

FARMINGTON —
FARMINGTON HILLS
SPORTS
SCENE

Wolves win under-17 Cup

Farmington High School forward Matt Konopinski is a member of the under-17 Wolves soccer team that captured the Champions Cup March 23 in Delaware, Ohio, with a double-overtime, 3-2 victory against the Cleveland Internationals.

The Wolves, coached by Lara Richters and assisted by Kevin Thalloway, also defeated the Ohio Thunder, 1-0, tied Syracuse, N.Y., 0-0, and downed the Reading Soccer Club, 2-0. J.T. Katuska (Livonia) of the Wolves took MVP honors.

Other members of the Wolves are Nic Djokic and Paul Johnson of Livonia; Brian Emrick, Westland; Brian Popeney, Canton; Jason Tillman, Brighton; Mike Borowiak, Fraser; Steve Hirshey, Troy; Pat Kelleher, Northville; Alan Hodeler, Novi; Ryan Bennett, Ann Arbor; David Williams, Southfield; Brady Vance, Traverse City; Steve Hecker, Portage; Bain Rumohr, Mason; and John Pizanis, East Lansing.

Konopinski was the leading scorer as a junior last fall on the Farmington team that won the Division II state runner-up. He made the All-Observer first team after scoring 24 goals and assisting on 11 others.

Whalers still playing

The season is over for the Plymouth Whalers as a team, but a few of them are still playing.

Goalie Jason Bacashihua, forward Damian Surma and defenseman Libor Ustrnul have been assigned by their NHL clubs to play for their AHL affiliates.

Bacashihua, drafted in the first round last year by the Dallas Stars, will report to the Utah Grizzlies. He had the second-most goals-against average in the OHL this season at 2.34 and led the league in shutouts with five. He posted a 26-12-7 record with a .921 save percentage.

Surma finished his career with the Whalers as their seventh-leading scorer with 105 goals and 120 assists in 241 games.

A sixth-round pick of the Carolina Hurricanes in 1999, Surma signed a contract with the Hurricanes last year and started the season with their AHL team, the Lowell Lock Monsters before returning to play 55 games for the Whalers. He scored 28 goals and had 27 assists for Plymouth before returning to Lowell Lock this week. Ustrnul had one goal and eight assists with a plus-35 rating. A second-round selection of the Atlanta Thrashers in 2000, Ustrnul will report to their AHL team, the Chicago Wolves.

Callahan stars for Albion

Albion College senior hurdler Josh Callahan of Farmington Hills (North Farmington) earned an individual championship for the Britons March 30 at the University of Indianapolis Invitational, winning the 110-meter high hurdles with a time of 15.55 seconds.

The Britons competed well against NCAA Division II and III programs from Ohio, Michigan and Indiana, finishing third in the team standings with 66 points. Indianapolis won the team title with 145 points followed by DePauw University with 82 points.

Lady Raiders sweep pair

Oakland Community College began conference play Thursday by sweeping a softball doubleheader from visiting Delta College, 7-1 and 11-0.

Kelly Nilson and Lindsay Bzdek combined on a two-hitter in the opener. Nilson pitched the first six innings, striking out seven and walking three. Bzdek worked a hitless seventh. OCC had 10 hits off Delta pitcher Stacey Behmlander. Toni Salo, Emily Bell and Kasey DeSutter were 2-for-3 for the Lady Raiders. Bell drove in two runs; Kristie Richmond, Jenna Little and Jackie Popinski had one RBI apiece.

The second game was a five-inning mercy. Kristi Marzalet pitched four innings for the win, allowing four hits but no walks. Bzdek worked a hitless final inning again.

The Lady Raiders had 11 of their 12 hits off Delta starter Jelene Lary in 2.2 innings. Salo was 3-for-4, and Leanne Peters, Little and Theresa Flowers had two hits each. Flowers also batted in three runs. Little and Bell two apiece. Richmond, Peters and Lindsay Garland had single RBIs.

OCC is 2-0 in the Eastern Conference of the MCCA and 7-6 overall. Delta is 0-2 and 4-10.

Mercy fields talented team again
Marlins can challenge
for state softball crownBY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

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Maybe this will be the year Farmington Hills Mercy gets to the state championship game in softball.

The Marlins hope to play one more game in the tournament after reaching the Division I semifinals the last two years and losing each time by a run.

Furthermore, maybe this will be the year Mercy finally wins it all!

With virtually their entire team returning, the Marlins certainly have the talent and ability to make that happen in 2002.

"There are a lot of good teams out there," Mercy coach Jack Falvo said. "For us to make it to the finals, we have to go through some quality players and teams in this area."

"You have to be a little lucky and a little good to get that far. We can do it as well as anybody else, but a lot of things have to go our way to achieve it."

After posting a 35-8 record last year, the Marlins enter the season as the No. 2-ranked team in Division I. Defending state champion Portage Northern is at the top of the list.

Mercy lost to Waterford Kettering in the semis last year, 2-1, in eight innings, and Portage Northern dealt Mercy a 1-0 defeat the previous year.

"We're honored to be thought of so highly, but the season hasn't even started yet and this team hasn't proven anything yet," Falvo said.

"It's a great starting point, but the team knows it has to work hard to maintain that, and where we start really doesn't matter. It's where we finish (that does)."

Among its returning players, Mercy



Jack Falvo
"For us to make it to the finals, we have to go through some quality players and teams in this area."

PREVIEW

has one of the state's best pitchers in senior Megan Fediuk, who was 23-4 with 13 shutouts and an earned run average of 0.62.

Fediuk, who has amazing control, struck out 201 while walking just nine in 168.2 innings. Her record over the last two seasons is 39-9 with 327 strikeouts.

"Megan is one of the most focused, hard-working people around," Falvo said. "She's a very intense competitor. She's a real joy to coach. When you have a player like that, it sure makes everybody else that much better."

Seniors Molly O'Malley and Rachel Del Corvo and junior Lauren Mydlowski will do some pitching, as will freshman Dana Franz, who led Farmington Hills St. Fabian to the CYO championship last year.

"Our intention is to keep Megan as fresh as we can through the course of the season," Falvo said.

"We feel Dana is going to push all the pitchers in our program for the No. 1 spot next year. We'll bring her along slowly. By May she could be a key member of our pitching rotation."

Senior Holly Van Cleave was the starting catcher last year, but Falvo is thinking about moving senior Lindsey Fediuk from center field to catcher and Van Cleave to the outfield.

"The biggest reason is Lindsey has a little stronger arm, but Holly is a very good receiver," Falvo said. "Both have assets we like, and we might rotate them."

"This year we're blessed with a lot of versatile players. We haven't settled on a defensive lineup, but I am comfortable and confident we have players who can play in a variety of places."

O'Malley and junior second baseman Anna Schneider were first-team All-Observer players along with Megan Fediuk.

As the leadoff batter, O'Malley hit .411 with 63 hits and led the team in runs scored with 38. She had just 16 strikeouts in 129 at-bats.

"We look for Molly to be that person

Please see MERCY, B3



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DUNKER

All-area pitcher: Mercy senior Megan Fediuk has 39 wins over the last two seasons and is a two-time, All-Observer player.

Hawks eye 4th straight league title

BY DAN O'MEARA

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There very likely could be another Western Lakes Activities Association baseball championship card for Farmington Harrison this year.

The Hawks, who have won 13 of 14 straight and five of the last seven titles, have the talent to

Drew Stanton
all-state shortstop

do it again in their final season in the WLA.

"We should be a good ballclub, no question about it," coach John Herrington said. "We're looking forward to starting the season next week."

Harrison will be led by senior all-state shortstop Drew Stanton, who has signed to play football at Michigan State but might have a Major League Baseball offer to consider, too.

"It's going to be hard to match .500 but, if anybody can do it, I think he can," Herrington said. "He'll bat in the No. 3 spot in the order, and he runs the bases real well. I think he'll be drafted by a professional baseball team."

Stanton set single-season school records for batting average, hits (51) and RBI (48). His hits included 12 dou-

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bles, three triples and three home runs, and he also scored 36 runs.

With the graduation of all-area pitcher Matt Zatklin, Herrington plans to use Stanton, who worked just 16 innings and had a 1-0 record last season, on the mound more this year, too.

The Hawks will have a solid pitching staff with the return of senior Rob Whipple and juniors Andy Wingert and Mike Sacha. All are right-handed pitchers, including Stanton.

Whipple was 7-2 with a 2.24 earned run average, 47 strikeouts and 11 walks in 43.2 innings. Wingert had a 2-3 record and pitched just 21 innings, but he had a 1.33 ERA and his strikeouts-to-walks ratio was 3.5-to-1.

Sacha did little pitching last year, but Herrington expects him to play a bigger role.

"I think that's four very capable

starters," Herrington said. "We also have Nick Vitonis as a relief pitcher. I think the pitching staff will be strong. I think Drew will be quite a force on the mound for us."

Junior Kevin Zerbo, a second-team, all-area catcher, won't be behind the plate this year due to a knee injury he suffered in football season.

He will play baseball but will see action at either first base, the outfield or the designated hitter position. Zerbo hit .409 with six doubles and three home runs.

The catching job is a three-way battle between senior Bill Richeson, junior Micah DeMeyer and senior Jason Block. Richeson is a returning varsity player; DeMeyer was on the JV, and Block is a transfer from Milford, Ohio.

"All three have certain strengths,"

Please see HAWKS, C2

Early win boosts Farmington's outlook

BY DAN O'MEARA

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There's nothing like a come-from-behind victory in the season opener to build team confidence for the upcoming campaign.

That's what coach John Fillion's Farmington United boys lacrosse squad did March 19 when it defeated Orchard Lake St. Mary's in its first game, 13-12.

"We were not expected to win that game," Fillion said. "Nobody believed we would win. St. Mary's is supposed to be a pretty good team with a solid program."

Farmington was down two goals with a minute remaining, but it rallied to win with three straight goals by juniors Jeff Toscani, Vince D'Angelo and Mike Landsberg.

Landsberg, the only new member of the varsity this year, is quite an addition; he scored five goals and had one assist in the St. Mary's game.

The remainder of the team's 24-man roster consists of returning players from a winning team, which bodes well for Farmington this year.

"I feel very confident with these guys; I believe they're up to the challenge," Fillion said. "I expect to have a very successful season."

Farmington lost its leading scorer to graduation in

BOYS LACROSSE

"I feel very confident with these guys; I believe they're up to the challenge. I expect to have a very successful season."

John Fillion
—Farmington United coach

Brian Kozanec, who scored 50-plus goals in each of the last two seasons.

But it's unreasonable to expect anyone to match those numbers, Fillion said, since Farmington has a lot of new, bigger-school opponents on its schedule this year.

"We won't have as many blowouts," Fillion said. "Games will be tighter like the one with St. Mary's."

Farmington is still in Division C of the Michigan Scholastic Lacrosse Association, but the league has realigned itself based on enrollment instead of the years each program has been in existence.

"Last year we were defined by experience level," Fillion said. "This year we're defined by the size of the

program or the number of kids we can draw from, like the MHSAA. We're trying to be more in line with the MHSAA, because we're trying to be part of their program, also."

"You play better if you're playing against better teams," he added. "The level of play comes up, because the competition is better. Last year we kinda dominated teams except for Rockford and Waterford, who also are moving up this year."

Farmington's starting attackers are the three who scored the last three goals against St. Mary's. Toscani and D'Angelo had two goals apiece in that game; Toscani, one of four captains, also had two assists.

Three midfielders can play at one time, but Fillion has an offensive line consisting of juniors Mike Haas (captain) and Matt Balla and sophomore Mike Murphy and a defense-oriented group that includes senior captain Chris Kuclo and juniors Brandon Thompson and Kyle Hart.

Kuclo, Thompson, Haas and Balla scored one goal each in the season opener.

The defenders in the first unit will be seniors Brian Doughty (captain), Paul Hart and Mike Kloosterman. Junior goalie Joel Rosen replaces two-year starter Francois Berranen, who graduated.

"(Rosen) had a spectacular second half," Fillion said, referring to the St. Mary's game. "He kept us in the