



DAN O'MEARA

## Hawks share center stage with Marlins

We're accustomed to this being state championship week in Farmington. Until now, that was the sole domain of Farmington Harrison as it made its annual run for a football title.

But this year the Hawks have a little competition, if you will, with Farmington Hills Mercy winning the state championship in girls swimming and diving Saturday.

We began the week amid the excitement of the Marlins winning their first Class A title since 1972, which was the first year the Michigan High School Athletic Association conducted a girls state meet.

And we hope to end the week with Harrison winning its ninth (fifth in this decade) state championship in football Friday when the Hawks play Hudsonville at the Silverdome.

"It's the first time I've been on a state championship team," said Mercy coach Jim Downs. "I've had a couple fourths, a sixth and a ninth but nothing this big time."

### School honors swim champs

Mercy High School had an assembly to recognize the members of its swim and their achievement earlier this week.

"They put it up on the marquee and took the girls' picture by the marquee," Downs said. "They're treating them pretty nice over there. We're going to get a banner to put up in the pool, too."

The Marlins took just six swimmers, albeit very talented, to compete in the finals, but the rest of the team was there to cheer them on.

"It was a big plus to have the other kids on the team there," Downs said. "Of course, they came down at the end and all the kids went in the water. It was neat to have our own little cheering section."

Downs' description of his team's cool in the heat of competition and the way it handled the pressure of the two-day meet reminded me of Harrison coach John Herrington's football team. The Marlins were businesslike in their approach, Downs said.

"Friday they were pretty low key going back to the hotel," Downs said. "One or two of them were doing homework, believe it or not." "I was a little bit like Midland Dow last year," Harrison coach John Herrington said, adding Hudsonville runs the I-formation as opposed to Grandville's split wishbone. "They don't run as varied an attack as Grandville, but they run it effectively."

"They're something like (Westland John) Glenn in that they use two tight ends a lot and try to control the ball."

Herrington likens the 5-foot-10, 195-pound Lurtsema to Walled Lake Western's Dave Johnson except he runs from the tailback position instead of fullback.

"He has the same kind of speed in the open field and great balance," Herrington said. "You have to wrap him up and get a lot of people on the ball. It's very tough to take him down one on one."

"He's a big-play back. I've seen him break a lot of long runs. He had 300 yards against Portage Central and just ran over them."

Hudsonville coach Dave Duram says there's something there. He doesn't have any commitments (from colleges), but he's getting a lot of attention."

Fullback James Kuipers has rushed for 362 yards and three touchdowns and is one heckuva blocker, according to Duram.

"He made one all-area team based on his blocking, and he has a number of colleges looking at him," he said.

The Eagles (11-1) have played music.

# Marlins finish No. 1 in Michigan



Farmington Hills Mercy won its second state championship and its first since 1972 in girls swimming and diving Saturday. The Marlins won the Class A meet with 142 points and set a state record in the 400-yard freestyle relay.

BY DAN O'MEARA  
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Couch Jim Downs took a calculated chance when he made his lineup for the state finals, and it worked out perfectly for his Farmington Hills Mercy swim team.

His decision to put junior Kelly Carlin in all three relays and the 200-yard freestyle helped the Marlins capture the girls Class A championship Saturday at Eastern Michigan University.

Mercy scored in every relay, winning the 400 freestyle and taking second in the medley, and the 200 freestyle

proved to a solid event for the Marlins.

"Kelly was the key in all three relays," Downs said. "That was the gamble we made in the beginning, to put her in all the relays where there were double points."

"I figured we'd get more points in that (third) relay than putting her in a second open event. She would've had to take eighth to make up for that, and that would've been pretty tough."

By winning the 400 freestyle relay with a state-record time of 3:31.25, Mercy overcame a one-point Zeeland lead and easily won the meet with 142 total points.

The Marlins needed only to finish the relay to win the meet since runner-up Zeeland hadn't qualified a 400 relay for the finals.

Downs' fear was one of his swimmers might leave early on the start or one of the exchanges and Mercy would be disqualified. In that case, Zeeland would've won by default.

"If we jump, they win the meet by one," he said. "The kids are in a situation where they've qualified first and so they want to win this thing."

"I told them 'I know you want to win this, but I don't want you to jump, either. I want real safe exchanges. Don't do anything crazy where you're rushing the exchanges.'"

"That would have been total anguish. Can you imagine that? I'd rather take second and win by a comfortable margin, but they wanted to win that event."

Carlin, freshman Kristin Loridas,



Amy McCullough won 500 freestyle



Elizabeth Posvar set school records

sophomore Amy McCullough and junior Elizabeth Posvar went for it all, however, and ended up setting a state record.

"They wanted that relay big time."

Please see MARLINS, C3

## Harrison objective: 9th state grid title

BY DAN O'MEARA  
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As an eight-time state champion, Farmington Harrison has had many successes in the state football finals, but the Hawks might be thinking this week about one of the few that got away.

The Hawks hope to win their ninth title when they play first-time finalist Hudsonville for the Class A crown at 1 p.m. Friday in the Pontiac Silverdome.

But the last time Harrison faced a team from the Greater Grand Rapids area was in the 1996 state final, and Grandville punished the Hawks with a strong running game and won 24-17.

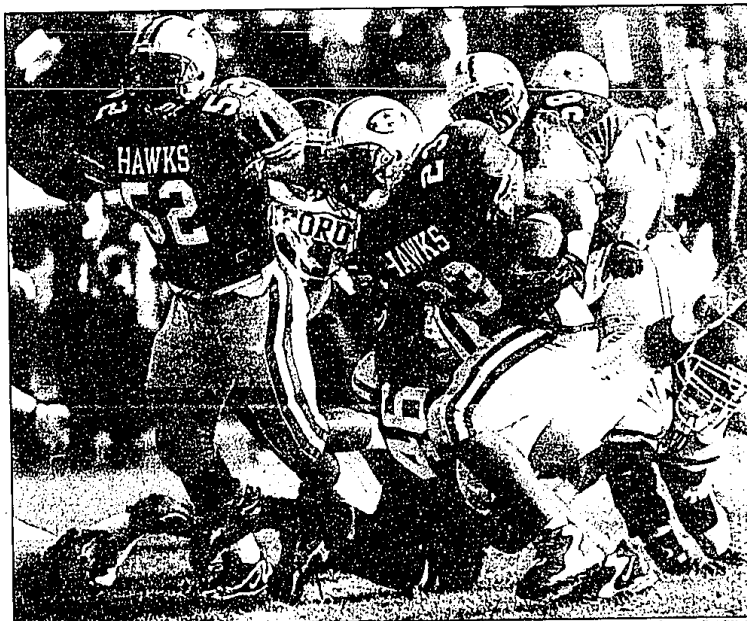
That was also the last time Harrison lost a game. The defending Class A champion Hawks are 12-0 this year and take a 25-game winning streak into the season and tournament finale.

Hudsonville also boasts a strong rushing attack and relies almost solely on senior back Nate Lurtsema for its offensive production.

"They're a little bit like Midland Dow last year," Harrison coach John Herrington said, adding Hudsonville runs the I-formation as opposed to Grandville's split wishbone. "They don't run as varied an attack as Grandville, but they run it effectively."

"They're something like (Westland John) Glenn in that they use two tight ends a lot and try to control the ball."

Herrington likens the 5-foot-10, 195-pound Lurtsema to Walled Lake Western's Dave Johnson except he runs from the tailback position instead



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDGER

Off to the races: Harrison linemen Steve Migliore (52) helps clear the way for tailback Kevin Woods (23), who rushed for 162 yards and four touchdowns in a state semifinal victory over Oxford, 48-7.

of fullback.

"He has the same kind of speed in the open field and great balance," Herrington said. "You have to wrap him up and get a lot of people on the ball. It's very tough to take him down one on one."

"He's a big-play back. I've seen him break a lot of long runs. He had 300 yards against Portage Central and just ran over them."

Hudsonville coach Dave Duram says

Lurtsema is the "biggest secret in Michigan." He played in only two games last year because of an injury, but he has rushed for 1,983 yards and 22 touchdowns this year while averaging 7.2 yards per carry. Lurtsema runs the 40 in 4.49 seconds, added Duram.

"Imagine what it was like knowing you had a back like that over on the sideline bandaged up?" Duram said. "People are just beginning to realize

there's something there. He doesn't have any commitments (from colleges), but he's getting a lot of attention."

Fullback James Kuipers has rushed for 362 yards and three touchdowns and is one heckuva blocker, according to Duram.

"He made one all-area team based on his blocking, and he has a number of colleges looking at him," he said.

The Eagles (11-1) have played musi-

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STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDGER

Familiar pose: If you've seen Bill Slobin, chances are he was talking on his cell phone. Here, he relays halftime information on the Harrison-Oxford semifinal game to an interested party.

## Slobin helps Hawks get stronger in weight room

BY DAN O'MEARA  
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Bill Slobin became a better football player through weight training, and he has a direct and simple exhortation for the young players he coaches: It worked for him; it can work for them.

For the last decade, Slobin has been passionate about passing that message and his knowledge along to aspiring Farmington Harrison gridriders.

As coordinator of the team's strength and conditioning program, Slobin gets credit from coaches and players (past and present) for his work behind the scenes to give the Hawks a physical edge.

Slobin, who played center for the Hawks in 1978-79, was a volunteer assistant coach with the Harrison freshman team in the mid '80s but soon found a role for himself.

"I drifted into the weight room one day, and a couple sophomores were in there lifting," Slobin recalled. "I said 'Make sure you're doing it right.' As crazy as it sounds, here we are."

Here is now a year-round program.

### FOOTBALL

Coach Bob Sutter and Steve Wiese, a lifelong friend and former teammate of Slobin, spend their share of time overseeing it, too, but Slobin is the driving force behind the get-fit movement.

"There was a lot less stuff in there, but that's how I made myself into a football player," Slobin said. "I wasn't any better than the next guy, but I worked hard. If I wanted a job, the best way to do it was to lift weights."

"As time went by, I saw how kids can benefit from this, too, and coaches (John Herrington and Sutter) gave me the opportunity to do this."

Slobin, who played at 5-foot-10 and 200 pounds, has taken the ball and run with it, so to speak.

During the season, players lift weights after practice every Tuesday and Thursday. In the off season, they lift during a sixth-hour tech class, and Slobin, Wiese and Sutter run a summer-long program.

"It's gotten more and more organized"

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Please see O'MEARA, C6