

Hawks eye 3rd straight WLAA tennis title

By NEAL ZIPSER
SPECIAL WRITER

High school is starting and the fall season is right around the corner. You know what that means — Farmington Hills Harrison is ready to claim another championship.

Most people come to this conclusion over the success of the Hawk football program. This season, however, the football team is rebuilding, but Harrison is expected to continue their domination in another sport — girls tennis.

"This may be the year that another sport at Harrison gets some recognition," said coach Bernie Goldstein, who enters his 18th season. "The football team has deserved its recognition. They have a great program. But Harrison also has had good basketball teams and baseball teams recently."

Goldstein's modesty may have omitted the words "tennis teams," but the rest of the league is well aware of the Hawks' recent success.

Harrison has won the Western Lakes Activities Association title the past two seasons and has only lost one conference dual meet in the last two years. After losing their first non-conference match last season, the Hawks went 11-0 in the league and 13-1 overall.

Despite the high finish, Harrison failed to advance out of its tough Class B regional, which featured the top two teams in the state — Bloomfield Hills Andover and Bloomfield Hills Kingswood.

"This season, the Hawks will compete on the Class A level. Goldstein believes the move will help Harrison's chances."

"It hurt (not getting past the regionals) because we knew we were better than some of the teams that

did advance in Class A." Goldstein said. "I think we would have been in the top 10 in the state in Class A."

The Hawks lost only two doubles players, Jodie Whitehead and Allia Bambenek, and return a senior-filled team.

"We have seven seniors on this year's squad, and we have to win this year or else," Goldstein said. "We can't wait until next year."

Returning as the first singles player is sophomore Stephanie Schwalm, who has improved, Goldstein said.

"She has added a better serve. She goes to the net and volleys well. She can adapt her game to the type of game her opponent is playing. She played very well last year with the pressure of being a freshman."

Senior Julie Heist, one of the hardest hitters on the team, returns to claim her second singles position and is more relaxed this year, according to Goldstein.

"In the past she was very tense. But she is having a good time on the court and even laughing out there."

Senior Jill Barringer is the third singles player, and senior Kristi Cornwell has moved from first doubles to try fourth singles.

Senior Lisa Tumble, who was last year's third singles player, teams with her close friend, junior Amy Tube, to make the first doubles team.

The second doubles team will be the former third team of seniors Melissa Prendergast and Barb Utterbach. Goldstein predicts a good season for them.

The third doubles team will be senior Caroline Chubb and sopho-

more Jodie Barringer. Sophomores Destiny Laczowski and Kristin Walters are the fourth doubles.

"I would like us to three-peat and advance to the state (finals)," Goldstein said. "This potentially could be the strongest team I've ever had here."

FARMINGTON MERCY

In his eight years as Farmington Mercy's coach, Jim Kerwin has learned to accept the word "good," but it's the word "champion" he wants to hear.

Kerwin describes the Marlins as "a better than average team but not at the state (championship) level." Since 1984, Kerwin has coached winning teams that have fallen short of the next level.

The last time Mercy captured the Catholic League title was 1986 when they qualified for state. Since then, they have had good teams, including last year's 9-4 squad which finished second, but have not been able to surpass Birmingham Marian.

"They are always the team to beat," said Kerwin, who's team is off to a 2-0 start.

The Marlins lost eight seniors from graduation, but their biggest loss is the transfer of their top singles player from last season, Meagan Ledbetter.

Sophomore Kristen Kluska, the No. 2 player last season, will fill Ledbetter's spot. Freshman Amy Modica has emerged as the new No. 2 player. Sophomore Jackie Rajkovich and senior Peggy Mueller will be the third and fourth players, respectively.

Kerwin is relying on a pair of freshmen, Julie Zimmerman and

Katie Emery, for his first doubles combination.

Sophomores Dana Fischioni and Anjali Thaker make the second doubles team, while juniors Michelle Uller and Dawn Green are the third duo. Sophomore Susan Milas and sophomore Kristina Kudelco are the final doubles combination.

"We are as good as last year's team and actually we have more potential," Kerwin said. "It all depends on how well we come together."

Even though Mercy does have several young players, Kerwin isn't worried about a lack of experience. One reason is the Marlins participation in an eight-school junior varsity tennis league.

"There is no question the JV team has helped our program," Kerwin said. "It's not like taking new kids once they come up to the varsity. There are some good teams in the conference, and they supply good competition."

NORTH FARMINGTON

Three years ago, North Farmington won the WLAA. The next year, they struggled in what turned out to be a rebuilding year.

The Halders finished 10-4 in dual meets last year, fourth overall in the WLAA and wound up qualifying for the state finals after a strong showing in the regional. So what's the outlook for this year's team?

"It will all depend if we can get support from our doubles teams," coach Norm Stanislawski said. "Our doubles combinations are still our big question marks. If we can get some depth there, we may cause some trouble for some teams."

North lost five seniors last year, including the first doubles team of Hadley Thurman and Jana Bockrath. Stanislawski considered them the most productive last year.

The first and second singles players return but will switch positions. Junior Keely Jones will be in the No. 1 spot and senior Jennifer Reef the No. 2.

"Keely has improved from last year," Stanislawski said. "Her serve is stronger, she is more experienced and she is hitting the ball harder than she did last season. Jennifer, who is a lefthander, is a consistent player. They are also good friends."

Sophomore Allison Walkon and junior Heather Stoneman will likely be the third and fourth singles players, respectively.

After that, there is a long list of players fighting for the doubles spots. Juniors Renee Chou, Lindsay Livermore, Jennifer Irani, Jennifer Kosutic, Emily Ochse, Jennifer Pawajski, Brenda Cho, Keri Krentzin and Dana Sterling will all see some time.

Freshman Heather Cornwell and Amy Marks also will be in the doubles puzzle, Stanislawski said.

FARMINGTON

Preparation for each Farmington match begins the previous night.

"The team gets together and has dinner at one of the girls' houses," coach Brenda Payne said. "They're a real close group. They eat together and make posters together. They have a lot of spirit."

Farmington will combine that spirit with youth and hope to improve on last season's 4-6 mark and ninth-place finish in the WLAA.

Four players are battling for the four singles spots, and any one can play any position.

The leading candidate is junior Sarah Bardi, a transfer from Livonia Stevenson. She played second singles for the Spartans.

Sophomore Julie Haight, who played third singles, also is fighting for a spot along with improved junior Laura McWilliam.

Payne is impressed by the play of freshman Beth Wilson. The lefthander has become one of the hardest hitters on the squad, and Payne expects her to be the top singles player within the next two years.

The Falcons only have two seniors on their roster, and both will make up the first doubles team. Kiran Arora, who played first doubles last year, will be joined by Wendy Michalski.

Sophomores Devon Woodruff and Leslie Britt make up the second doubles team, juniors Lauren Tucker and Hollie Williams the third.

The fourth doubles position is still open. Leading candidates are the teams of junior Dyanne Heeki and sophomore Erin Kenney, junior Amber Schuette and freshman Kristen Zhanek. Freshman Korin Sisojo and junior Amy Murphy will see time on the court.

"We should do well this season," Payne said. "Other coaches are scared of us for a change."

Payne, who was a doubles player at Farmington before graduating in 1980, thinks her second year of coaching will be easier than her rookie season.

"Getting used to coaching was tough," admitted Payne. "Playing is easier than coaching."

Livonia fighters get help

By STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

If a boxer had no luck in the ring Wednesday at the Vegas Night Boxing Show, he could still try his hand at the blackjack table.

That's what made this amateur boxing show at Livonia's Laurel Manor different than any other ever held in Michigan, according to Livonia Boxing Club Director Paul Soucy. Proceeds from the show went to the LBC's new gym

on Plymouth Road, east of Middlebelt, scheduled to open in a couple weeks, Soucy said.

About 600 fans attended, Soucy said.

A non-profit organization is entitled to a Vegas Night, Soucy said. "It was encouraging for the first time but we'll be a lot more successful on our next (Vegas Night) venture."

Those fans who were able to get their attention away from the blackjack tables saw some com-

petitive fights on the eight-bout card. The LBC was well represented with six fighters, including Steve Bond and Scott Mattison, cousins from Garden City.

Bond improved his record to 5-1 as a 165-pounder with a second-round Technical Knockout of John Hart, a Livonia native fighting out of the Coleman Young Club in Detroit. The referee called the fight when Hart was having trouble keeping his balance after taking a standing eight count

against the ropes.

"I started controlling the fight when I was just boxing him," Bond said. "I caught him with some good punches, scared him and he just started bawling. The second round he came out and still wanted to brawl so I bawled with him."

Hart graduated in 1982 from Livonia Franklin where he was an all-league basketball player. He took up boxing eight months ago and is 1-1 as an amateur.

"This keeps me in shape," said Hart, who works Monheim Auto Action in Flat Rock. (Basketball) is behind me now. I try different things all the time."

Hart's lack of experience showed.

"If I had to do it again I would have boxed more and stayed outside and jabbed," said Hart, who played blackjack afterwards. "I stood right in front of him and I was an easy target."

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