

All-Observer

Farmington players earn area accolades

BASKETBALL

game. He was also an all-WLAA selection.

An honor roll student, McCaffrey plans to attend Princeton University. Donald Didlake, Bishop Borgess: His coach calls Didlake a diamond in the rough. Even so, Didlake's play was a gem this season.

The 5'10 senior guard averaged 20.3 points per game, five assists, six rebounds and two steals for the Spartans. "He's an extremely talented guard that is capable of taking a game over," said Borgess coach Chuck Albright. "Right now, I feel he's a diamond in the rough but there's more to be seen. He hasn't reached his full potential yet. He's still peaking."

Didlake hasn't signed to play in college yet, but is being looked at by Lamar, Hampton and several Mid-American Conference schools. "He's going to be a great guard for some college," said Albright.

Justin Ockerman, Garden City: The 6-0, 245-pound junior made All-Metro Blue Division and second-team All-Metro West after averaging 13 points, nine rebounds and 4.6 blocks per game.

He also shot 60 percent from the floor and 60 percent from the free throw line in 16 games before going down with a season-ending knee injury. Garden City was undefeated in its first 16 games.

"Justin's got all the skills," Garden City coach Greg Williamson said. "He has great hands and a soft touch around the basket."

"He changes the complexion of games and runs the floor very well. He came to us in good shape after football."

Ockerman is a three-sport athlete who also excels in baseball.

Ken Nether, Plymouth Canton: Nether, a senior who transferred to Canton after his junior year at Southfield HS, had to adjust to the Chiefs' motion offense and that took a bit of time. But by mid-season, he was rolling.

"Nether 'led us in almost everything,'" said Canton coach Dan Young. The 6-5 forward averaged 18.2 points while making 53 percent of his shots, and he led the Chiefs in rebounding with 9.0 a game and in assists with a 2.8 average. He also made 76 percent of his free throws.

"And he usually guarded the opposition," Young said. "He plays every game." said Young. "I think that says it all. In the

second half of the season, he really picked it up."

Nether is considering several schools, among them Siena Heights, Lake Superior State, Rochester College, Schoolcraft College and Henry Ford CC.

ALL-AREA SECOND TEAM

Phil Watha, North Farmington: Watha made his reputation as a three-point shooter, but the other parts of his game improved and were noticed this year. He defended, rebounded and went to the basket with the ball.

The 6-1 senior wing, a three-year varsity player like Medunjanin, led the Raiders in scoring with 15.7 points per game and was third in rebounding with 3.9.

Watha made 52.2 percent of his field goals (119-of-228), including 41.2 percent behind the arc (54-of-131). He was an 82.2-percent free throw shooter, sinking 37 of 45 shots.

"(Wayne State coach) Ron Hammyne had a great quote," Negoshian said. "He said 'I've been coming to your practices and recruiting Emir. I think Phil might be your best player. I should be recruiting him, Tom.'"

"He's so low maintenance. He doesn't do a lot of flashy things, but he plays consistently and makes very few mistakes. You tell him something once and that's it, because he has a great understanding of the game."

"He didn't get enough credit defensively. We were No. 1 in Oakland County the last two years, and Phil was as big a part of that as anybody."

Matt Mikel, Farmington: The 5-foot-11 junior has started at either point or guard for three years and this year led the Falcons to their winningest season in school history with a 17-6 record.

Playing on a team with balanced scoring and ability, Mikel still led Farmington in every category except rebounding.

He scored in double figures in 13 games and scored either eight or nine points in six others. He averaged 11.4 points, shot 46 percent from the floor (74-of-161) and made 43 percent of his three-point attempts (42-of-88).

Mikel's strongest attribute might be his free throw shooting, however. He sank 72 of 87 chances for 83 percent.

"He's like having a coach on the floor," coach Denny Mikel said. "He understands what we're trying to do offensively and defensively, and he really gets us into our offense."

"His stats don't jump out at you, because everybody did their part offensively for us. We had four or five guys scoring all about the same."

"He went to the line in some of our closer games and made key free throws that led wins for us. He brings a well-rounded game to the team, and I'm glad he's coming back for another year."

John Bennett, Livonia Churchill: The 6-4 senior forward is Churchill's No. 2 all-time career scoring leader behind Tom Bay (881) with 731 points. He also set the Churchill single-season point total mark with 372.

Bennett averaged 17 points per game this season, 20 ppg in the Western Lakes. He had season highs of 31 (vs. Plymouth Canton) and 29 (vs. Walled Lake Western).

He shot 45 percent from the field (87 of 192) and hit 33 percent from three-point range (40 of 123).

"John is one of the best long-range shooters I've seen in years," Churchill coach Rick Austin said. "He runs the floor very well. We couldn't utilize him as much as a rebounder, but he was a great leader for his size."

Bennett, who set the school's single-game scoring record as a junior with 37, made first-team All-Western Lakes.

Jason Waldmann, Plymouth Canton: Waldmann was, in the words of Plymouth Canton coach Bob Brode, "a load inside."

Waldmann combined with Nether to give the Chiefs a very effective one-two punch. The 6-5, 235-pound senior was "the best post player I've coached," said Canton coach Dan Young. "Every one's defense was geared to stopping him."

"He's got great hands and he's a good passer, and of course he can score."

Which he did with great efficiency. Waldmann, a unanimous all-WLAA selection, averaged 15.8 points, 7.1 rebounds and 2.8 assists per game, and led the team with a 63 percent field goal percentage.

"He handles the ball well for such a big guy," Young said. Waldmann is considering Adrian College, Rochester College and Schoolcraft.

Rob Sparks, Redford CC: Looking solely at the numbers, Sparks might not make most all-area teams.

Considering that he had back surgery on a herniated disc in October, 14 points per game looked pretty good for the 6-3 senior guard/forward.

"He ended up playing 17 games, but in the first two or three of those, he played a quarter here and a half there," said CC coach Rick Corbett. "By mid-January, he got back to three quarters of the game. So while he averaged 14 points, when he finally came back it was more like 18 or 19 points per game."



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Justin Ockerman
Garden City



Phil Watha
North Farmington

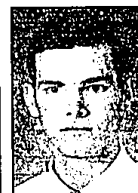


Jason Waldmann
Plymouth Canton

All-Area basketball selections



Matt Mikel
Farmington



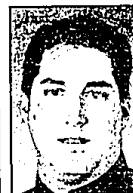
Rob Sparks
Catholic Central



Ken Nether
Plymouth Canton



John Bennett
Livonia Churchill



Coach Doug Taylor
Plymouth Christian

ALL-OBSERVER BASKETBALL

FIRST TEAM

Sr. Emir Medunjanin, 6-0, N. Farmington
Sr. Matt McCaffrey, 6-0, Plymouth Salem
Sr. Donald Didlake, 6-10, Garden City
Jr. Justin Ockerman, 6-0, Garden City
Sr. Ken Nether, 6-5, Plymouth Canton

SECOND TEAM

Sr. Phil Watha, 6-1, North Farmington
Jr. Matt Mikel, 5-11, Farmington
Sr. John Bennett, 6-4, Livonia Churchill
Sr. Jason Waldmann, 6-0, Plymouth Canton
Sr. Rob Sparks, 6-5, Catholic Central

THIRD TEAM

Sr. Justin Mikel, 6-5, Farmington
Sr. Denis Iemase, 6-3, Plymouth Salem
Sr. Shane Nowak, 6-10, Wayne Memorial
Sr. Matt Lorkos, 6-5, Catholic Central
Sr. Joe Hundley, 6-0, Farmington Horizon

FOURTH TEAM

Sr. Dave Corry, 6-1, Plymouth Christian
Sr. Yaku Moton, 6-8, Westland Glenn
Sr. Rick Burack, 6-4, Liv. Clemensville
Sr. Cedric Mann, 5-7, Redford Thurston
Jr. Ryan Celestini, 6-2, Catholic Central

COACH OF THE YEAR

Doug Taylor, Plymouth Christian Academy

HONORABLE MENTION

N. Farmington: Adrian Borgess, Brian Shuman; Farmington: Chad Seaton; Hazelton: Nick Hall, Brian Nelson; Salem: Ryan Cook, Ryan Wimmerguth, Andy Kozlowski, Mark Bolger; Canton: Dan McLean, Jim Reddy; Canton Agape Christian: Paul Antikner, Julian Welling; Stevenson: Kirby McChristian, Harland Beverly, Mike Landon; Franklin: Derek Schenck; Churchill: Randall Bobbie, Brandon Dziwinski, Avery Jassid, Brad Deacon; Clemensville: Corey McMantry, Scott Wilson, Scott Carr; Livonia Westland: Charlie Hoff, Luke Keaton, Nate Mackes; Huron Valley Lutheran: Rene Arnel, Alan Kleins; Plymouth: Mike Hurstman, A.J. Saerell, John Glenn; Brent Bogie, Michael Franks; Wayne: Gary Johnson, Justin Goins, Jermaine Garner; Redford: Mike Mcker, Dill Gerson; Thornton: Matt Nowak, Jesse Doolay; Garden City: Brian Harmon, Jess Webb, Rob Hudson; Redford CC: Anthony Coratti, Mark Willoughby; St. Agatha: Dan Boutier, Greg Russell; Borgess: Khalil Wims, George Toles.

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