

Raiders build OAA hopes around veteran guard duo

BY DAN O'NEARA
STAFF WRITER

The focal point of this year's North Farmington girls basketball team will be a pair of veteran guards.

Seniors Christy Stockton and Jehan Hindo are the lone returning starters for the Raiders, who had an 8-13 record.

Stockton was named all-Lakes Division in the Western Lakes Activities Association after averaging seven points and four steals.

"If there's any place you want a veteran, it's at point guard, and she has just continued to improve," coach Tim Carruthers said.

"We feel real comfortable with her running the point and getting us into our sets. She's going to be a leader for us."

Hindo is the only four-year

varsity player and the team's most experienced member. She'll play the No. 2 position and be the backup point person. "We're going to be a more guard-oriented team with those two seniors back," Carruthers said, noting the Raiders lost post players Meghan Callahan and Catherine Audette to graduation.

North also lost guards Jennifer Jary and Tina Frank, and senior forward Lindsey Hirzel decided not to play basketball this year.

The Raiders have a post player with potential in 6-foot-1 junior Kristen McElean, who was on the varsity last year and had playing time behind Callahan and Audette.

"She'll get the bulk of the work in the post," Carruthers said. "She has great size, a good wing span and long arms. She's still working to become a good

post player, but she works hard at it."

The fourth starter will 5-8 junior wing Brittany Palewski, another returning varsity player and the best pure shooter on the team, according to Carruthers.

"Christy can shoot the ball, too, but Brittany is a spot-up shooter," he said. "We're really hoping she's the one who makes the biggest step. She played very hard in the preseason, and she has improved since last year."

Senior guard Kuja Sheth also returns, and 5-9 sophomore forward Jamie Hirzel split time between the JV and varsity.

Freshmen Erin Doig, a 5-7 guard, and Alexis Clayton, 5-8 post who can also play guard, could end up playing key roles, too.

The varsity roster includes 5-7 junior Julie Mattara, 5-8 sen-

ior forward Sachiyi Hase and 5-5 junior guard Megan King. All three were on the JV last year.

"I think we'll be a good defensive team," Carruthers said. "The girls work hard on the press, and we're going to do that for 32 minutes."

"We'll try to shut people down and be aggressive with our defense. We need to hold

people down (offensively), because we're not going to be a great scoring team."

"We don't have the one kid who's going to score a ton for us. We have to be balanced and the defense needs to create scoring opportunities for us."

The Raiders, who start tonight at home against Milford, will be in Division II of the Oakland Activities Association.

"It's going to be a great challenge for us," Carruthers said. "There are great players in this division and some excellent teams."

"Our goal is to outwork people. If we leave it on the floor, no matter what the score, we're going to be satisfied."

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HAWKS

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and we have the strong full-court game. So it will be interesting."

Athens and Avondale were engaged in a see-saw battle through the first 10 minutes of their game. Each team held a couple of early leads, but the action was tied 14-14 with six minutes remaining before halftime.

The Red Hawks, members of OAA Division I, then went on a 9-3 run to take a 23-17 half-time lead. Avondale never regained the lead after that, but attempted a comeback beginning the second half.

Athens led 31-26 when freshman center Blanca Williams went to the line midway through the third quarter. She made the first shot, missed the second, but the Red Hawks controlled the rebound and junior guard Lyndsey Norman eventually snapped in a three-point shot for a 35-26 lead.

Avondale, an OAA Division III member, never got closer than eight points the rest of the way.

"Avondale's a nice team, but I think we were able to wear

them down," said Clinton. "We ran some full court pressure. We were able to get a couple runs on them and that was the difference."

Norman led Athens with 13 points while junior post player Rachel Brocker had nine points and a team-high 11 rebounds. Erin Mulligan, Allison Bullard and Williams scored six points each.

Avondale coach Todd Henderson's team had a balanced effort as nine of the 10 players scored. Patricia Tillman led the way with eight points, followed by Jennifer O'Neill (seven) and Courtney Lewis (six).

Harrison, meanwhile, had little trouble with Farmington. The Hawks led 18-2 after one quarter and managed a strong second-quarter defensive effort to own a 27-3 halftime lead. All of Farmington's first-half points were scored via free throws.

The Falcons outscored the Hawks by a 17-11 second-half margin.

"It was a good start for us. We saw some good things and played a solid first half," Mantyla said.

"We struggled in the second half. Farmington put some

pressure on us, and we didn't respond well to it all the time. But it was good for us to see that, too."

Jessica Condeni had nine points and eight rebounds to lead the Hawks. Karen Ternes scored seven points and Maggie Condeni five.

"I thought they outplayed us in the second half," Mantyla said. "Their zone collapsed on Maggie a lot, and we were pleased to get scoring from a variety of people."

Five different people hit perimeter shots. That's going to be important for us, because people are going to try to take Maggie out of games."

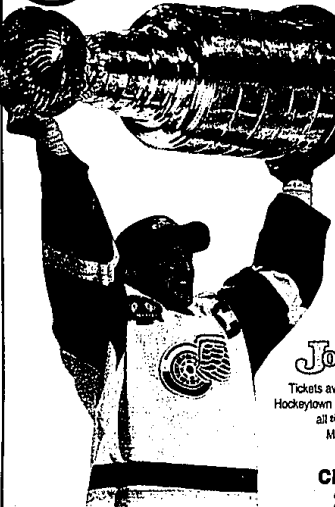
Angie Palanian led Farmington with six points. Coach Greg Ambrose said the Falcons should have switched from a first-half zone defense sooner, but he was pleased with the second-half effort.

"I'm proud of the way they kept fighting," Ambrose said. "There were some jitters tonight. We had three girls on the floor who hadn't played in a varsity game. But we got through it. We found out the basket is still 10 feet tall at both ends. We had a good strong finish."

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