

# Marlins best Blazers in major win



Farmington Hills Mercy's basketball team no doubt got the attention of Catholic League opponents Tuesday. Mercy indicated it plans to be a factor in the Central Division title race by defeating Livonia Ladywood, 57-46.

By DAN O'MEARA  
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A young Farmington Hills Mercy basketball team needed a big win to prove to itself and others it can compete with the best.

The Marlins achieved exactly that Tuesday night when they upset Catholic League rival and perennial power Livonia Ladywood, 57-46.

"Tonight it all came together and we just played great basketball," Mercy coach Kristin Wright-Guinn said. "I'm happy for the players, because they've worked so hard and it finally happened."

"This is my third year coaching at Mercy, and people were saying it's the first time Mercy has beaten Ladywood in four years."

It was the first loss in three Central Division games for the Marlins, who are 6-3 overall. The host Marlins, who start four juniors, are 1-2 and 5-3.

"Mercy wanted it more," Ladywood coach Andrea Gorski said. "They played hard and aggressive, and we didn't have an answer."

"They shot the ball well and they had even scoring. They were well prepared; they outshined us."

Mercy outscored Ladywood in the second quarter, 19-12, and led at halftime, 29-21. The Marlins increased their lead to 46-31 after three periods before the Blazers narrowed the gap by four in the last quarter.

"The girls came out fired up," Wright-Guinn said. "We had a great shooting percentage tonight. We had such great confidence. The girls just came to play. We were up early and kept it going for the rest of the game."

Deidre Jones scored 12 points and had nine rebounds to lead Mercy, which was 19-of-24 shooting free throws.

Barb Maczka and Alexandria Mar-

shall tossed in 10 points apiece and Whitney Johnson seven. Maczka also had six rebounds and four assists, Marshall three steals.

"Alex Marshall got us going," Wright-Guinn said. "She was driving to the basket and the shots were going in. The team carried it on through."

"They're gaining their confidence. They're great athletes; they were just lacking confidence. Now they've gained it."

Ladywood's leading scorer was Ruth Sventickas with 14 points. Six-foot center Liz Obrecht added 12 and Lauren Hesano eight. The Blazers made 10 of 16 free throws.

"Early in the fourth, Ladywood hit a couple shots and gained a little momentum," Wright-Guinn said. "They tried to go inside to the big girl. We were just able to withstand that."

Tessa Kuykendall and Megan Gargiola stepped up and played good defense against her and made it difficult for her to score."

## Falcons defuse Rockets

Farmington High moved above .500 in girls basketball Tuesday by defeating the visiting Westland John Glenn Rockets, 67-55.

Brittany Coleman and Julie Kimmel combined for 42 points to pace the Falcons, who are 4-3 overall and 2-2 in the Western Lakes Activities Association.

Coleman scored 22 points and Kimmel, who also had 16 rebounds, 20. Jarin Atkins added six points and 10 rebounds; Deanna Gauer had nine rebounds.

Farmington led at halftime, 32-29, and outscored Glenn by eight in the third quarter to increase its advantage to 63-42.

The Falcons, who led by as many as



Jones plays pivotal role: Deidre Jones scored 12 points and had nine rebounds in Mercy's 57-46 win over Livonia Ladywood.

## Whalers have winning start in new era

By ED WRIGHT  
STAFF WRITER

Many things changed for the Plymouth Whalers during this past off-season, but one thing remained the same during Saturday night's season opener against Owen Sound — the scoreboard.

Playing with several new players at key positions and a new coaching staff behind the bench, the Whalers looked very similar to the teams that dominated the Ontario Hockey League's Western Conference the past two years, outskating the Attack 6-4.

The game was delayed a week due to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C.

"I thought the guys gave a great effort," new coach Mike Vellucci said. "It's always nice to win the opener, especially when you have a lot of new players like we have this year. I thought our first-

## JUNIOR HOCKEY

year players did a nice job and our veteran players did a solid job as well."

Probably the most notable change this year for the Whalers is in front of the net, where 19-year-old goalie Jason Bacashihua (pronounced Bu-cash-i-hu) is taking over for standout Rob Zepp.

Bacashihua, who was in goal for the Dallas Stars NHL team in an exhibition game five nights earlier, showed flashes of brilliance while stopping 23 of 27 Attack shots.

"I don't really think about taking over for Rob, I just go out and play my own game," said Bacashihua, a native of Dearborn. "I let in a couple of rebound shots tonight, but overall, I thought I did all right."

Bacashihua shined in the third period when he

stopped 14-of-15 Attack shots.

The Whalers also played without last year's leading scorer, Stephen Weiss, who is still battling in the Florida Panthers' training camp for a spot on the NHL team's opening-day roster.

Veteran center George Nistas scored the first goal of the season for the Whalers when his slap shot from just inside the blue line beat Owen Sound goalie Justin Day less than three minutes into the game. Nistas was assisted by 17-year-old first-year player Tim Sestito and Mike Smith.

Owen Sound tied the game 17 seconds later when the Attack's Tom Znoski slipped the puck past Bacashihua from close range.

The Seattle-Smith-Nistas line struck again on a power play at the 9:41 mark when Sestito scored his first OHL goal after taking a feed from Nistas.

After the Attack tied the game at 2-2, Plymouth's

Please see WHALERS, D3

## Rice coach nears career victory record



They call him coach: Brother Rice coach Al Fracassa (right) is pictured with three former star players who are now assistant coaches on his varsity staff — Steve Morrison (left), Jay Sofran (center) and Mike Lodish (rear).

## Warriors defeat Shamrocks in Boys Bowl thriller, 21-14

By MARTY BUDNER  
STAFF WRITER

Al Fracassa is on the brink of becoming the state's all-time winningest football coach.

With a thrilling 21-14 victory over arch-rival Catholic Central in the Boys Bowl Sunday, the veteran Brother Rice coach registered his 308th career victory.

Fracassa owns a 308-90-4 record and is tied with former Saginaw Novell Catholic Central coach Leo "Smoky" Boyd for most career wins in Michigan.

The Warriors can help Fracassa reach the record 309th victory Saturday in a non-league game against Detroit Country Day on the Yellow Jackets' home field.

In a bit of irony, DCD head coach Dan MacLean, who played for Fracassa in the mid '70s, will attempt to keep his former mentor from reaching that milestone. Fracassa knows the record will be tough to set against a formidable Country Day team (4-1).

"I know Dan is going to do everything he can to try and prevent me

## FOOTBALL

from getting it," Fracassa said. "I think it will be very hard to beat Country Day. They have some great talent. They really beat up on Novell Catholic (a 37-0 victory on Saturday)."

Fracassa, whose 42-year coaching career includes stops at just two schools (Royal Oak Shrine and Rice), admits he's a bit surprised he's so close to the record just half way into the season.

The Warriors lost 39 players from last year's Division 2 state championship team and entered this fall with a very young lineup.

Undeclared Rice (4-0) has won with an offense that is steadily improving and an opportunistic defense.

Fracassa says his four senior captains — Pat Lynch, Ryan Brittain, Sean Williamson and Ross Ryan — have played very important leadership roles. Fracassa believes it's that winning

Please see FRACASSA, D3

## FARMINGTON HILLS SPORTS SCENE

### NFHS breakfast, sale

The North Farmington High School girls and boys basketball teams and cheerleaders will have a pancake breakfast and harvest sale Saturday, Sept. 29.

The event takes place in the school cafeteria from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Tickets are \$5 apiece and will be available at the door.

The harvest sale items include corn stalks, pumpkins and hay bales, etc.

### Densmore leads Albion

Sophomore Lindsey Densmore (Farmington Hills Mercy) led the Albion College women's golf team to its third match win of the year in five outings.

Densmore's 85 placed her second in the individual standings. Freshman teammate Lindsey Drewes (Rochester Adams) was fifth with an 87.

Albion's team total of 350 was four strokes better than Alma and St. Mary's College, which tied for second place in the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association match at Lenawee Country Club.

The Britons will attempt to defend their two-year hold on the MIAA championship at the league meet Friday and Saturday at the Brookwood Golf Course in Buchanan.

Albion's women won the MIAA Team Academic Award, carrying a 3.5 grade-point average for the 2000-2001 school year.

Densmore received individual MIAA academic honors with a 3.7 grade point for her freshman year while earning a varsity letter.

### Twisters defeat Rage

The Michigan Twisters retained their spot as the top team in the Lakeshore Football League's Northern Division with a 17-13 win over the host Battle Creek Rage Saturday.

A 39-yard field goal by Chuck Pettipas gave the Twisters a 3-0 first-period lead, but it didn't last. Early in the second period, Rage quarterback Tim Kubiak connected with Eric Gauer, on an 84-yard touchdown pass.

The Twisters (7-1) replied with a 1-yard touchdown run by Jason Gibson for a 10-7 Twister lead. Gibson finished the game with 104 rushing yards on 19 carries.

The Twisters increased their lead to 17-7 on a 23-yard Rob Elswick-to-Reggie Brandon (Wayne) pass play. Kubiak's 42-yard TD toss to Don Lonsaway pulled the Rage within 17-13. Aaron Brothers blocked the extra point.

Although Kubiak did bury the Twisters with two long passes, he completed just 11 of 43 for 286 yards.

Other offensive leaders for the Twisters were Donti Hamilton with four receptions for 59 yards and Frank Nicorommi (Farmington) with three catches for 47 yards.

### Whaler fans generous

At their season-opener Saturday against the Owen Sound Attack, fans of the host Plymouth Whalers contributed \$4,179.64 to the New York Firefighters Disaster Relief Fund as part of an Ontario Hockey League effort to raise money for the victims of the terrorist attacks.

"The Plymouth Whalers and the Ontario Hockey League would like to thank all of our fans for their generous support and donations," said Whalers general manager and coach Mike Vellucci. "We always knew we had great fans, and judging by their support this past weekend, we can say we have the best fans around."

### Hawks edge Chargers

Farmington Harrison had a close match turn in its favor Tuesday when it defeated Livonia Churchill in boys golf at San Marino, 158-169.

Matt Lee shot 38 and Dave Koch 39 to lead the Hawks, who are 3-4. John Kiuka had 40 and Junichi Miura 41.

Churchill had the match medalist in Kevin Kasten, who shot 38. Steve Robinson had 39, Scott Cudrowski 40 and two were tied at 44.

"We've been playing well all season, and we finally got a close score in our favor," Harrison coach Bill Spencer said.

### Blues baseball tryout

The South Farmington Blues will have tryouts for their 14-and-under travel baseball team on Saturday, Sept. 29. For more information call (248) 477-3523.