

## SPORTS

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C.J. RISAK

## Latest ruling on pool depth stirs debate

Sports and statistics are so woven together, tightly bound, that people often mistakenly believe that the former cannot survive without the latter.

Untrue.

If you are familiar with sports at all, you know statistics do not always tell the story. Stats are portions only; people provide the story.

That is why I cannot accept all the facts and figures tossed about by the Michigan High School Athletic Association's executive director, Jack Roberts, regarding the mid-year recommendation to change the minimum depth for starts in swim meets.

Roberts and the MHSAA "recommended" to member schools that all starts off blocks at competitive meets be in at least five feet of water. Until that decree (or whatever the MHSAA wants to call it), the minimum depth was four feet.

Now understand — you don't just go out the hose and pump another foot of water into the pool. Nor do you just pull out the starting blocks and move 'em around to where it's deep enough.

Here's the reality of the situation: Only four of the 11 teams in the Western Lakes Activities Association compete in pools that meet the MHSAA's new requirements.

And you know what? Those four — Plymouth Salem, Westland John Glenn, Livonia Churchill and Livonia Stevenson (the Spartans compete at Livonia Bentley) — might not be able to keep pace with the MHSAA, either.

### How deep will it go?

That's because there's a good chance the depth requirement could change again. Two meters (six feet, seven inches) is the most common figure now tossed about.

Or maybe it'll be seven feet. Or eight. Who knows? Certainly not the MHSAA — it was just four years ago that the mandate was pushed through changing the minimum depth from three and a half feet to four.

That caused a major problem for lots of schools. Farmington's schools did not host a swim meet whenever possible, because any competitions at North, Harrison or Farmington had to have in-the-water starts, pushing off the wall.

Ever seen a 400-yard relay with four swimmers starting in the water? It's not the stuff Olympic dreams are made of.

So, now we come to Roberts' reasons. Why the change?

"We felt we were slipping behind what a prudent high school association should do," he explained. And what's that meant? Well, according to Roberts:

- First, swimming has more catastrophic (defined as paralyzing) injuries than any other high school sport;
- Second, the result of those injuries is (surprised) a lot of lawsuits;
- Third, because of the first two, all sorts of state agencies are getting in their two cents worth of opinion.

Back to the statistical game. How many catastrophic injuries have there been in swimming?

### Numbers twisted

Roberts said there have been at least two and as many as four swimmers injured in the state in the past 15 years while diving into pools. In football, Roberts said there were two catastrophic injuries this past season, "but there were none in my previous seven years here."

Is that an accurate statistic? Not according to every swim coach from the Observer area questioned. "In my 13 years here, I have never had an accident off a starting block," said Canton coach Hooker Wellman. "Never."

Farmington coach Ross Bandy extended that viewpoint. "Nationally, I have never, during a meet, heard of a kid suffering an injury" while diving.

Even Roberts wouldn't argue. He could only recall one of the diving accidents, and that involved horseplay on the deck. It had nothing to do with the swim team.

"It is not unsafe for trained persons to correctly use starting blocks," Roberts said. "The problem is incorrect use. That's where the injuries occur." That means, because the use of blocks cannot be completely policed, the pool depth must be changed? And that will prevent injury?

That's pretty hard to swallow.

As Bandy noted, "They're penalizing the wrong people. That's where I find fault with the system."

Roberts goes back to his book of facts to argue his point. Florida and Iowa, he insists, have already mandated all pools must be five feet in depth. The YMCA and YWCA are endorsing the

See RISAK, 2C

## Raiders ground high-flying Falcons

North Farmington ended Farmington High's winning streak in boys basketball at four games Friday, 50-48.

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER

Jon Pennala waited until after the basketball game to take the ice.

With the score tied and Pennala about to shoot a one-and-one, Farmington High tried to freeze him with a pair of timeouts Friday.

But the senior guard still sank both free throws with 13 seconds remaining as host North Farmington upset the Falcons 50-48.

It was an intense, emotional scene in the last minute as the Raiders overcame a three-point deficit to win. Fans on both sides rocked the gym with loud support before a missed Farmington shot made the outcome final.

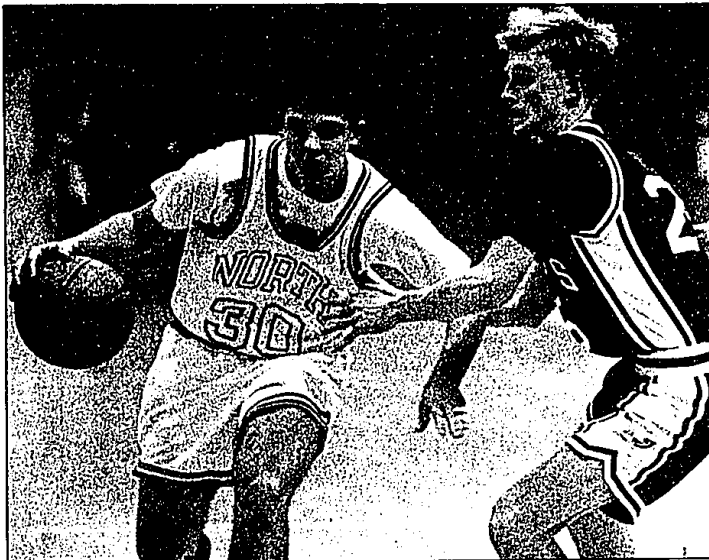
It was a deflating finish for the Falcons, who are having their best season in years but played without two starters. Stan Lewis and Steve Juncal were benched for disciplinary reasons.

Both teams are 2-1 in the Western Lakes Activities Association. Farmington is 7-2 overall and North 4-5.

"Actually, we didn't have time to build (the rivalry) up because we had a game Tuesday and we were off school Wednesday and Thursday," Pennala said, carrying a bag of ice as he limped to the locker room to ice a sore ankle. "We just came here today for the game. Coach said to go out there and play."

"But it's still big. This was my last time playing them in a regular-season game. I'd like to play them again when they have all their players. I still count it up because we came off two days of no practice and we didn't shoot the ball well."

Pennala, the leading three-point shooter on the North team, had eight points — all free throws in the second



SHARON LEMIRE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**Hoop rivalry: North Farmington guard Doug Dolak protects the basketball from Farmington defender Kevin Afferbaugh Friday. The Raiders won 50-48.**

half. Forward Scot Lord led the Raiders with 13, guard Doug Dolak scored 11, and center Evan Ellis had 10.

Senior guards Scott Messer and Jason Jackson paced the Falcons with 18 and 12 points, respectively. Mike Tokar added seven.

The game was a matter of survival as each tried to survive without some of its best players.

It looked as if Farmington might pull it off, staying ahead most of the

game and extending the lead to 44-39 late in the fourth quarter.

"When you take 30 points out of your lineup, it hurts you," Farmington coach Denny Mikel said, "but that's no excuse. I think we played well enough to win without (Lewis and Juncal)."

"We made some crucial mistakes down the stretch and, because of it, we gave them some chances to stay in

the game — and they took advantage of it."

In the end, it was North that survived without key players. Dolak and Lord at most of the third period with four fouls and left early in the finale with their fifth.

The Raiders were on "real thin ice" at that point, according to North coach Tom Negoshian. "We had two

See RAIDERS, 2C

## Harrison comeback falls short by 1

BY C.J. RISAK  
STAFF WRITER

For two quarters at least, this game was a joke — and all the laughs belonged to Plymouth Canton.

But the tone turned serious in the stretch run. And as the clock ticked, ever so slowly for the Chiefs, the humor melted. Suddenly, it wasn't funny anymore.

It was a ballgame.

Fortunately for Canton, time ran out on a furious Farmington Harrison rally that fell a point short. The Chiefs' 61-60 victory Friday at Harrison lifted them over .500 for the first time this season — they are 5-4 overall, 2-1 in the Western Lakes Activities Association.

The Hawks slipped to 4-5 overall, 0-3 in the WLAA.

"That was quite a finish, eh?" said a relieved Canton coach Dave VanWagoner. "Well, we'll take the win on the road."

And run with it — which is exactly what put the Chiefs in command in the first half. After a lackluster first quarter by both teams (Harrison led

### BASKETBALL

12-8), Canton came alive in the second. VanWagoner put his troops into a full-court press, and the Hawks came unglued.

"We're a slow team," admitted Harrison coach Mike Teachman. "Quickness bothers us."

It showed in that quarter. Canton scored 13-straight points and, after a Harrison basket by Kevin Bambenek, the Chiefs ran off nine more. By the time halftime mercifully arrived for the Hawks, they had been outscored 29-8.

And it might have been worse. They committed seven turnovers in the quarter, and Canton was horrible at the free throw line, making just 6-of-14.

Harrison started the second half with a 7-2 run, but the Chiefs still had a comfortable 49-30 lead when the fourth quarter rolled around. They increased their advantage to 20 with a Matt Paupore free throw in the first minute of the final period.

That's when the fun began. In a 3¼-minute span, Harrison put together a 17-2 run that trimmed Canton's lead to 52-47. Calvin Pruitt and both Bambenek brothers, Kevin and Charles, each had five points in the comeback, with Charles' three-pointer with 3:32 left making it a five-point game.

It remained agonizingly tight the rest of the way, but Harrison never did catch up. Rick Smith's free throw with 45 seconds left pulled the Hawks to within 53-55; he missed the second, but Aaron Weiss rebounded and Kevin Bambenek pumped up a potential game-tying three. It missed, and Harrison was forced to foul.

Ted Docks went to the line with 30 seconds left and made 1-of-2. Smith answered with a layup seven seconds later, and the Hawks again fouled Docks. This time he hit both with nine seconds to go, making it a four-point game.

That was the ballgame, right? Well, not quite. A long-range Kevin Bambenek triple pulled the Hawks to within a point with a second left. But

they never regained possession.

Paupore was the only Chief to reach double figures in scoring with 18. Docks had nine, and Ron Hunter netted eight. Docks also had five assists.

Harrison got 15 points and 18 rebounds from Pruitt. Kevin Bambenek scored 14, and Charles Bambenek finished with 12.

"Yeah, it was a great comeback," Harrison's Teachman said. "There's a real positive feeling in our locker room right now. We proved we can play against quickness."

Certainly the Hawks made a believer out of VanWagoner. His team's second-quarter surge pleased him, but the rest did not. "That's as good a quarter defensively as we've had," he said. "But as good as that quarter was, the second half was as bad defensively."

"I think the kids thought they had it won. In the fourth quarter they completely fell apart. Thank goodness we made our free throws at the end."

No kidding.

## North's Lord ponders college choices

BY STEVE KOWALSKI  
STAFF WRITER

Redford Catholic Central lineman Brett Magyar committed to Wayne State University after turning down a full scholarship offer to Central Michigan University.

The 6-foot-3, 240-pound Magyar joins Plymouth Salem lineman Steve Hurst in committing to WSU. WSU's scholarship pays only for tuition and books.

Had Magyar accepted CMU's offer, he would have been the third CC player this year to commit to a Division I program. In December, lineman Doug Brzezinski committed to Boston College and lineman Nick Kallas committed to Iowa.

Magyar was unavailable Friday but his father, Alex Magyar, commented.

"We're happy with the decision he made," the elder Magyar said. "Both schools offered a lot. Brett had to make a decision based on the facts he had and that's what he did."

High school seniors can sign national letters of intent Wednesday, Feb. 2.

Observer's top kickers, North Farmington's Scot Lord and CC's Adam Borchert, remain un-

committed. Lord, a punter and tight end who scored a 33 on

### RECRUITING

his ACT, has been appointed to West Point but is still considering Miami (Ohio), Oklahoma and Arizona.

Lord would play both positions if he attends West Point but would only punt at Miami (Ohio), Oklahoma or Arizona. Because of scholarship reductions and reluctance to give punters scholarships at Division I schools, Lord might not know his fate with the latter three schools until the first week of February.

"I think I'm Division I material, but if I push comes to shove, I could always go Division II," Lord said. "Division I schools have only so many scholarships and they don't want to waste any on punters, but punting is an important part of the game."

Borchert, who scored 35 out of a possible 36 on the ACT and has a 4.9 grade point average taking honors classes at CC, will decide between Ivy League schools Harvard, Yale and Pennsylvania.

Borchert attempted only three field goals because most of CC's drives ended in touchdowns and made two, with a long of 43. More than half of

Borchert's kickoffs reached the end zone.

CC tailback Freddie Taylor has considered Grand Valley and Hillsdale and also visited Northwood. Linebacker-safety Joe Pongracz visited Northwood and cornerback Dave Morelli has drawn interest from Hillsdale and Northwood.

Livonia Stevenson wide receiver Brad Morgan will probably end up at North Carolina State or Virginia Tech, where he would study environmental engineering and possibly walk-on as a football player.

Westland John Glenn tight end Mike Blint has visited Grand Valley, Ferris State and CMU.

Glenn linebacker Jerome Cooby is leaning toward Ferris State, lineman Jason Fuller visited WSU, and Grand Valley and defensive back Matt Howton has visited Ferris State and Grand Valley.

Farmington Hills Harrison has four players making visits to Saginaw Valley quarterback Joe Pesci, tight end/free safety Nick Burgess, linebacker Ed Kennedy and linebacker/kicker Brock Gove.

Salem fullback Rob Shepley visited Ferris State over the weekend. Livonia Franklin fullback Jess Shabarian has drawn interest from Wayne State.

Redford Thurston all-state wide receiver Jeff Lanco will probably end up at a junior college playing baseball.