for-5 with three RBI, had the winning hit with a two-run single and Kelley West added a two-run homer.

West had three hits and five RBI, and Lisa Geary and Amanda Ault had four hits and scored three runs each.

Raiders pound Patriots

Karen Seremet pitched a complete game and helped her own cause at the plate as North outslugged host Livonia Franklin 13-9 Thursday.

"The Raiders recorded 12 hits and committed five errors, the Patriots 11 hits and seven errors."

North supported Seremet with a 10-1 lead before Franklin scored six times in the fourth inning and closed to 10-9 after five. Seremet walked three and struck out one. Michelle Averill went the distance for the Patriots (5-17).

See SOFTBALL, 4C

Marlins win league

Farmington Hills Mercy scored 194 to win the first-ever Catholic League golf meet Wednesday at Tanglewood Golf Club.

Birmingham Marian was second with 215, while Livonia Ladywood took third with 218.

Kristyn Schulkins was the medalist for Mercy with a 42. Sarah Anderson paced Ladywood with 49.

Putty Cahill scored a 49 for the Marlins. Amy Schulkins and Summer Woods shot a 51 and 52, respectively.

