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Chris McCosky

## This coach is surprise

**T**URNING INTO the snowy, empty parking lot along side of the Farmington Training Center, she became aware of another car following her. The car turned into the same snowy, empty parking lot. She hesitated before exiting her car. A girl can't be too careful these days, especially in a snowy, empty parking lot.

The sportswriter, who was in the other car (they were both going to the Farmington-Livonia Stevenson volleyball game), was aware of the girl's caution.

"There is supposed to be a volleyball game here, isn't there?" said the sportswriter after the girl had gotten out of her car. He figured she was one of the players. He had hoped to rest her fears, if, indeed, she had any.

"I HOPE SO," said the girl, in a surprisingly mature voice, one that didn't fit her youngish appearance.

"Are you a player?"  
"No, I'm the coach."  
"Oh, you must be Kim."

Kim O'Neill is the new varsity volleyball coach at Farmington High. She is an ultra-petite woman of 21 years. Her clothes are stylish, tight cords tucked into her short boots and a glistening, eye-catching top.

Kim O'Neill does not look like a varsity volleyball coach. An unknown spectator entering the Training Center to watch Farmington play would have difficulty distinguishing the coach from the players.

Enter the visiting team from Livonia.

STEVENSON is coached by Leo Cagle. Cagle looks like a volleyball coach — he wears a shirt, tie, sweater, dress slacks. He is, perhaps, in his late 20s, early 30s. He has been very successful in his six years at Stevenson. His team has lost to Farmington only once in that period.

"You know, it's a different ballgame coaching at the varsity level," Cagle said before the game. "You can't be one of the players. You have to be the coach, first. You have to kind of separate yourself from the players and establish your authority, or else you won't get anything accomplished."

O'Neill doesn't buy that philosophy. She believes in being "one of the girls." She believes she can be friend and coach to her players, simultaneously.

"I think you have to be their friend in order to be their coach," O'Neill said. "I want them to know if I have a problem they can talk to me about it. I want to be able to communicate with them both as my players and my friends."

That philosophy bucks accepted tradition. But, it seems to be working for O'Neill.

"OH, YOU wouldn't believe the improvement I've seen. I have eight juniors on this team that played on my JV team last year. That team was something like 4-10. There's been so much improvement. The girls are willing to work hard. They really want to improve," O'Neill said.

An example of how anxious the Falcons are to improve: The Falcons wanted badly to beat Stevenson last Monday. Stevenson is one of the Western Lakes powers. No practice was scheduled over the weekend, so the players asked O'Neill if they could practice on Sunday. That's wanting to win.

Being both coach and friend could present some problems — like discipline. This is another area in which O'Neill veers from coaching tradition.

"I don't yell at my players. As long as they give 100 percent effort and do their best, then I can't ask for anything else. Like tonight, some of the girls were shaking, real nervous, and I just told them, 'Hey, if you lose, you lose. It won't be the end of the world. Just go out there and do your best.'"

"Don't get me wrong, I like to win. It's just that, you have to have fun first."

O'NEILL HAS learned her coaching craft from two successful mentors — Ron Shortt, the former Farmington coach now at Farmington Harrison, and Mike O'Toole from Schoolcraft Community College, who retired after last season.

Though she has taken much from her two mentors, she has also purposely forgotten some of their lessons.

"The girls had some problems with Ron last year," O'Neill said. "I don't know if it was because he was male or what, but the girls really couldn't communicate with him. The girls seem to really open up to me. I think that really helps."

"With Mr. O'Toole, he was too tough and hard to get along with. I learned a lot from him, but I don't want to be the kind of coach who always yells at the players. I think that does more harm than good."

"I can be firm. I mean, the players know when I put my foot down I mean business. They know what I expect out of them. I know Ron Shortt doesn't believe in this, but for me, being their friend helps me be a better coach. We are friends, but they still respect me as a coach. They know who's in charge and if they don't do as I say, then they do lapse or they don't start."

The pretty little girl you see on the volleyball court in the stylish clothes may not look like a varsity coach. But Kim O'Neill is a proof that appearances can indeed be deceiving.

# Spartans' size spikes Falcons



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Jill Waterman rises to her feet and watches as one of her numerous saves sails back over the net. Waterman was everywhere, it seemed, for Farmington, but it wasn't enough to defeat Stevenson Monday night.

By Chris McCosky  
staff writer

For a minute there, it seemed almost possible. It appeared that first-year coach Kim O'Neill's premonition, that her Farmington volleyball team would knock off talented Livonia Stevenson, might come true.

Trailing 2-0 in the first game Monday, Farmington rattled off nine unanswered points, seven in a row via the vicious serves of Laura Varty, and forced Stevenson coach Lee Cagle to call time out.

"I was worried," Cagle said, "but you try not to show it. Since Christmas, we have started real slow. But then we pick up real fast."

Indeed, after the time out, the much taller Stevenson team scored the next 13 points and won the game 15-9.

THE SPARTANS' run seemed to deflate the charged-up Falcons. The second game went to Stevenson 15-7. The two games combined lasted 40 minutes.

"Once we established the net, it made the rest of it a lot easier," Cagle said.

It wasn't difficult to get the net game established. Stevenson starts a front line of 6-foot-1, 6-foot, 5-foot-10 and 5-foot-9 players. Tami Scurot and Lisa Bokovoy combined for 22 spikes in the two games and continually kept the Falcons on the defense through the match.

"Our passing started to go real bad in the second game," O'Neill said. "And they are just so tall, they took the net away. We were having to dig spikes all night. It's tough to get any offense going against them."

But O'Neill said she was pleased with her team's effort.

## volleyball

"It's not like I'm ashamed of my players. They came out all charged up and played real good in the first game. They gave 100 percent and they just got beat. I can't ask anything more from them."

BESIDES THE net play, Cagle got an excellent effort from Kathy Balcoff, who's nine serving points in the first game helped the Spartans overcome the Falcons' early surge. Linda Loeffler, Pam Griffin and Balcoff keyed the net game with outstanding digs and sets.

"Pam and Linda and Kathy really controlled the backcourt for us. They did an outstanding job," Cagle said.

Farmington got strong floor play from Laura Spence, Tara Twomey and Jill Waterman. The two made some spectacular diving saves on Spartan spikes. Unfortunately for the Falcons, the spikes were too fast and frequent to save them all.

"We will play them again," said O'Neill, who hasn't given up on the belief that Farmington can defeat the mighty Spartans. "We have the talent to do it. I think that being tall is an advantage in this game, but I'm a firm believer that you do not have to be tall to be a good volleyball player. Passing is the most important skill and that's what we lacked tonight."

Stevenson (2-0) will host Plymouth Salem on Monday. Farmington (2-1) travels to Canton tonight.

# Austin out, North wins

The North Farmington volleyball team learned something Monday night. It learned that, as much as they would prefer not to, they could win without Amy Austin.

Austin, a potential all-stater, sprained her ankle early in the match against Brighton. Austin was scheduled to have the ankle X-rayed Tuesday.

To the Raiders' rescue came Patti and Mary Kozicki, Julie Pistole and Brooks Landback — and the Raiders prevailed over a talented Brighton team in three games, 15-12, 9-15, 15-13.

"They learned something that I have known about them for a long time," said Raider coach Steve Lubieniecki. "They learned that they are capable of playing good team ball. It's nice to have a player of Amy's ability, but in volleyball, you can't do it with just one player. They found out that they could pull together."

PATTI KOZICKI won the praise of Lubieniecki.

Kozicki's setting proficiency stabilized the Raider attack.

"She really directed the team," Lubieniecki said. "It was a real cliffhanger and a real fun match. We needed her leadership out there."

Pistole came off the bench when Austin went down, and turned in a superb performance. She was a major force at the net both hitting and blocking.

Landback, a junior, came off the bench and didn't miss a serve. She hit effectively, 90 percent successful hits and 40 percent aces.

Mary Kozicki was the Raiders' top hitter. She was successful on 18 of 20 hits and scored six aces.

The match was evenly played throughout the three games. In the third game, Lubieniecki made a pivotal strategy change.

"I saw that they were sitting back on our spikes. So, we decided to go to our off-speed game. Instead of spiking we'd up the ball or have Patti send it across instead of setting it," she said.

# Falcons' upset bid scares the Rocks

By Rich Swenson  
staff writer

When Plymouth Salem's cagers came out in the first quarter against Farmington Tuesday night, they still had plenty of firepower left over from last Friday's impressive 66-57 win over Livonia Stevenson.

But then the bottom fell out and the Rocks had to struggle to earn a 69-54 decision over the 1-5 Falcons. The final score was no indication of how close the game was.

The Rocks roared to an 18-5 first quarter lead after canning seven of its first eight shots, and it looked like the Falcons were going to get blown right out of the gym.

But Farmington, ignited by junior guard Bruce Kratt's seven points, came right back in the second quarter, outscoring the Rocks 21-10 to pull within one at halftime, 28-27.

AND THE ROCKS knew they were in a ball-game.

"They are a much better team than their record indicates," Salem coach Fred Thomann said. "In the second quarter, we tried to do a couple different things defensively. We tried some traps, but they took us out of position. They did a nice job of recognizing our defense — they hit the right spots on the court."

Thomann must have said the right things at halftime, because the Rocks started the second half as they did the first, connecting on four of their first five shots to take control of the game with a 38-29 lead.

Senior Rick Berberet must have been paying special attention. Saddled with four fouls, the bulky 6-foot-6 center poured in five long-range jump shots in a row, and they caught nothing but net. He finished with a game-high 23 points.

"He's been pretty consistent all year," Thomann said. "When he's on balance and he sets up, he's a good shooter."

DESPITE HIS TEAM's poor play in the second quarter, Thomann was satisfied with the Rocks' effort, which gave them their sixth straight win without a loss.

## basketball

"It's difficult for young players to come off an emotional Stevenson game and still play well," he said. "When we jumped out in the first quarter, everything was going our way. But then we lost it. All in all, I'm satisfied with our play."

For Farmington coach Richard Roy, it was another in a series of frustrating losses.

"We were intimidated in the first quarter — we didn't show enough patience," he said. "We played much better defensively in the second quarter that led to some baskets. Our kids don't realize that a lot of points come off playing good defense."

"I told them that Salem would come out fired up in the third quarter," he added. "We started trying to bury it up again. Unfortunately, we ran into a hot shooter (Berberet). I'm not happy to lose, but I was pleased with our effort."

HE ESPECIALLY praised the play of his guards. Senior-Scott Hayash, making his first start in the last couple of games, responded with a team-high 15 points, including 13 in the second half, while backcourt partner Kratt pitched in 12. Forward Tim Carruthers also added 12.

Berberet got plenty of help from his teammates. Guards Jeff Arnold and Mike White contributed 10 points apiece, while Barry Bell and Erich Hartnett each had nine.

Salem outshot Farmington from the field, connecting on a respectable 29 of 55 shots (52 percent). The Falcons managed only 21 of 50 (42 percent).

Farmington won honors from the free throw line, however, hitting an impressive 15 of 21 (72 percent). The Rocks made just over fifty percent (11 of 20).

The Rocks will be put to the test against a tall and physical Northville team tonight. The Mustangs have returned all of its starters from last year.

Things won't get any easier for the Falcons, who meet 6-1 Livonia Churchill.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

CC's John McIntyre scored 23 points, but it was a rough night for him and the Shamrocks.

# CC can't Kolp with red-hot Warriors

By C.J. Rieck  
staff writer

First of all, it was not the kind of basketball game that might have been expected.

But Birmingham Brother Rice-Redford Catholic Central games rarely are. Oh, Rice won Tuesday's contest, which was expected, by a 55-46 count. But the Warriors' victory was not as convincing as what might have been anticipated, nor was it delivered in a logical manner.

After all, Rice had a huge advantage considering CC's starting center, Paul Tavara, stands only 6-foot-1 compared to 6-6 Matt Diggins and 6-7 Jeff Heberhols.

And yet it was the outside shooting of Andy Kolp that won it for the Warriors, who are now 5-1 overall and 3-0 in the Catholic League's Central Division. CC fell to 3-5 overall and 1-2 in the Central Division.

"I THINK WE played very hard but the emotion of these games with Catholic Central got the best of you," said Rice coach Nick Conti. "Offensively, we were playing a little too fast, but we weren't having too much difficulty getting Andy (Kolp) shots."

"We've seen a lot of teams pack their zone defense in against the big men, and at times it's frustrating."