

Wenson, Zang key Falcon 9

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

TONY WENSON'S Farmington baseball team lost six of its nine starters from last year's team that finished a somewhat disappointing 12-9.

But a quick review of the 1984 roster shows that the names, the key names, are the same as last year. Names like Wenson and Zang, for example, will again be counted on to trigger the Falcon attack.

Last year it was Paul Wenson and Dan Zang. This year, it's Joe Bob Wenson and Jim Zang.

"Those two (Joe Bob and Jim) are really fine prospects," said Tony Wenson, Joe Bob's brother who's beginning his fourth year at the helm of the Falcons.

"I expect them to get some All-Overseas recognition this year."

Joe Bob was Farmington's leading batter as a freshman last season and was named second-team All-Area. He hit over .400. He plays second base and

shortstop and will be doing some pitching as well.

ZANG, A junior, hit better than .300 last season. Zang, a speed merchant who may win the 100-yard dash for the track team in addition to baseball, will be the Falcons' catcher.

Neil Davis was last year's starting shortstop. He and first baseman Mike Christensen are the only two seniors on the squad. After that, Wenson is beset with a roster full of inexperience.

"We are very young. And there are many spots still unfilled," said the coach. "Our strengths will be our hitting and our speed. We will rely heavily on our offensive punch and hope the defense can hold out. Our pitching is going to be slow to develop."

Keying the mound corps will be junior left hander Dave Cassaro, who saw limited action last year. Joe Bob Wenson, Davis, and junior Chris Green (brother of former Falcon standout Stacey Green) will also see mound duty.

Wenson said only five spots have been filled. Zang will catch, Christensen will play first, Wenson and Davis will play either second or short depending on who's pitching. Green will play center field and Cassaro will play somewhere in the outfield when he's not on the mound.

Others vying for playing time are juniors Brad Tobin, Mike Pinkerton, and Mike Behrend.

WENSON SAID he is encouraged despite his team's obvious lack of experience and depth.

"There are two things that I have been most impressed with. No. 1 is our conditioning. We have been working out since January and I have never seen a team in as good a shape as we are right now. Also, our hitting has been impressive. This is the best we've looked hitting the ball this early in pre-season. And that's a credit to our conditioning," he said.

One thing teams will have to be wary of is the Falcons' speed. Zang, Wenson, Green and Cassaro "are all burners — and they all have a knack for getting on base."

"We are a real young team," Wenson reiterated. "Still, we have a nucleus to work with. I think we will be a very strong hitting team, but who knows? When the season starts we may get strong pitching and the bats will go silent. You never know with high school baseball."

Some of Farmington's question marks will be tested early. The Falcons are scheduled to play in the West Bloomfield Invitational Saturday and Sunday, along with Farmington Harrison, North Farmington, Catholic Central, Lake Orion, and the defending state champs West Bloomfield.



C.J. Risak

The forgotten study

WHAT WE HAVE here is a prime example of the ol' shuffler.

It's the common, everyday variety used by all sorts of governmental bodies. How it works is simple:

• Complaint arises.

• Media attention makes it an issue.

• Governmental agency is confronted and looks for an "out" — some way to save itself without stirring up further trouble.

• Answer: the government agency placates the complainers and the media by forming a committee to study the matter in detail.

• Time passes. Tempers are tempered. People forget. The government agency waits until the furor is forgotten by the public, then cancels the committee.

It's happened before. It'll happen again.

EXAMPLE: TASK FORCE on Interscholastic Athletics, first appointed by the State Board of Education on Feb. 7, 1978. The Board listed nine charges for the group to address.

Among them were who should rule over interscholastic sports; disciplinary practices in regards to players and the hiring of coaches; pay scales for men's and women's coaches; and the structure of the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA).

The task force did its work, over a full year. Members met monthly as a committee of the whole to discuss what each accomplished in subcommittee labors. By February, 1979, the report was completed — 44 pages worth of hard work by 34 people deeply concerned with the future of interscholastic sports.

The task force presented its prize package to the State Board of Education. The board members listened for a short while, said thank you and moved on to other matters.

CATHY DRITAS served on that task force. Dritas, who serves as athletic director at Bloomfield Hills Academy of the Sacred Heart, remembers the long hours of work, the monthly overnight meetings in Lansing, even the weekend session at Meadow Brook Hall. All were paid for by the state board.

The task force's recommendations included keeping the MHSAA as a governing body, but restructuring it to more fairly represent females; for each school district to conduct a three-year financial study of interscholastic sports (no such comprehensive study had ever been done statewide); to rewrite the MHSAA rules and regulations to include females; to study the impact of splitting seasons (i.e., boys playing basketball in winter, girls in fall); to insure equal opportunity for all athletes, and equal pay for all coaches in comparable sports.

THERE'S SOME IMPORTANT stuff there. Issues that deserve attention, policies that need changing.

Yet very little was done. The MHSAA remains the governing body of interscholastic sports, but it does little to solve key problems. No detailed financial study regarding the expense of interscholastic sports — which might be beneficial when school districts start threatening athletic budget cuts — has ever been encouraged by the MHSAA.

Nor has the MHSAA encouraged a study into coaches' salary, although claims that boys' basketball coaches are paid more than girls' coaches abound.

THE MHSAA DOES have female representation on its 19-member council — Karen Wilkinson and Mary Jason. Two is far from the equal split recommended by the task force.

"It's called a tokenism," Dritas said.

Even the little but important things suggested by the task force — like rewriting the MHSAA rules and regulations to show that girls play sports, too, or for the MHSAA to require more stringent tests for aspiring officials — have been ignored.

"I was so proud of this," Dritas said, glancing through the report. "Why they commissioned us, and spent 'X' amount of money . . . Why? To keep the masses mollified and the malcontents busy. And when the shouting subsided, to do nothing at all."

The State Board of Education did its job well. It protected itself.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Joe Bob Wenson, brother of Farmington baseball coach Tony Wenson, hit better than .400 as a freshman last season. His bat, glove and maybe his arm will be counted on heavily by the Falcons.

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