

# SPORTS

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DAN O'MEARA

## Falcons deserve praise for effort

**Y**ours truly was so impressed by the Farmington varsity girls basketball team last week, I thought the effort and spirit it showed deserved further comment.

To refresh your memory, the Falcons won two games in the district tournament to reach the championship game, which no one expected them to do.

On top of that, Farmington nearly won the championship, which they had been given no chance of doing when the week started.

But the Falcons (10-13) almost did it, losing by just a point, 24-23, to host — and heavily favored — Bloomfield Hills Lahser (21-3).

If they had done it, I would be the first to say they deserved it because of the way they played throughout the week.

While my reporting must be neutral, I was hoping, as the final game unfolded and a Farmington victory seemed possible, to be able to write a big, bold headline with the word champion in it for these girls.

From that perspective, I had the opposite reaction to that score from others, who thought it must have been a dull, boring game.

I guess you had to be there to appreciate it, so I can understand how someone might have that impression.

But I thought it was anything but dull basketball. In fact, it was one of the more exciting and interesting games I've seen in a while — boys games included.

Here was Farmington, the eighth-place team in the Western Lakes and a big underdog, on the verge of upsetting Lahser, Division II co-champion of the Oakland Activities Association.

That was high drama, wondering if the Falcons could pull it off or Lahser could squeak past.

**Farmington executed good strategy**  
It was a cat-and-mouse contest all the way. Every possession counted; every point was critical.

Farmington didn't hold the ball or deliberately slow down the game, which one might assume from seeing the score.

The Falcons worked the ball for a good shot, made the most of their offensive chances, and controlled the game/score in that sense. I thought that was good strategy, good basketball!

Farmington played within itself and followed its game plan, and that helped to make it such a good game. I can enjoy a chess match game like that as much as any running, shooting contest.

If the Knights had shot better — they were 10-of-44 overall and 5-of-34 in the last three quarters — maybe the game wouldn't have been as close.

But Farmington had a lot to do with that poor shooting percentage, too. I can count one hand the number of offensive rebounds Lahser has had.

Is there a better defensive rebounder than Farmington senior Kim Washnock? There was none better on the court Friday.

But it wasn't just Washnock. I was impressed by the intensity of all the Farmington players in going after rebounds, especially at the defensive end.

Coch John Verdura summed it up when he said his team played with confidence, composure and determination, and that's what made the week and the performance (win or lose) so positive and memorable.

"They certainly played as hard as any team I've coached," Verdura said after that championship. "It was just a great effort, physically and mentally. By far, it was our best game of the year."

Verdura said his players deserved all the credit, but I think Verdura should be applauded for the job he has done, too.

Farmington isn't a girls basketball power and has taken its lumps from the powerhouse teams in the Western Lakes Activities Association over the years.

Verdura has worked for three years, teaching fundamentals and trying to mold a team, and it started to come together last week. That had to be very gratifying for the players and Verdura, who saw a winning attitude develop.

"After the first two years, it was like 'Oh, well, the season is over,'" Verdura said Friday night. "Now, we go in the locker room and the kids are upset."

"I'm not glad they're upset, but I'm happy with their desire to win and being upset at not being able to get it done."

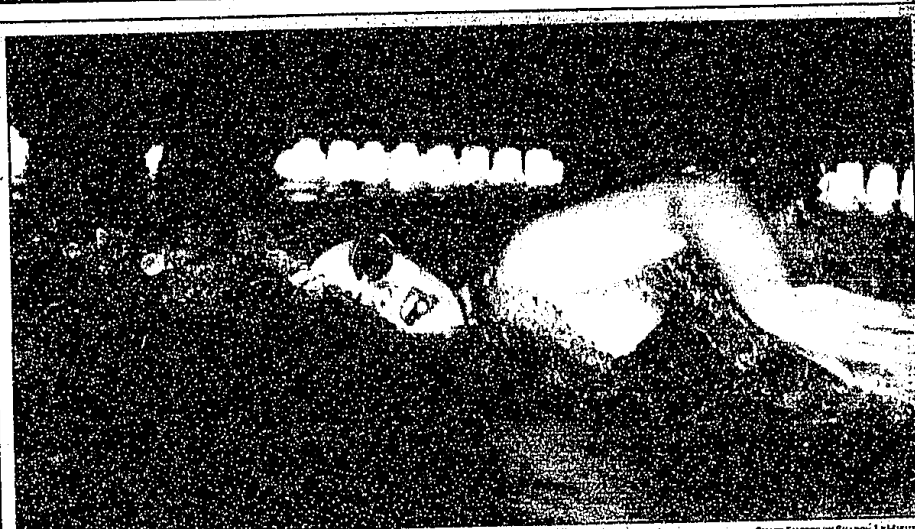
"Maybe we've crossed that bridge."

"Everybody likes to play and have fun, but you have to find kids who hate to lose."

■ I think the potential for girls basketball in Farmington next year is good.

The Falcons lose three seniors: Washnock, Melissa McDonald and Beth Hewald. But Amanda Porter, Sarah Reital, Brittany Dixon, Aug Newman and Maureen Carolan — all principal players in the district tournament run — will be back.

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STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMMON

**Successful state meet:** Harrison junior Lisa Richardson placed 10th in the 100-yard freestyle and 11th in the 200 freestyle Saturday at the Class A girls swim championships.

## Budde's strong finish paces Mercy



BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Mercy senior Bethany Budde achieved one goal and was just shy of another Saturday in the Class A girls swim finals.

Budde capped her high school career by placing second in the 100-yard breaststroke and third in the individual medley at the University of Michigan.

Her preliminary time of 1:06.17 in the breaststroke is a school record and will receive All-Area serious consideration.

She had her sights set on former Mercy star Katie Knipper's 1989 mark of 1:08.34 for a long time.

"That's something I've been aiming for the last four years," Budde said. "It's a nice way to end my high school career, to get that record."

Budde had hoped to lower her time to the 1:06s and win the state title in the breaststroke, but first place went to Tread Valenz of Rochester Adams with a 1:05.29 time.

"You always hope you can do a little bit better, especially when you finish second and think you could have gone a little faster," Budde said.

"But I'm happy with second place and my performance, because both

times were better by at least a second."

Budde's best effort in the breaststroke had been 1:07.1 at the Junior Nationals last March in Buffalo, N.Y.

Her time of 2:12.6 in last year's state meet was her previous best until last week. She swam 2:11:17 in the prelims and 2:10:59 in the finals.

The Mercy record belongs to Linda Goldstein, who swam 2:07.5 in 1990.

Both races were close, and Budde needed strong finishes to place as well as she did.

Birmingham Seaholm freshman Emily Ernst was third in the breaststroke at 1:06.31.

"It came down to who hit the wall first, basically who had the longest arm," Budde said. "I must have pushed a little harder to get that last stroke in."

In the IM, she edged her friend, Joni Sturgeon of Okemos, at the end, also. Sturgeon swam 2:10.03.

"It came down to the last 25 yards again," Budde said. "I saw her on the other side of the pool. I didn't know who it was, but I said 'I'm not going to let her beat me.'"

"I kicked it in and pushed a little harder, passed the threshold of pain, in those last 25 yards."

Mercy coach Greg Patrell said Budde's USS coach, Bob Jensen, deserves much of the credit for her success.

"The IM was a bit more of a surprise, because she hadn't trained a lot in the IM this year," Patrell



**Team effort:** Caroline Kenna helped the Marlins capture sixth place in the 200-yard medley relay.

said. "She was concentrating on the breaststroke, but she still took third in the state."

Budde also was a member of the sixth-place medley relay team, combining with Caroline Kenna, Jenny McDonald and Emily Suresh for a 1:53.16 time in the finals. The Marlins qualified Friday at 1:52.28.

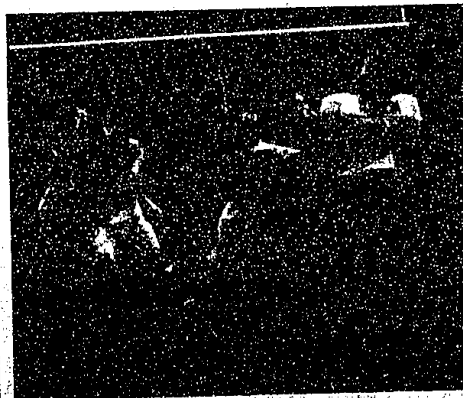
Mercy's Kristie Corda knocked 11 seconds off her seed time in the 500 freestyle, swimming 5:16.15 in

the prelims and placing eighth with a 5:16.59 time. Meredith Spiegel was 11th in the breaststroke at 1:10.58.

"Kristie's goal was to break 5:20 and she shattered that," Patrell said. "She loves to work hard, and it all paid off for her that day."

Meredith has been faster during the year, and her time was not what she had hoped. It wasn't for lack of

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ART HANCOCK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**End zone in sight:** CC quarterback Greg Call gets a key block en route to a touchdown run Saturday against Stevenson.

## Holt's stingy defense final challenge for CC

BY STEVE KOWALSKI  
STAFF WRITER

Redford Catholic Central wrestling coach Mike Rodriguez knows how tough the kids are at Holt High School.

"They're pretty strong all the way through, lightweights through the heavyweights," said Rodriguez, who has won seven state championships at CC. "One of their heavyweights two years ago beat John (Spolsky). But they can get all the heavyweights they want and they can't stop John this time (on the football field). He's pretty determined."

The Shamrocks and the Rams, both sporting 12-0 records, will play at 1 p.m. Saturday in the Class AA championship game at the Pontiac Silverdome.

While Holt has a top 10 wrestling program, the Rams' tradition on the football field can't compare to CC's. The Shamrocks have won three state championships and played in five of

the last eight title games, winning two.

Holt advanced to its first championship game with a 34-8 victory over Monroe in the Class AA semifinal game at Jackson. This is Holt's first appearance in the state playoffs since 1979.

CC coach Tom Mach isn't interested in history, however.

"We knew they'd be tough because of that (wrestling)," Mach said. "It's a toughness that spills over to other sports."

Despite an unblemished record and an aggressive defense, Holt second-year coach Mike Smith is getting used to being the underdog. Monroe had seven turnovers against Holt, and Smith wasn't surprised to hear a reporter from the Detroit Free Press on Sunday night's Sports Update Show on Channel 7 said the Rams should just be "happy" to be there.

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