

Farmington stuns tourney favorite, wins district title

BY C.J. FISHER
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It was . . . unexpected. Not just by Plymouth Canton, a softball team that was state-ranked, that had been to the state semifinals last year and fully intended on making on a return trip. But the outcome was also a surprise to Farmington, a team with a losing record, that had won nothing, a team that had no idea of what it was capable of.

Until Saturday's Division I district championship game.

Farmington 3, Canton 1.

It was one of the bigger upsets of the state district tournament.

Farmington (12-18) advances to the regional tournament at Brighton to play the host Bulldogs (32-8) Saturday. The Chiefs finish with a 30-4 record.

In the first regional semifinal, Ann Arbor Pioneer (21-19) goes against Highland Millford (11-26) at 10 a.m. The championship will be 30 minutes after the end of the second semifinal.

"It is unbelievable; I didn't know if the girls thought they could do it," Farmington coach Jerry Osborne said. "When (Melissa) Mytty is on (the mound), we play pretty well."

"And I think, when they saw Gretchen (Hudson, of Canton) wasn't on the mound, they got fired up."

It was an odd set of circumstances, one of injured backs and setbacks. In the end, it all worked out well for the Falcons — and not so well for the Chiefs.

"We just didn't hit the ball," said a dismayed Jim Arnold, Canton's coach. "They came out hitting the ball; they got the timely hits."

"That's a well-coached team over there. I've got a lot of respect for that man (Osborne)."

"We had baserunners; we just didn't move 'em."

There were two decisive half-innings: Farmington's first and Canton's fifth.

The Falcons, who lost to Canton 9-5 on May 19 at Farmington (Mytty pitched a couple of innings), must have appreciated seeing Jenny Fisher as the start-

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ing pitcher Saturday, only because Fisher had started that regular-season game and they had scored four runs off of her in six innings.

They didn't waste any time against her in the district final; fielding problems didn't help, either. Fisher walked Farmington's lead-off hitter, Kristin Brown, then Tricia Krause reached base on an error by Chiefs' second-baseman Carrie Kovachevich.

That brought to bat left-handed hitting Angie Luttman, the Falcons' senior left fielder. Luttman tagged a Fisher pitch, lining it over left-fielder Christina Kiesel's head, one hop off the fence. Both baserunners scored, and Farmington was ahead 2-0.

The Falcons made it 3-0, getting one-out, back-to-back-to-back singles from Becky DeFotter, Julie Rotenheber and Brown, with Brown's scoring the run. Krause followed with a bunt, but a sharply-played, catcher-to-first-baseman throw, double-play ended the inning, with Canton catcher Kathleen Mokienco tossing out Krause at first and Liz Elsner relaying back to Mokienco, who tagged out Rotenheber as she tried to score.

What made Farmington's lead so insurmountable was the pitching of Mytty and the defense behind her.

"She's been out most of the season with two herniated discs in her back," explained Osborne. "And we finally did something we talked about all season, and that's play defense."

The Chiefs had three baserunners in the first two innings; Melissa Brown in the first on an error from the catcher trying to steal by catcher Meghan O'Rear; Fisher, who walked with one out in the second; and Becky Mizze, who beat out an infield grounder to put two runners aboard with one out. Mytty got out of the jam by striking out both Brianne McNicholas and Angie Neau.



Winning pitcher: A healthy Melissa Mytty played a key role in Farmington's district tournament success.

When Fisher put two runners on base, walking one and hitting another with a pitch, with one out in the fourth inning, Hudson relieved. Hudson had pitched Canton's 2-1 victory over Plymouth Salem in the district semifinal earlier Saturday.

In the Chiefs' decisive two-run sixth against Salem, Hudson singled in the sixth with Mike singled to start the inning and McNicholas reaching base when Farmington shortstop Krause bobbled Mytty's throw on an attempted force at second. Anna Zell, pinch-hitting for Neau, singled to load the bases with no one out, and Kovachevich singled to deliver Canton's first run. The bases were still loaded

with none out. Paula McKernan tried to bunt home one run, but McNicholas was forced at the plate. Melissa Brown then grounded to Mytty, who forced the runner at home, and O'Rear's relay to first doubled up Brown, ending the inning.

"I think that was the turning point in the game," said Osborne.

Four consecutive putouts in center field by Farmington's Brown, two of them on diving grabs, ensured the victory. Mytty allowed one run on four hits and two walks, striking out nine in seven innings; she also led the offense with three singles.

Fisher and Hudson combined to give up three runs (two earned) on seven hits, three walks and one hit batsman. Mizze walked and one hit batsman. Mizze had two of Canton's four hits.

"We didn't expect the season to end this quick," Arnold said, sitting in an empty dugout.

Mercy crushes RU in district tourney; Troy next on slate

Farmington Hills Mercy may have lost 14 softball games this season, but it has one thing a lot of schools with more victories do not — a berth in the regionals.

The Marlinas reached the next level of the state high school tournament by winning the Division I district at Birmingham Groves.

Mercy returns to Groves on Saturday where it will meet Troy in a regional semifinal at 10 a.m.

The Marlinas, who won a regional title last year but lost in the state quarterfinals, defeated Redford Union in the district championship game, 9-1, after edging host Groves in the semifinal, 4-2.

Mercy piled up four runs in each of the first two innings, four coming on a grand slam by Carrie Brankiewicz, to cruise to their victory over the Panthers.

Freshman Megan Feduk went the distance to defeat RU. She scattered six hits, walked two and struck out five to best the RU's Emily Williams, who was touched for 10 hits.

Williams didn't walk a batter and struck out two, but her team didn't score until the seventh.

Lauren Monterey singled to start the bottom of the Mercy first; Dana Falvo followed with a single, and Nuvero Naomi was hit by a pitch to load the bases.

Brankiewicz followed with her blast over the center-field fence to get Mercy off to a 4-0 start.

In the second, Theresa Lawrence triggered a four-run inning with a single. Monterey singled and Falvo loaded the bases with a bunt single to first.

Erin Carron singled in one run; Naomi singled for one more, and Brankiewicz cleaned up the scoring again with a two-run single.

Crystal Shina singled in the fourth to drive in Mercy's final run.

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Erin Howard scattered eight hits, walked one and struck out three to pitch the Marlinas to the first game victory.

Mercy took a 1-0 lead in the third, then tacked on two in the third after Groves, which was the victor in the game even though it was the host team, had scored twice in the top of the third.

The Marlinas added their final run in the fourth and Howard took it from there.

Monterey walked to start off the two-run third for Mercy, and Falvo singled her to third. Carron had an RBI on a fielder's choice grounder, and reached second on a sacrifice bunt. Carron scored on Shina's single.

In the first, Monterey reached on a walk and moved to second on a passed ball. Falvo bunted her to third, and she scored on a sacrifice fly by Carron.

In the fourth, Jamie Law was hit by a pitch and was scored to second by Monterey. She stole third and scored on a wild pitch.

Six Mercy girls made the all-district team: Carron, Monterey, Falvo, Naomi, Brankiewicz and Marissa Lawrence.

CHURCHILL 2, GARDEN CITY 1: Freshman pitcher Meghan Mislak put forth a performance beyond her years Saturday, giving up just three hits in the championship first as Liviana Churchill captured the first district title since 1994, and only its second in school history, at Oxford.

Mislak (10-8), who struck out eight and walked none, did not get flustered even after giving up three hits in the fourth inning and suffering a scraped knee holding the ball out in the bottom of the seventh.

Churchill (17-14) scored the final run in the fifth inning. Stephanie Doyle was hit by a pitch. She took second on a passed ball and advanced to third on a wild pitch.

Kristin Dewick brought her team with a single, her third hit of the day.

Seaholm takes turn at winning, edges Harrison in extra innings

BY DAN O'MEARA
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When Birmingham Seaholm loaded the bases with no outs in the bottom of the ninth inning Saturday, coach Mike Heesling had a good feeling about his softball team's chances.

The Maples scored the winning run as Stephanie Levine raced home on a wild pitch to give host Seaholm a 2-1 win over Farmington Harrison and a Division I district tournament championship.

"I thought 'This had better be it. We had no outs,'" Heesling

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said. "We had two chances to get the run in, and we had the heart of our batting order coming up; so I was sorta confident, because we were making contact."

The outcome was the reverse of last year's district final in which the Hawks defeated the Maples in eight innings, 4-3.

Levine's deciding run ended what had been a pitching duel between Seaholm's Avery Gholston and Harrison's Ali Ault.

Gholston posted 13 strikeouts

and Ault 10. Each pitcher walked one batter. The Hawks had an 8-6 edge in hits.

Harrison made three errors, the second of which allowed the Maples to tie the score, while Seaholm played an error-free game.

"It's the little things that make the difference," said Harrison assistant coach Rob Schrock, adding for Mike Teachman, who was attending his son's wedding.

"In a well-pitched game, it's a question of who makes more mistakes. We made more of them; I guess that's the bottom line."

"We made ours, too, with the baserunning," Heesling said, referring to the two times Seaholm had a runner thrown out at third while trying to take an extra base.

The Maples (18-11) advance to the regional tournament Saturday at Mount Clemons. Clarendon's "Maples" left Gonzales stranded at second in the sev-

enth and Jenny Gatt at third following a one-out triple in the eighth.

The ninth was different, however. Seaholm filled the bases by sandwiching a pair of singles by Levine and Gonzales around a bunt by Lisa Townsend that was misplayed for an error.

The Hawks left at least one runner stranded in every inning but the first, including a runner at second in five innings.

Gonzales and Levine had two hits each. Leslie Schrock, one of four seniors on the Harrison team (the Aults and Brittany Maxey are the others), also had two hits.

"Our girls battled hard the whole game, as they have all year," Rob Schrock said. "They made a great effort to stay in the game, to keep it tight."

"It's especially tough for the four seniors. We really wanted to win for them. There's only one team that ends the season not losing, but we had hoped to play

another week at the regional."

SEAHOLM 13, OAK PARK 3: Gholston struck out all nine batters she faced, pitching three innings in Seaholm's five-inning, mercy-rule victory in a district tournament semifinal game Saturday.

Gholston pitched the first, second and fifth innings to earn the victory. Levine pitched the third and fourth innings, allowing just one hit.

Townsend, Sarah DeWitt and Andrea Silicchia had two hits apiece to lead the Maples. Jenelle Woods added a two-run single.

Silicchia had three RBI and DeWitt two. Gatt, who reached base with a single, an error and a walk, scored three runs and Silicchia two.

HARRISON 25, BONDORO 1: Emmett pitched a no-hitter in a semifinal district tournament game Saturday as the Hawks merited Royal Oak Bondoro in five innings. Emmett struck out 13 and walked no one.

Ali Ault went 3-for-4 and had four RBI; Schrock was 3-for-5 with two RBI.

Taylor, Jenelle Welling and Maxey chipped in two hits apiece. Taylor and Maxey also had three RBI each. Welling scored three runs and Taylor two.

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