

All-Observer hoops

Warriors' Ramthun, Falcons' Mikel honored



Justin Ockerman Garden City Ryan Celesky Catholic Central Matt Mikel Farmington



Joe Ruggiero Livonia Franklin Nate Meckes Lutheran Westland Nick Tochman Plymouth Salem



Dan Boulter Redford St. Agatha Colin Szamora Garden City Mark Willoughby Catholic Central

BY BRAD EMONS
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Lutheran High Westland had a breakthrough boys basketball season in 2000-01.

The man who helped pull the strings, fifth-year coach Dan Ramthun, deserves a lot of the credit.

The Warriors, who had posted records of 11-10, 8-13, 14-8 and 11-9 under Ramthun, leaped to 19-2 record this year, best in school history. Lutheran Westland also captured its first-ever Metro Con.

For his efforts, Ramthun was named Observer-Lakes Coach of the Year.

"We had good chemistry, a nice balance and blend of guys who worked well together," Ramthun said. "From Day One I knew we had something special. We had good leaders in Brent Habitz, a junior captain, and Luke Kasten. It was a special group, a good year and it was fun to coach these guys."

Ramthun, 38, coached at Detroit Lutheran Westland from 1990-94. He is a graduate of Luther West High School and was a four-year starter, 1,000-point-plus scorer and Concordia College's all-time leader in assists. He later earned a Masters from Eastern Michigan University and was an assistant principal at Lutheran Westland before becoming principal this year at Lutheran South, a new school in the Monroe area.

With the long commute each day, Ramthun is unsure if he'll return next year to coach the Warriors.

"Right now that's up in the air," Ramthun said. "I certainly didn't mind doing it this year."

As for the All-Observer squad, two familiar names lead the first team — Justin Ockerman of Garden City and Matt Mikel of Farmington.

Introducing the All-Area boys basketball team as selected by the Observer sports staff:

ALL-AREA FIRST TEAM

Justin Ockerman, senior, Garden City
 All season long, Garden City coach Greg

BASKETBALL

Williamson would tell people the the Cougars were more than just Ockerman.

Maybe, but the all-Mega Blue selection was one pretty big indispensable part. The 6-10 senior averaged 35 points per game, 10 rebounds per contest and five blocks. He literally carried the team on his back at times, including the Mega Blue-Gold championship game, a district win against Belleville and helped the Cougars catch the regional for the first time since 1985.

"He can run the floor and he has great hands," said Williamson. "His inside game allowed us to do things on the perimeter. It's the best year he's ever had. He came on during the tourney and really played well. I hope he gets the chance to play college basketball, if he decides to go that route (instead of baseball)."

Ryan Celesky, senior, Redford CC: Celesky was the top scorer on one of the area's top teams, as the 6-9 guard averaged 22.5 points per game, hit 61 of 124 3-pointers on the season, averaged 2.4 assists per game and shot 83 percent from the line.

Celesky, an all-Catholic selection, also proved during the year that he was more than just a long-range scorer.

"He stopped being a bomber and really improved his all-around game," said CC coach Rick Coratti. "He added to his game over the summer. He'd take the ball to the basket or pull up and shoot the mid-range jumper. The improvement he made really showed."

Gary Johnson, senior, Wayne: The 6-1 senior point-guard was a two-year starter for the Zebras.

He averaged 17.5 points per game (404 total points in 23 games) and was the team's assist leader averaging six

per game as Wayne finished 12-11 and reached the district finals.

The All-Mega Conference Red Division pick had a career-high 39 points against Plymouth Canton.

"Gary had a great senior year," Wayne first-year coach Wayne Woodard said. "He really bought into the system. What people don't realize is that he's a very good defensive player. He gets his hands on a lot of balls. He covered a lot of the good kids and did a great job, more than held his own."

"I couldn't ask for anything more. He's a great leader and I'll miss him next year."

Junior colleges such as Schoolcraft, Glen Oaks and Kirtland are after Johnson's services.

Joe Ruggiero, senior, Liv. Franklin: The 6-2 senior guard averaged 18.5 points per game and 7.1 rebounds per game.

The All-Western Lakes choice scored in double figures in 20 of 21 games. The lone game he didn't reach double figures he nearly had a triple-double.

Ruggiero shot 45 percent from the field, but was even more adept inside the arc where he used the glass while shooting 53 percent.

"Joe had a tremendous season," Franklin first-year coach John Sarzi said. "There's not many who have come through Franklin with his kind of versatility. Most people were focused their defense on him, but he still got off good shots and took good shots. He was deadly from 12 to 15 feet."

"Joe's a tough competitor and we're certainly going to miss him."

Ruggiero, a first-team All-Observer football pick, will play both baseball and football at Wayne State.

Matt Mikel, senior, Farmington: Mikel was the starting point guard for four years and finished his career as the all-time school leader in assists (237) and

was one of the leading scorers with 945 points.

The 5-foot-11 senior also is Farmington's No. 1 in career steals and free-throw percentage. During his career, the Falcons compiled an overall record of 60-24.

Mikel averaged 13.6 points per game this season with a high game of 22, which he achieved three times.

He scored in double figures in 16 of 22 games while leading Farmington to a second-place finish in the WLLA regular season.

Mikel also had 83 rebounds, 87 assists and 41 steals. He shot 36 percent overall, 31 percent from three-point range and 81 percent at the line (91-of-112).

"He has some pretty impressive individual stats," said his coach and father, Denny Mikel, "but the thing I like most about Matt is he's the ultimate team player."

"He didn't play for stats; he always put the team first. Winning was the most important part for Matt."

"He was coachable and he was a good teammate. I'm really proud of his all-around game and his attitude about basketball."

Mikel has either visited or is considering the possibility of playing college ball at either Siena Heights, Madonna, Rochester, Northwood or Concordia.

ALL-AREA SECOND TEAM

Nate Meckes, senior, Lutheran High: The 6-7, 220-pound senior averaged 12 points, eight rebounds and three blocks per game for the 19-2 Warriors.

Meckes also shot 50 percent from the floor. He is a two-year starter and made All-Metro Conference and honorable mention (Class C) All-State.

Please see ALL-OBSERVER, D7

ALL-OBSERVER BASKETBALL

ALL-AREA BASKETBALL

FIRST TEAM

Justin Ockerman, senior, Garden City
 Ryan Celesky, senior, Catholic Central
 Gary Johnson, senior, Wayne Memorial
 Matt Mikel, senior, Farmington
 Joe Ruggiero, senior, Livonia Franklin

SECOND TEAM

Nate Meckes, senior, Lutheran Westland
 Nick Tochman, senior, Plymouth Salem
 Dan Boulter, junior, Redford St. Agatha
 Colin Szamora, senior, Garden City
 Mark Willoughby, senior, Catholic Central

THIRD TEAM

Jerry Oakes, senior, Plymouth Canton
 David Hopkins, sophomore, Ply. Salem
 George Toles, senior, Bishop Borgias
 Anthony Coratti, senior, Catholic Central
 Earl Brinston, senior, Wayne Memorial

FOURTH TEAM

Paul Anzilone, senior, Plymouth Agape
 Will Pedregosa, senior, Livonia Churchill
 Mike Leach, junior, North Farmington
 Curtis Titman, senior, Farmington
 Josh Meckes, sophomore, Lutheran West.

COACH OF THE YEAR

Dan Ramthun, Lutheran High Westland

HONORABLE MENTION

Stevenson: Lindon Ivaz; Matt Barnick; Franklin Mike Copeland; Chrobot; Kevin Zilinski; Brandon Dzikinski; Chenevieve; Tim Shaw; Adam Carpenter; Scott Winc; Lutheran Westland: Brent Habitz, Luke Kasten; Huron Valley Lutheran: Dave Anderson; Jahn Glenn; Brent Bogie; Michael Gorze; Wayne: Shannon Jeffries; Matt Patterson; Thawson; Joe Wilson; Matt Nowak; Andy Bovee; Redford: Dan Grant; Randall Taylor; Redford CC: Tom Jacecki; Ryan Clark; Farmington: Deren Byrnes; St. Agatha: Chris Meyer; Mike Law; Kenny Smith; Garden City: Brandon Audette, Rick Warnock; Farmington: Jeremy Mares, Mike Grifflie; Brad Baranek; Marquette: Dave Condon; Terrell Mayberry; LaDarius Brown; N. Farmington: Blair Weiss; Lakeshore: Jason Neal, Mike Patterson; Canton: Oliver Wolcott; Andrew Holmes; Salem: Jeff Hearn; Plymouth: Christian; James Boushagh; Clay Walton; Agape Christian: Rob Hough; Josh Anthony.

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