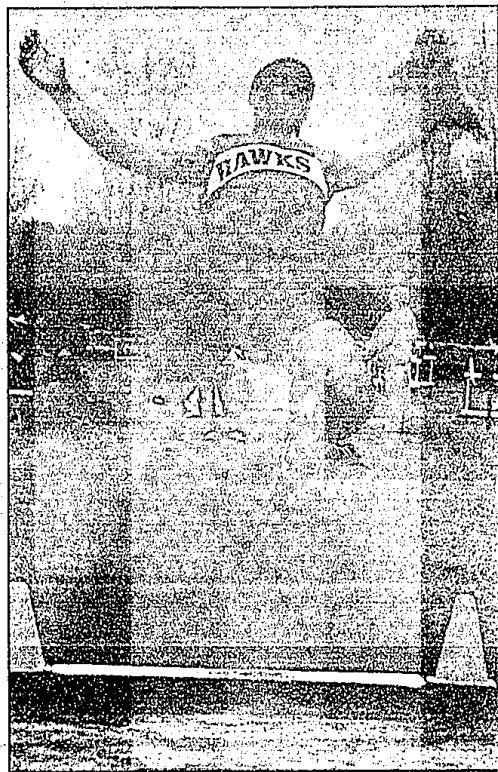


Hawks plan to be back on track



Farmington Harrison had a down year when compared to others in 1998, but the Hawks hope to be battling for championships again in boys track. With a lot of returning talent, the Hawks have a chance to do just that.

BY DAN O'MEARA
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Farmington Harrison hopes to rebound from an untypical season by Hawk standards and regain the stature of past years as an Observerland power in boys track and field.

But that could be easier said than done since Harrison lost some all-area athletes — sprinters Keith Battle and Jerrard Johnson and hurdler Jason Sharp — to graduation and the competition remains just as formidable.

The Hawks, who were Observerland Relays champions two years ago, were 2-4 in duals — all the losses were close scores — and slipped to sixth place in the Western Lakes Activities Association.

"Last year was not a real successful year for us; it wasn't our typical season," Harrison coach John Reed said. "I think the kids got discouraged, and the team morale went down."

"Our team motto this year is 'Attitude is everything.' We're focusing a ton on getting kids with the right attitude, kids who want to do well, are real positive and are setting goals."

"We're focusing on coming together as a team; so far it's been going great. The team morale has been great. If we take care of that, we have kids with ability, and the team will do OK."

The Hawks return a pair of all-area athletes in junior pole vaulter Derek Laskowski and junior sprinter Kevin Woods, who was part of the top 400-meter relay team in Observerland.

The pole vault could be Harrison's best event with Laskowski, who finished sixth in the state and was the WLA, regional and Oakland County champion, backed up by a large group that includes juniors Erik Oswald, Caleb Smith and Justin Shafer and freshmen Matt Migliore and Kurt Laird.

(Laskowski) went 14-1 (school record) last year; he'd like to go 15 feet

this year, and we think he'll do that. Reed said, adding assistant coach Richard Penedral is the driving force in the pole vault.

Woods, who developed into a star running back in football last fall, was seventh in the WLA in the 100 dash at 11.3, just two tenths of a second behind league champion Eric Sage of Walled Lake Western.

The Hawks also return senior Andre Davis and sophomore Krishna Reid, and Reed welcomes the addition of senior Ricky Bryant, an all-state football player headed for Ohio State, and freshman Agim Shabaj.

"We're going to have a lot of speed; that will be our strength," Reed said, adding the Hawks were third in the 800 relay without their fastest team at the recent Huron Relays.

Harrison should do well in the long jump with Reid, who was third in the league meet, Woods, Davis and junior Nick Hall.

"We think the long jump will be our best event as far as a group," Reed said. "We just have a ton of freshmen and sophomores in there who are real good."

Reid is also the top high jumper. Besides junior Brad Person, Reed looks for freshmen Jeff Ross, Matt Elsey, Reno Olivero and Owen Ridings to provide depth in that event.

"We're pretty young, but they're pretty good," he said. "The freshmen are tall kids and good jumpers. I think a couple kids are going to jump 5-8 to 6-9."

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Derek Laskowski

Soaring Hawk: Farmington Harrison junior Kevin Woods could be one of the top long jumpers and sprinters in the area this year.

Early wins boost outlook for Falcons

BY DAN O'MEARA
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BASEBALL

Encouraged by early-season results, coach Tim Schafer and his Farmington High baseball players have reason to believe 1999 will be a better year for the Falcons.

With a young team trying to rebound from a 7-21 season, Farmington has more confidence and optimism after winning its first three games.

The Falcons swept a doubleheader Thursday from Birmingham Seaholm, 3-0 and 7-3, and followed with a 2-0 victory Friday over South Lyon.

"We were pleased with the way we played," Schafer said. "But this is a

starting point; we want them to get better. This isn't something we want to be out of character for them."

"Though we are young, we have high expectations for them. There's definitely room for improvement; we weren't flawless by any means. But they stayed together and fought hard, and we were pleased to see that."

Charlie Avery, one of only three seniors on the team and the ace of the pitching staff, threw a one-hit shutout that included 14 strikeouts in the first game Thursday.

He was 2-7 but had a respectable 2.73 earned run average last season. He also had 63 strikeouts and 36 walks in 61 innings (more than double that of any other pitcher). He was 6-1 as a sophomore and helped the Falcons win a division title in 1997.

"We look for him to provide leadership and keep us in some ballgames," Schafer said. "If he throws strikes, he's going to be one of the tougher pitchers around."

"We're real young everywhere else. But, hopefully, Charlie and (senior) Brad Baker will pull us together and teach the young pups the way."

Avery was Farmington's fourth-leading hitter last year with a .339 average

and was the team leader with 22 RBI.

Also pitching for the Falcons are juniors Brent Heraghty, the only left-hander on the team, Jim Kay, Matt McGrath, Justin Gerwatowski, John Waisanen and Pat Klein.

"Other than Charlie, we're very young and nobody has really proven himself," Schafer said. "But they can throw strikes. It's just a question of who, under the pressure of the game, steps up. We know we've got one, and we're waiting to see if we can develop one of those other guys."

Farmington has a young receiver in sophomore catcher Nick Hippler, who

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Senior-less Marlins rebuild team for '99

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SOFTBALL

A glance at the Farmington Hills Mercy softball roster might lead one to believe the Marlins area headed for a down year following a 29-11 season.

Mercy has no seniors on its team and is minus some outstanding players who were lost to graduation such as shortstop Kelly Moug and outfielder Shayla O'Mara, both of whom made the All-Observer first team.

The Marlins, who won district and regional titles but lost to Harper Woods Regina in the state quarterfinals, must also replace pitchers Terri Schroeder and Leah Moeller, as well as infielders Beth Ann Nowak, Katie Homant and Paige Evans.

But Mercy does have veteran players among the 12 juniors on its 14-player roster, and coach Jack Falvo is confident the Marlins will be a quality team before the end of the 1999 season.

"It's going to take us a little time to learn each other as teammates, coaches and players," Falvo said. "It will take time for all the JV players to adjust to the varsity level, but I expect them to

start to jell toward the beginning of May."

"I think these girls are more than capable of performing at the same level as last year's team."

Among the returning players are junior co-captains Erin Carson and Dana Falvo. Both played last summer for the Motor City Madness, the runner-up in the 16-and-under ASA national tournament.

Carson, who plays catcher, had a .439 batting average and .520 on-base percentage with five doubles, three triples and 19 RBI.

"We're strong down the middle, and we have experience there," Falvo said. "We expect big things from Erin this year. With her summer experience and playing at the nationals, we expect her to establish herself as one of the premier players in the area."

Dana Falvo, the coach's daughter, batted .360 with 17 RBI last year while hitting ninth. She switches from play-



Key player for Marlins: Dana Falvo, a switch-hitting junior, will play center field and likely hit second in the Mercy batting order.

Softball players clinic

South Farmington will have a clinic for softball players 6-9 p.m. Thursday, April 15, at East Middle School in Farmington Hills. Players of all ages and levels are welcome to attend all or part of the clinic. The topics to be covered are pitching, hitting, bunting, stealing and basic skills.

For more information call Bill McNeill at 471-4953.

Whalers even series

For the third time in four games, the Plymouth Whalers and the London Knights were forced to an extra period to decide things Friday night in London, Ontario.

But this time, it was the Whalers who prevailed.

Defenseman Nikos Taelios scored 6:05 into the first overtime on the power play, with London's Mike Mazzuca in the box, to give Plymouth a 5-4 win, evening the best-of-seven series at two games apiece.

David Legwand and Harold Druken assisted on the game-winner. For Legwand, it was one of his better games of the series. He scored his first goal of the series with just 1:04 left in the second period to give the Whalers a 4-2 lead.

But London, playing in front of a packed house (attendance: 5,075), stormed back in the third period. Jay Legault narrowed the gap to 4-3 with a goal at the 5:26 mark of the final period. Then Tom Kostopoulos scored his second goal of the game with 9:17 left to knot it at 4-4.

The game was tied at 1-1 after the first, with Jason Ward netting a goal for Plymouth on the power play only to have the Knights' Rico Fata tie it 2-2 later. The Whalers then put three goals into the net in the second period after Kostopoulos had given London its only lead of the game early in the period.

Eric Goody tied it at 2-2 6:39 into the period, then Julian Smith put the Whalers ahead, 3-2, 30 seconds later with an unassisted goal. Legwand's marker gave Plymouth its biggest lead of the game.

Shaun Fisher had three assists for the Whalers.

For the first time in the series, the Knights outshot the Whalers, 45-43. Robert Holsinger, however, was equal to the challenge; the Plymouth goalie made 41 saves. Gene Chiarello had 38 stops for London.

Raiders split twinbill

Oakland Community College split a softball doubleheader with host Flint Mott Thursday, losing the first game, 4-3, and winning the second, 4-3.

Mott rallied from a 3-1 deficit in the opener with a three-run fourth inning.

OCC pitcher Missy VanDoorn gave up four hits and three walks in a complete game. The Lady Raiders also had four hits.

In the second game, the Lady Raiders scored twice in the top of the sixth inning to break a 2-2 tie.

OCC's Jennifer Sargolowsky went 3-for-3; Danielle Ventimiglia had two hits and Wendy Wado two RBI.

Winning pitcher Rachel Fuller went the distance, scattering six hits without issuing a walk.

The Lady Raiders were 1-5 in the Michigan Community College Athletic Association and 9-14 overall following the twinbill.

College diamond news

Angelo Palazetti of Farmington Hills has the best pitching record (5-2) on the Western Michigan University baseball team.

He also leads the Broncos in games started (seven), games completed (two), innings pitched (39 2/3) and strikeouts (33 as opposed to 15 walks).

The Birmingham Brother Rice graduate's earned run average is 4.35. The Broncos were 10-12 overall as of April 4.

Alma College softball pitcher Erin LaCasse of Farmington Hills (Harrison High) earned her fourth victory without a loss in the second game of a doubleheader with Saginaw Valley State University.

LaCasse, who has completed all four starts, struck out four and walked two in the 4-3 victory. Her earned run average is 1.50.