



JOHN STANO/staff photographer

Sure-footed

North Farmington's Dona Kibritle (above) won the balance beam event and tied for first with teammate Kim Edwards in floor exercise to help the Raiders slip past Plymouth Canton in girls' gymnastics last week. For the story of this and other gymnastics meets, turn to Page 2.

Stunner!

North nips Thurston

By Jay Keenan
special writer

The pressure was on. Redford Thurston had its 10-0 record and the lead in the Northwest Suburban League to protect when it traveled to North Farmington Friday.

And the Raiders, a game behind Thurston in the NSL, could not afford a loss to the Eagles on their home court if they had hopes of a league championship.

Predictably, the game went down to the wire before North Farmington emerged with a 52-51 victory.

The Raiders' win, combined with Livonia Franklin's 78-43 triumph over Canton City East Friday, left three teams tied for the league lead. Thurston, North and Franklin all have 4-1 records.

SENIOR BILL GRAVIUS scored the winning points for North, converting two free throws with nine seconds left. Gravius hit nine of 11 from the foul line in the game.

Thurston had another shot at North when Mike Stephen went to the line with two seconds remaining. But Stephen, an 82-percent free throw shooter, missed both chances with an overflow Raider crowd screaming their approval.

"It was a tough loss," said Thurston coach Gary Fralick. "It was probably one of the hardest losses I've ever had."

Thurston was handicapped by the loss of senior forward Tim Fredericks, the Eagles' leading scorer and rebounder (22 points, 17 rebounds per game). Fredericks hurt a knee two weeks ago in practice and hasn't played in three games. The injury was diagnosed as a slight cartilage tear, and Fralick decided not to play him. Fredericks is expected to return Tuesday.

"WITH A PLAYER like Tim out of the lineup, it's got to hurt," Fralick said. "We've won our last two without him, but it's hard to beat a team as good as North on their home court with your best scorer out of the lineup."

Gravius finished with 15 points to lead North. Tom Renard pumped in 14 and Mark Bowditch 11. George Sibel had 20 points for Thurston, with Jim Sibel scoring 11 and Rich Biskner 10.

North scored the first nine points of the game, but Thurston battled back to within two at the half, 26-24.

The second half featured surges by both teams, as first one then the other took sizable leads. The Eagles grabbed a 34-28 advantage midway through the third quarter, but North scored the final 10 points of the period to claim a 38-34 advantage.

THE RAIDERS started the final quarter the way they ended the third, outpacing Thurston 6-2 for a 44-36 lead with 6:15 left. But the Eagles stormed back, pulling to within one (50-49) with 1:12 remaining on two free throws by George Sibel.

North went into a stall, but Jim Sibel stole the ball and passed off to Biskner for the go-ahead basket with 30 seconds left. Thurston held the lead for 21 seconds until Gravius' winning free throws.

"Maybe it was the rebounding advantage that we had on them that did it for us," North coach Ken Dean said.

"We have better ball handlers and passers than we showed tonight. But we got frustrated with them, and they gave us trouble with their presses."

"We're going to have to work a lot harder at handling their press the next time we play them."

HARRISON 65
W.L. WESTERN 61

Farmington Harrison owns first place in the Western Six League thanks to its 65-61 win over Walled Lake Western in a crucial WSL game Friday.

Steve Hollatz, Harrison's 6-foot-4 senior center, had 27 points — four above his season average — to go with his 15 rebounds and four blocked shots.

Gus Kehagias, a 5-10 senior guard, scored 17 points and dished out eight assists. Teammate Pat Oman had 12 points, making good on all six of his floor shots, and six rebounds. Mike Turquist logged nine assists.

Oakley Watkins, a 6-2 junior, led Western (4-6 overall and 301 in the league) with 29 points.

Harrison, now 4-0 in the conference and 9-3 overall, plays next on Tuesday at home against Redford Union.

LIGGETT 63
NORTHWEST 48

Grosse Pointe University Liggett rolled to this easy victory over Farmington Lutheran Northwest in a Michigan Independent Athletic Conference game Friday.

Liggett had two big quarters — the first and third — where it score more than 20 points. Northwest, 1-9 overall, did not have the firepower to stay up with that potent offensive attack.

Liggett held a 33-26 halftime lead, and broke the game open with a 20-5 spurt in the third quarter.

Northwest, 0-5 in the league, was led by Darrall Johnson with 15 points. Mike Aumann had 12 points, and fellow Crusader Paul Goode added 10.

Northwest will host Southfield Christian School Friday.

Area wrestler eyes berth in '84 Olympics

By Jim Hughes
staff writer

Not many wrestlers with a 1-13 record realize the dream of competing in the Olympic Games. But for Mike Johnson, that 1-13 is ancient history.

Johnson, who recorded that abysmal record as a freshman at Troy High School, has come a long way since. His goal: The 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

"My goal is to win the gold medal in the '84 Olympics in L.A.," Johnson said, "but at the time, just making the team has got to be my first step. After I make the team, then I want to win the gold medal."

After his freshman year, things started to look better for Johnson. He was 21-7 as a sophomore, 26-4 as a junior, and won the 155-pound state championship as a senior after he posted a 40-1 record. His prep career was followed by collegiate wrestling at Central Michigan University, but he has opted to train as a Greco-Roman wrestler in lieu of American-style wrestling.

"Greco-Roman is my specialty," the muscular Johnson said. "That's where my success lies. I'm more successful in Greco-Roman; I prefer it to college style."

WHEREAS COLLEGIATE and high school wrestling allows the wrestler to use his arms and legs, Greco-Roman eliminates the use of the legs.

"That's why the American wrestlers are at a disadvantage when they wrestle internationally," Johnson explained. "They're used to using their legs. In Greco-Roman, you have to utilize your upper body."

Although Johnson went to CMU to wrestle, he has "retired" from college wrestling to pursue his dream of wrestling in the Olympic Games. However, he is no stranger to international competition. Johnson, a 21-year-old senior at Central Michigan, traveled with the Junior World team during his freshman year.

Like his high school debut, his international wrestling debut was just as inauspicious. He competed in Sweden with the Junior World team, but lost his first two matches. "It was a learning experience," he says.

However, he did improve with age. In March 1981, Johnson won the 149-pound division at the United States World Federation nationals in Illinois. He defeated Tom Minkel, who made the 1980 United States Olympic Team. In May of that year, Johnson, wrestling at 163 pounds, he won the World University nationals in Lincoln, Neb.

JOHNSON WAS fifth at the World University Games in Rumania, again at 163 pounds. In 1978, he won two gold medals at the National Sports Festival in Colorado Springs.



Mike Johnson
Olympic hopeful

On Jan. 29, he will compete in an international meet in Havana, Cuba.

"All the wrestling I've been doing, and the wrestling I will be doing, will help me make the Olympic team," he said. "The better competition I get, the better I will get."

As far as making the Olympic team, Johnson said his chances are realistic.

"They're very realistic," he said. "I'm considered in the top three nationally in my weight class, and I beat the top guy (Minkel). So it's looking pretty good."

Although Johnson has an enviable record and list of accomplishments, he says it hasn't been easy for him. He said he achieved success through the three "D's."

"Determination, drive and desire — that's what it took," he said. "I really haven't had a lot of natural talent, as seen from my freshman record. What I had, I had to work for. Don Hill (Troy athletic director) has given me a lot of help. I know I have his moral support; he's behind me whether I win or lose."

Lately, there's been more winning than losing. And if he continues to win at the present rate, nobody will believe he was ever 1-13.

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