

Observer Sports

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DAN O'MEARA

'99 grid season will be historic in Farmington

A new era in Farmington high school sports begins Friday with the introduction of night football games.

The change, from a longstanding tradition of Saturday afternoon games, has created a lot of anticipation and excitement for the players, parents and student bodies.

Farmington now will be in harmony with the rest of Oakland County schools, most of which play on Friday nights with the exception of a handful of private and parochial teams.

I have to wonder, too, if that fact won't hasten the often-rumored switch from the Western Lakes Activities Association to the Oakland Activities Association.

I'm sure the schools will realize their goal of drawing bigger crowds, if not creating more interest in the games, as a result.

A greater percentage of the students will see the games as social events, as they are every Friday night at every other school.

Attendance should increase

But there are non-students who will be more inclined to attend a Friday night game, too. The conventional wisdom was college games and other family pursuits tended to keep adults away on Saturday afternoon.

People associated with the Farmington Harrison program and those not associated with it expressed to me over the years their surprise at the low attendance despite the great success of those teams.

If greater crowds are expected, parking could be a problem, especially this year due to the construction at all three high schools.

When I visited each school a couple weeks ago, the available parking space was reduced and the lots were a mess with dirt and dust at all three sites.

In that regard, it's ironic and unfortunate such a major event as the move to Friday night football is taking place at a time when the otherwise positive construction work will interfere with it.

As for the aforementioned tradition of playing Saturday games, it will take some time for me to get used to Friday night football in Farmington.

I've been covering Farmington football games since 1987 — when Mill Coleman was just a sophomore and first-year player at Harrison — and I must say I liked Saturday games.

On a sun-soaked afternoon, I always enjoyed, not only the games, but the drive down Farmington, Orchard Lake or Middlebelt roads to tree-lined Shiawassee and through the downtown area, listening to the second half of a U-M or MSU game on the radio.

But I can't disagree with people who say Friday night is for high school football.

Yes, Friday is for prep game

Games were played on Friday night when I was in school a long time ago, and some of my fondest professional memories are of covering Friday night games at Black Field in Greenville in the early '80s.

Maybe now I'll have a chance to actually see a college game Saturday instead of tuning in over the airwaves.

And it's not just the football players who will play at night. Soccer games will start at 7 p.m. now instead of 5:30. Some late-season games used to end in near darkness.

"The parents will be able to get out and see their kids play," North Farmington boys soccer coach Ron Meteyer said. "I think that will help us a lot. It's also fun for the kids to play under the lights; everything seems faster."

As for our devoted readers, there's one big plus for you! You'll be able to read about the Friday football games in the Sunday paper instead of waiting until Thursday.

When the Observer switched from

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STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRINKER

Preseason practice: Brian Horr (right) tries to slide the ball by teammate Jarret Kruse (22) during a North Farmington soccer practice as Gjon Djokaj watches the action in the background. All three are experienced players who will have key roles for the Raiders this fall.

Raiders hope to do even better



BY DAN O'MEARA
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North Farmington set a school record for single-season victories last year when it finished 14-6-2 in boys soccer, and the Raiders hope they can surpass that mark this season.

Coach Ron Meteyer's team will have to compensate for the loss of leading scorers Craig Hearn and Justin Street, who accounted for a total of 66 goals.

But the Raiders still have a lot of returning talent, led by an eight-member senior class, and enter the 1999 season with plenty of optimism.

"We've been looking forward to seeing what this group can do for a long while," Meteyer said, adding his team defeated Monroe, Woodhaven and Southfield Christian in scrimmage games Saturday.

"The guys who graduated were fine players, and we'll miss them. But I think we have a real good season ahead us."

Heading the list of nine returning varsity players are senior tri-captains Gjon Djokaj, Brian Horr and Kyle Meteyer.

Djokaj and Horr, who scored 15 goals last year and had quite a few assists,

play midfield positions, and Meteyer anchors the defense from the sweeper spot.

Midfielders Jim Gabriel and Jarret Kruse, stopper Eric Phillips and defender Dan Shumer are returning seniors who will play key roles.

The Raiders also bring back juniors Greg Boothroyd, Andrew Hathaway and Glen Hearn with a season of varsity experience.

Sophomore Mike Buchwald, who moved up to the varsity at the end of last season and is in the Olympic Development Program, replaces Tony Munaco as the goalkeeper.

The varsity newcomers include seniors Bob Kerwin and Brian Shapiro, juniors Raj Grewal, Aaron Fleisher, Joe Juncas and Jake Kaufman and sophomores Mike Leach, Jeff Shumer and Sermet Alver.

"Anytime you lose two players like Hearn (who scored a school-record 42

goals) and Street, it's going to be tough," Meteyer said, adding he was encouraged by what he saw in the scrimmage. "We may not score as many goals, but I think the games are going to be interesting."

"We have a solid midfield and an even more solid defense. It's going to be hard to crack our defense. I don't know if we'll score a lot of goals and wow anybody, but we have players who can do that."

The Raiders are an intelligent bunch, too, according to Meteyer, who hopes North can achieve academic All-America status, which requires a 3.25 team grade-point average.

"We have a lot of bright kids on this team," Meteyer said.

The Raiders begin the season Saturday at home against Milford. Game time is 12:30 p.m.

Please see RAIDERS, C3

Farmington plans for successful year

BY DAN O'MEARA
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The boys on the Farmington High soccer team figure they have some unfinished business, and the Falcons just might have the talent to get it done this year.

Farmington won its first district tournament championship, defeating rival North Farmington in the final, but it had a letdown in a regional game and lost to Dearborn Edsel Ford, 5-2.

To make it worse, the Falcons had beaten the Thunderbirds earlier in the season 3-0 and were leading 2-0 in the Division II post-season contest before everything got turned around.

Farmington, which finished 12-6-3, lost some key players to graduation, most notably two-time All-Observer forward Tim Rais, but returns most of its team.

"I think we're going to be quite competitive in our league," said Farmington coach Luke Juncas, who spent the summer in Kosovo working with the U.S. Army as an interpreter.

"I also expect a very good performance in the state tournament. That's one of our goals, to win the district and advance in the state tournament."

BOYS SOCCER

The Falcons return 11 varsity players and are probably strongest in the midfield with four starters back, one of whom was a defender, however.

Junior Karl Lopata, sophomore Nick Ramirez and junior Andrew Buck were starting halfbacks, and senior Jeff Frederick is moving from defense in place of second-team, all-area midfielder Patrick Faloon.

Ramirez scored nine goals and had four assists last year; Buck had four of each.

Frederick is one of three players who begins his fourth year on the varsity, the others being forward Jon Kambouris and stopper Justin Gerwatowski.

"I think it's safe to say (it's the best) midfield Farmington has had), even though the midfield was pretty good last year," Juncas said. "All are a year older and more experienced, so I think the midfield is going to be better."

"All of these guys have very good skills and can play with a lot of effectiveness. I think our midfield is going to be able to compete against any group of midfielders in our league."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRINKER

Varsity vets: Nick Ramirez (left) and Jeff Frederick return for the Falcons.

Please see FALCONS, C3

Ex-player says he'll drop suit

BY DAN O'MEARA
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Zvonko Milosevski, a former Farmington High School baseball player who was injured during a practice drill, said he planned to drop his lawsuit against the school district and coaches.

Milosevski, 18, was hit on the left side of his face by a thrown baseball last spring and required plastic surgery as a result. He said he suffered a shattered cheek, broken nose and possibly permanent eye damage.

Milosevski had filed suit Aug. 18 in the Sixth Circuit Court in Pontiac, seeking more than \$25,000 in damages.

"We're not suing; we're dropping everything," Milosevski said, adding his parents were upset a 911 call was not made from the school.

He said he did receive first-aid treatment at the school in an attempt to stop the bleeding.

"My parents thought it was serious enough that a call should have been made instead of waiting around for someone to pick me up. I'm 18 and can check myself into a hospital."

Then we were hit by the insurance company. We didn't know what to do; we hired a lawyer. We don't blame the school; it was an accident."