

Sidelines

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Falcons prepare for Division I challenges

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Coach Luke Juncaj and the athletes on the Farmington High boys soccer team are prepared to deal with some difficult and challenging situations this year.

The Falcons, according to Juncaj, have steeled themselves to the fact they'll be playing in Division I of the Oakland Activities Association and Division I for

the post-season state tournament, too. "We're going to have a (good) team," Juncaj said. "We're going to be competitive against anybody this year. I know we're going to do fine."

The Farmington soccer team views the switch to the OAA from the Western Lakes Activities Association as a lateral move since it will still be competing against larger schools.

Farmington has an enrollment of less

than 1,300 students while most of the schools in the OAA Division I for boys soccer have approximately 2,000 each.

The other teams are Troy, Rochester Adams, Troy Athens, Rochester, Clarkston and Royal Oak Kimball.

The criteria for determining the division in which a team is placed is a combination of enrollment and quality of program.

Farmington had a record of 18-4-2 a year ago and fared well in the Division II

state tournament the last two. The Falcons were runners-up last year and semifinalists the previous year.

Among fall sports teams, the only other Farmington schools in the OAA Division I are Harrison football and North Farmington girls tennis and swimming. None are in Division IV.

What makes the situation worse for his team, according to Juncaj, is the Falcons

PLEASE SEE FALCONS, C6

Farmington has another strong team

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

There's no doubt Farmington High will field a quality team for the 2002 boys soccer season.

Duplicating last year's 18-4-2 record will be a little harder to do, and it will be more difficult to make another run at a state title.

But, if the Falcons ever had the team to compete in Division I of the Oakland Activities Association and Division I of the state tournament, it appears this is the year.

Farmington returns 12 players, including nine of 11 starters, from last year's team that was the state runner-up in Division II.

"I believe this is the best team I've ever coached at Farmington," said coach Luke Juncaj, who begins his 12th season.

"It's a very balanced team. We have excellent players on defense, in the middle and up front. We have speed and skill."

"We have a striker who can score goals when we need one really bad. We have people in the back who will be able to stop whatever kind of competition we face."

The Falcons have a first-rate offensive threat in senior forward Matt Konopinski, an All-Observer and first-team, all-state player in Division II.

A four-year starter, he scored 24 goals and assisted on 11 others to lead Farmington in scoring last season.

"He has to be one of the top forwards in the whole state," Juncaj said. "He's fast and he can beat people; he can finish and score goals."

"There are going to be a lot of close games this year, and he's going to have to come through for us and get those goals that put us over."

Forward Nate Meyer was one of the two starters who graduated; the other was All-Observer defender Nick Ramirez. Taking Meyer's place



BILL BRESLER / OBSERVER

Senior Matt Konopinski uses his body to control the ball in last year's Division II soccer state final against Grand Rapids Christian. He scored 24 goals and had 11 assists last season.

PLEASE SEE FARMINGTON, C5

Hawks have solid start to season

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Harrison continued its strong start in the sport of boys golf Friday with a second-place finish in the West Bloomfield Invitational.

Troy won the 12-team event at Kensington Golf Course with a 308 total. Harrison, which won the annual city tournament on Wednesday, posted a 319 and West Bloomfield a 317.

"We seem to have the six (players) right now who are playing very well," Harrison coach Bill Spencer said. "They're off to a good start and it's just a matter of keeping that momentum going."

"I think we had the capability, but we were unknown quantity going into the season."

"When you get a 314, you're averaging 78.6 for four guys. That's good. If you can make a few improvements here and there, something good could happen in the season."

David Koch had a second-straight solid round for the Hawks, shooting a team-leading 75 to tie for fourth place overall.

Harrison's Chris Fitzgerald shot 78, Paul Mazanka 80, Danny Doig 81, Eddie Bellamy 82 and Matt Kjolhede 87.

"I think we did a good job; we had a lot of balance," Spencer said. "We had a chance at the end. We knew it was slim. One of their (Troy) players came in with a 78 and knocked out a high score."

PLEASE SEE HAWKS, C3

It's tee time for new golf season

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

After a 23-year interval between appearances in the state finals, Farmington Harrison qualified for the Division II boys golf tournament last year.

Three seasoned players return from that team, giving the Hawks a nucleus around which they hope to build another qualifier.

Junior David Koch and seniors Chris Fitzgerald and Matt Kjolhede were regular players last season along with four who graduated. Harrison lost four-year standout Matt Lee, Jun Shi Mura, John Kukla and Joey Graves.

Koch, who shot even-par 72 in the rain Wednesday to earn medalist honors in the annual city tournament at Huron Meadows, averaged 49.9 strokes for nine holes and 82 in tournaments.

"He'll be the No. 1 golfer," veteran Harrison coach Bill Spencer said. "He's done a very nice job over three years, and he played a lot of tournaments this summer."

"He liked the shorter courses, but he realized to get better he'd

have to play the longer courses and he made it a point to do that."

Gerald averaged 41.8 last season and Kjolhede, who had a fine round of 76 in the city meet, 42.3. Spencer expects both to be solid, consistent players this year.

"They're going to have to reach that potential," Spencer said. "That's what you're expected to do when you're a senior."

Spencer refers to seniors Danny Doig, John Kukla and Eddie Bellamy and sophomore Paul Mazanka as The X Factor, because he needs one of their scores to fill the No. 4 spot.

Doig, who played in seven varsity matches, averaged 43.3 in competitive rounds that included some JV contests. Bellamy averaged 45.5 and Mazanka 47.4.

"We need one, maybe two, to be a factor," Spencer said. "If one, two and three do the job, which they do most of the time, then four, five and six win the match for you."

"If they shoot well, you have a good chance of winning the match; if they don't, guess what?"

PLEASE SEE GOLF, C3

Shamrocks anticipate good year

BY BRAD MONASTIERI
STAFF WRITER

This could be the year.

After a tough finish to a solid season in 2001, the Catholic Central boys golf team is loaded with terrific veterans and one newcomer who could make a big splash in his first season of high school competition.

Coach Bill Hayes didn't shy away from setting high expectations for his team.

"We should be very good," Hayes said. "We didn't play well at regionals last year, but we've got quite a few kids back this year and we're looking forward to a very successful season."

Warren DeLaSalle is the defending Catholic League champion, while CC compiled a 9-4 dual match record last season.

Leading the returning players is senior captain Tristan Lester, who

PLEASE SEE SHAMROCKS, C3

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