

Sports

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entertainment, business, classifieds inside



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Chris McCosky

Back to reality and fall sports

DON'T GET me wrong, I like summertime. It's kind of like a mental health period for us sports types. Summertime is much more relaxed around here than in other seasons. We don't have much cause to work until 4 a.m. Summertime gives us a chance to get home and get reacquainted with the wife and family — you know, that type of thing.

But, come Sept. 1, summertime means one thing to me — boredom. Right around this time is when I run fresh out of summertime feature stories. Right around this time I've grown weary of my house chores. And right around this time my wife has had her fill of getting reacquainted. I mean, when she starts saying things like, "Don't you have to cover a football game this weekend?" I know she's had her fill.

Now is the time when thoughts and energies turn to high school sports — our bread and butter at the Observer sports desk. It's time to get back to the realities of this job. Here's a few of the things I'm looking forward to this fall:

• **FARMINGTON HARRISON football.** There's an electricity about Saturday afternoon football at Harrison. If you've been there, you know what I'm talking about. No other area school that I've covered — and this is not a knock on anyone — has it. The fans are unbelievably supportive. The teams are perennially powerful. The coaches are gracious and cooperative, win or lose. There's almost a collegiate atmosphere surrounding Harrison football.

• **Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy basketball.** Mercy is the Harrison of girls hoops. The Mercy program has the same electricity surrounding it that Harrison has. Maybe that's because both are champions.

Things could get pretty dramatic on the girls hoop scene this season, especially from a Catholic League point of view. Mercy coach Larry Baker will put a most awesome team on the floor. Three three-year starters are back: Annette Ruggiero, Amy DeMatteis and Mary Norton. All three played on Baker's 1983 state championship team. Also returning are Bev White, Terri Ford and Sue Scott, heavy contributors on last year's team.

But, as good as Mercy should be, they will have their toughest time ever occupying the Catholic League. Livonia Ladywood, last year's Class B state champ, returns its whole roster. Mercy and Ladywood will probably lock horns three times this year. That series could make the state playoffs seem anti-climactic — well, almost.

• **RAIDERS AND FALCONS.** These two football teams live in the shadow of Farmington Harrison's success. That is unfortunate, of course, but it's also unavoidable.

Yet, both teams will be very interesting to monitor this year.

North Farmington lost a ton to graduation. Most experts feel that Jim O'Leary's team is going to be bottom-rung in the North-east Suburban League this year. I don't agree. I think the Raiders are going to surprise a lot of people. Let's wait and see.

Farmington is kind of an enigma. If you talk to coaches around the league, they say that Farmington has as much talent as anyone. But, if you talk to the Falcons' coach, Don Kulick, you come away feeling the team is doomed for the cellar again.

The Falcons are fighting a tradition of losing. The players are in a situation where they not only have to learn how to play the game, but they must also learn how to win. Turn your head around, the Falcons must believe in themselves. They must go out onto the field with a positive attitude each week. There's only one person who can instill such an attitude and that's Don Kulick.

• **OTHER SPORTS.** Mercy swimmers have their undefeated streak in league dual meets on the line. They haven't been beat in more than 20 years. I just wish that the Marlins, just once, would swim a dual against Livonia Stevenson. Settle this burling question once and for all.

Will Kelly Davidson return to high school tennis this year? The Harrison senior, one of the top amateur players around, hasn't been seen at pre-season practices yet, according to coach Bernie Goldstein.

It'll be interesting to see how North Farmington's young men respond to new soccer coach Cathy Cole. Cole did an outstanding job with the girls' team last spring. Ron Holland deserves a pat on the back for giving Cole the boys' job. Hiring a young woman to coach a boys varsity sport wouldn't have happened five years ago.

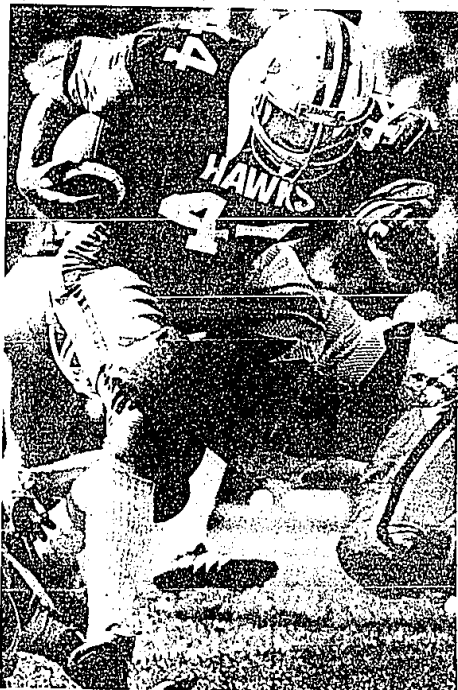
Quick, who was North Farmington's boys soccer coach last year? You have five seconds.

SPEAKING OF coaching changes, Pat Duthie completes his return to the Raider swim program this fall as he replaces Jordan Hatch as the girls' coach. Duthie used to coach both boys and girls at North before he gave them up. He resumed the boys program last winter.

I feel sorry for Hatch. He did a good job at North. But, he was a victim of the rules. The rules state that a qualified coach teaching in the district (Duthie) can bump a non-teaching coach (Hatch) out of the job. Like it or not, fair or unfair, a rule is a rule.

Well, the fall season is just a week away. It's time to put away the shorts and sleeveless shirts and get out the sweaters and cords. Before I put on my cap of objectivity, though, I want to wish all the Farmington teams the best of luck. I wish you all undefeated seasons. And, remember, as my buddy Biting once said, "I'll be watching you."

A special mix of talent, class



Yes, John Miller is finally a senior — much to the delight of opposing coaches. The Farmington Harrison All-American has left his mark both on and off the gridiron.

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

JOHAN MILLER is a senior. The applause you hear is from opposing football coaches across the state, delirious that Miller will finally be gone. The sob you hear are coming from Farmington Harrison head coach John Herrington, who has had the pleasure of coaching Miller the past two years.

You see, Miller has been the most dominating high school football player in this area and probably the state the past two seasons. His statistics overwhelmingly support that claim.

In two seasons, Miller has gained 2,973 yards in 481 carries — that's an average of 6.2 yards a carry. He has scored 42 touchdowns. He's caught 21 passes for 474 yards and three more TDs. In all, he's scored 258 points for Harrison.

And that's just his offensive contribution. On defense, where he plays safety, he's picked off a Harrison-record 15 passes, made 74 solo tackles and 90 assists. And, when Miller hits you, you know you've been hit.

He also punts, averaging 40.7 yards a crack.

MILLER was all-state as a sophomore. He was all-state and All-American in his junior year last year. He's already been named to Street & Smith's pre-season All-American team for 1984. In his three years at Harrison, the Hawks have a 31-2 record and a Class A state championship (in 1982).

It's no wonder that opposing coaches are anxious to see him play college ball.

But, the statistics aren't really what John Miller is all about. In fact, football isn't entirely what John Miller is about.

Without gushing, and it's easy to gush about him, John Miller is as polite, as level-headed, as completely unselfish a young man as you could ever hope to meet.

"There isn't anyone who doesn't like him," Herrington said. "He talks to all the different groups at school. No one is at all jealous of him. If there's anyone who doesn't like him, they won't tell him to his face."

Miller is easy to like. His politeness and gentlemanly conduct are alarming. He is completely unassuming. He talks in terms of the team. He never mentions himself or his accomplishments.

ON the practice field, Miller is in command. He's a senior now and he's anxiously assumed a leadership role. He badgers those who don't give 100 percent effort, he applauds those who do. He enters the junior varsity huddle and pumps up the young Hawks. He finishes first in all the sprint

People in sports

drills — he leads by example. He directs the calisthenics. He is perpetual motion.

This is odd for Miller. In past years, Miller seemed rather shy on the field. He was most effective and most inspirational, but in a quiet way.

There is a calm in Miller's eyes this year. You sense that this year will be a big year, not just for him, but for the team.

"That loss last year (13-12 to Livonia Churchill) is something I'm really sorry for. I'm sorry for last year's team," Miller said. "But, that loss really helped this year's team."

Miller said that, as a result of last year's loss, the 1984 Hawks are hungrier. Their pre-season practices have been awesome.

"If we had gone undefeated last year we'd have a 35-game winning streak, or something like that, on the line and three straight state championships. Now, we have a two-game winning streak. There's no pressure. It's like we have to prove ourselves all over again. Our practices have been great. Everyone is going all out. Everyone wants to win real bad," Miller said.

MILLER HAS accomplished in two years what very few players have in a full career. Yet, he is entering into his third varsity season with the enthusiasm of a sophomore.

"I can't wait to start," he said. "We've got a special thing on this team this year, I don't even know if the coaches know about this. But, we are all brothers on the field. And it's helped a lot. Nobody is out for themselves. Everyone is out there trying to help the team."

Brothers have always been a big part of Miller's life. Miller has three older brothers, Bob (38), Jim (32) and Bill (30). All three were all-league standouts at Harrison. Bob went on to be a three-year starter at Central Michigan University.

Those close to the Millers, and even Mr. and Mrs. Miller (Larry and Nancy), say that John's older brothers are responsible for keeping his head on straight through all the glory days.

"My brothers made sure nothing got out of hand," John said.

He also credited Herrington. "Playing on this team has been great. I've seen some teams where

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Talent on rise in Farmington

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

NEW COACHES and a new and improved level of play are what's shaking on the Farmington soccer scene this year.

Farmington has hired Ed Bartram to replace Dennis Place, who resigned after last year. Bartram coached the girls team at Farmington last spring.

Cathy Cole is the new boys head coach at North Farmington, replacing Abdul Mohammad. Cole coached the Raider girls last spring.

And the level of play? Well, let's put it this way: The days of the patsey Farmington soccer teams are over. With the increase of soccer's popularity in the area — thanks to the Bonanza Leagues and the Farmington Soccer Club — players have four and five years playing experience under their belts by the time they reach high school.

Farmington High, early assessments have it, should be the best team in the city this year. Look for North, however, to be vastly improved. Farmington Harrison had 30 kids attend tryouts this season, the most ever. Look for the Hawks to be young, but encouragingly improved.

Here's a brief look at the three teams:

FARMINGTON

Mario Said, John Gregory and Randy Gullinger are gone. They were the mainstays of last year's 8-3 team.

Ah, but fear not. On their costails come the likes of Erhan Ozil, Chris Hackman and Jason Forge — outstanding players.

The above three players make up what could be one of the strongest midfields in the area. The trio will be counted upon to control the tempo of the Falcons' matches and get the ball to a trio of competent goal scorers on the forward line.

Sophomores Tom Gammerath and Jerry Potter, along with senior Doug Prince, comprise the Falcon forward line.

The weakness, according to Bartram, will be the team's defense. "We are weak at fullback," he said. And to prove it, he isn't at all sure who will be playing there.

soccer

Tim Melnke, a junior, will be the one mainstay on defense. Senior Kenny Rehtsack, who along with Forge are the team's co-captains, will see action both at fullback and halfback. Sophomore Cam Aitken will also play back on defense, as will senior Maher Bashl and freshman Adam Krause.

Funny thing, though: Bashl and Krause are battling for the starting goalie job along with freshman Wes Turkington.

"We hope that we have enough strength at mid-field and forward to cover up for our weakness on defense," Bartram said.

The Falcons open up Tuesday, Sept. 4, at Southfield.

NORTH FARMINGTON

Cathy Cole is young, attractive, and very polite.

A pushover, right? She's alright for a girls coach, but the boys will run all over her, right?

Wrong.

Walk on over to the Raider soccer field. You'll see 25 young men conditioning their tails off. The one blowing the whistle and lining up all the drills is that nice, young coach named Cole.

"This year's team is bigger and has more muscle," she said. "They are very fast. And they are conditioned out of their minds. These guys have never really been conditioned before and that's half the battle, really."

The biggest obstacle the Raiders have to overcome, Cole said, is a losing attitude. The team was 1-14-1 last year.

"I told them that last year was over with. We have to begin with a positive attitude. When we put the ball in the net first, before the other team, I think we will start to believe in ourselves," she said.

KURT HUNLEY and Chris Heinemann, the team's co-captains, are among the top Raider players. So are Julian, Dennis McCarthy, Jeff Foster.

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