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C.J. Risak

Drugs in sport: help or hinder?

THE MESSAGE Drs. Frank Pollina and Joseph Femminino and former pro baseball prospect Barry Ruppenthal had to deliver was an important one. Only problem was there was almost no one there to receive it.

The three held a free seminar Saturday morning at The Community House, Birmingham. The subject: drug use and abuse in sports.

Good topic, considering the cocaine controversies and the steroid stories circulating through the press. Their goal was simple. As Pollina put it, "We want to try to educate people about the side effects of these substances. And we want to educate them about any possible benefits."

Seems like this would stir an interest in a wide spectrum of society — from high school and college athletes to their coaches, or even parents of athletes. But, for whatever reasons — perhaps 9 a.m. on a Saturday morning is too early for such a serious subject — only eight people showed, counting yours truly.

TOO BAD, because their message was worthy of greater attention. True, much of it was nothing new to me. I had read many of the same details regarding steroids in Sports Illustrated. Many, but not all.

While educating the public may be their intention, their seminar could also be titled, "Drugs: Are They Worth the Risk?"

Their conclusions would surprise no one, but Ruppenthal's first-hand testimony of his use of steroids adds a great deal of clout to their arguments.

"When I graduated from Ferndale High School in 1974," Ruppenthal told the dinky audience, "I was probably the cleanest guy in the state. I took nothing. I didn't drink or anything."

RUPPENTHAL was a pro pitching prospect with arm problems. Prior to a tryout with the St. Louis Cardinals, he recounted, a Grosse Pointe doctor approached him and told him how much steroids could help. Ruppenthal decided to give them a try.

"The first week I took them, they were everything he told me," he said. "It was like being on a 24-hour high. I felt as if I were invincible."

His arm problems melted away, in part because of the anti-inflammatory ingredient of the steroid. But also, the drug dulled the pain. And as Pollina explained, "Pain is a signal. It tells us something is wrong."

At his pro tryout, Ruppenthal "struck out something like 14 of the 18 batters I faced. The scouts there were very much impressed with my improved fastball."

He started training eight hours a day. He also started getting steroid injections once a week. But there were side effects. "I couldn't relax," Ruppenthal recalled. "I remember having to go outside and run around the block three times to calm myself down."

These severe mood changes proved to be his downfall. "I got so pumped up on the mound, I couldn't control it. I started getting wild. It took me a while to recognize it, but (steroids) were all I was taking."

Ruppenthal is now studying to be a sports trainer.

HIS EXPERIENCE is not unique. Neither are those who have suffered liver damage and sterility — usually temporary — from using steroids.

But whatever risk steroid use carries, athletes who take them swear by their effectiveness. Medical studies indicate steroids are far less helpful physically than athletes claim. They do build body mass, but that feature is more evident on someone who is ill and emaciated than a 250-pound weightlifter.

The psychological effect concerned Femminino. "Some say they are less fatigued, that they have this feeling of well-being and invincibility," he said. "That feeling may help increase workouts, but (the effect) is more psychological than physical."

Ruppenthal's experience supports those beliefs and raises another frightening prospect. As Pollina put it, "Athletes feel, 'How can I compete with these guys when they have such an edge on me?'"

The mental approach to any sport is all-important. If an athlete believes steroids have given him the opponent the advantage, it's going to be difficult to convince him he can still win.

EDUCATION, ACCORDING to the trio, is the key. As Pollina said, "There are very few substances that will actually help the athlete. Of the few that do, the risks aren't worth it."

But having a message of importance for the public and making them aware of it are two different things. So Pollina has decided upon a different approach, taking his seminar on the road.

"I've contacted several high schools and offered to present our seminar, and some have been very interested," he said.

Maybe that will help. Getting young athletes to realize how much harm they risk by taking such drugs is a task in itself. But it's only half the battle. When well-known athletes say they couldn't have made it without drugs, the risk seems worthwhile.

Convincing the uninitiated that there are no real advantages is the key.



Mersey's Terri Ford stole the show at Saturday's girls track and field regional meet at West Bloomfield. The junior sprinter won the 100-meter and 200-meter dashes and helped Mersey qualify for the state meet in two relays.

Ford is region sprint champion

Clarkston scored 121 points at the state Class A regional girls track and field meet Saturday at West Bloomfield, but Farmington Hills Mersey junior Terri Ford stole the show.

Ford helped Mersey place fifth overall with 40 team points and qualify for the state meet in four events.

Ford won both the open 100-meter dash (12.17) and 200 dash (25.6). Then she anchored Mersey's second place 800 relay team (1:49.58) and third place 400 relay team (51.83).

North Farmington placed 10th overall with 17 points. Barb Zeno qualified for the state meet by placing third in the 1,600 (5:38.06). Donna Chubb also qualified with a third in the 3,200 (12:18.4).

Farmington Harrison placed 12th as a team with 10 points. The Hawks' lone state qualifier was Jamie Holcomb who took second in the 300-low hurdles (46.9).

Farmington, 14th overall with eight points, will send its 3,200 relay team to the state meet. Anna Quenneville, Laura Spence, Alisha Richardson

girls track

and Bonnie Stecker placed third Saturday with a 10:06.5.

FARMINGTON WAS back on the track Tuesday, knocking off Western Lakes foe Walled Lake Central 50-48.

The Falcons (7-2-1) got firsts from Kelly Santimore in the high jump (4-8), Kris Devine in the discus (95-9), Lori Casaroli in the 300 hurdles (52.4), Alyse Fortune in the 100-meter dash (13.0), Alisha Richardson in the 400 (1:04.1), Carrie Hale in the 1,600 (5:53.0) and Nicole Jelley in the 3,200 (12:47.3).

Farmington also won the 400 relay (54.1) and the 3,200 relay (10:39.1).

The state meet will take place Saturday, June 1, at Flint Northwestern.

Farmington qualifies 4 for state Class A track meet

Although Milford Lakeland and Pontiac Northern hogged most of the spotlight at Saturday's state Class A boys track and field regional at West Bloomfield, Farmington managed to qualify five competitors for the state meet and place third in the team standings.

The Falcons earned 48 points Saturday, third to Lakeland's 112 and Northern's 88. Farmington Harrison (6) placed 13th and North Farmington (3) took 15th. North and Harrison didn't have any state qualifiers.

At Stebbins won the regional title in the 800-meter run with a 1:59.9.

Craig Petersmark qualified in two events. He took second in the shot put (48-4) and third in the discus (138-0).

Chris Inch placed second in the open 3,200 (9:47.3) and Ab Hazen placed third in the high jump (5-1).

FARMINGTON came back on Tuesday and routed Walled Lake Central in a dual meet, 120-17. The Falcons won all but one event.

boys track

Petersmark won both the shot (45-7) and disc (140-2). Mike Forge captured the 220-yard dash (23.7) and the 440 (52.7).

Other Falcon firsts were recorded by: Hazen in the high jump (5-8), Dave Cunningham in the long jump (11-8), Chris Kwanziemier in the 120-high hurdles (17.0), Greg Feenstra in the 330-low hurdles (42.3), Nathan Case in the 100 (10.4), Chris Inch in the 800 (2:09.4), and Al Stebbins in the 2 mile (10:30.4).

Farmington also won all four relay events: the 440 in 46.1, the 880 in 1:39.1, the mile in 3:51.8 and the 2 mile in 8:59.5.

The state Class A track meet is set for Saturday, June 1, at Flint Northwestern.

CC claims regional; Hawks get state bid

By Brad Emons
staff writer

With the regional safely out of the way, Redford Catholic Central's tennis team can concentrate on the boys state championships Friday and Saturday, May 31 and June 1, at the Midland Community Center.

The Shamrocks captured another Class A regional title Saturday at Schoolcraft College, scoring 28 points. Farmington Harrison and Southfield-Lathrup also qualified for the state tournament, tying for second place with 16 points each.

CC, which finished second last season behind defending champion Midland Dow, is expected to battle for first place this season with Catholic League foe Birmingham Brother Rice and perennial Class B power Okemos, which has moved up a class. The Shamrocks (No. 1 in Observerland) were ranked No. 1 most of the year by a statewide coaches poll until Rice knocked them off in a dual meet last week, 4-3.

"I haven't seen Okemos, and not many of the Class A teams have because they still play a lot of Class B schools," said CC coach Frank Garlicki. "To win the state we're going to have to do well at No. 2 and 3 singles, and in all of the doubles."

CATHOLIC CENTRAL swept all seven flights at the regional.

The closest match of any final occurred at No. 1 singles where CC's Mark Egnatios held off Harrison's Ken Davidson, 6-3, 6-7, 6-4.

The match was interrupted in the second set by rain with Davidson leading 6-5.

The two moved indoors to the Livonia Family Y to complete the match.

"Even though Mark lost the tiebreaker, a dry indoor court was to his advantage," Garlicki said. "He likes to move fast and scramble on the court."

At No. 2 singles, CC's Mark Agah raised his season record to 17-1 with a convincing 6-0, 6-0 victory over Harrison's Mark Rakoczy.

He is being counted on heavily by Garlicki at the state meet along with No. 3 singles player Phil Eagleson, who ran his record to a team-best 17-0 with a 6-0, 6-0 triumph over Lathrup's Eric Lefkowsky.

CC's Bob Helmbeck took the No. 4 singles crown with a 6-2, 6-2 triumph over Ian Hutchison of Lathrup.

IN DOUBLES, the Shamrocks' Greg Grabowski

tennis

CLASS A REGIONAL
TENNIS TOURNAMENT
at Schoolcraft College

Team standings: 1. Redford Catholic Central, 28 points; 2. (tie) Farmington Harrison and Southfield-Lathrup, 16 each; 4. Livonia Stevenson, 10; 5. Livonia Franklin, 8; 6. (tie) Farmington and Westland John Glen, 6 each; 8. Livonia Bentley, 4; 9. Livonia Churchville, North Farmington and Southfield, 3 each; 12. (tie) Redford Union and Detroit Redford, 1 each; 14. Detroit Henry Ford, 0.

CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

No. 1 singles: Mark Egnatios (CC) defeated Ken Davidson (Harrison), 6-3, 6-7, 6-4.
No. 2: Mark Agah (CC) def. Mark Rakoczy (Harrison), 6-0, 6-0.
No. 3: Phil Eagleson (CC) def. Eric Lefkowsky (Lathrup), 6-0, 6-0.
No. 4: Bob Helmbeck (CC) def. Ian Hutchison (Lathrup), 6-2, 6-2.
No. 1 doubles: Greg Grabowski-Jeff Huston (CC) def. Gary Fields-Den McColl (Lathrup), 6-2, 6-2.
No. 2: Jim Gillespie-Stev Campbell (CC) def. Randy Letorero-Bob Duganelli (Franklin), 6-1, 6-3.
No. 3: Walt Bartels-Rob Tranzou (CC) def. Rick Brockhaus-Aaron Tam (Harrison), 6-0, 6-0.

and Jeff Huston won the No. 1 doubles crown with a straight-set victory over Lathrup's Gary Fields and Dan McColl.

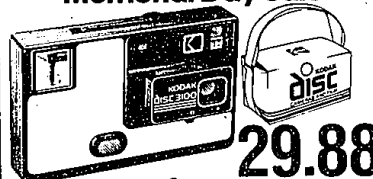
The biggest surprise of the tournament came at No. 2 doubles where Livonia Franklin's unheralded duo of Randy Letorero and Bob Bieganski reached the finals before losing to CC's Jim Gillespie and Steve Campbell, 6-1, 6-3.

Franklin, which scored nine points to finish fifth in the team standings, recorded one of its highest finishes in recent memory. Livonia Stevenson, which did not have a singles player or doubles team reach a final, scored 10 points to finish fourth.

At No. 3 doubles, CC made it a clean sweep when Walt Bartels and Rob Tranzou downed Harrison's Rick Brockhaus and Aaron Tam, 6-0, 6-0.

Although a state title is within CC's grasp, the Shamrocks hope to beat Rice this weekend in the Catholic League championships.

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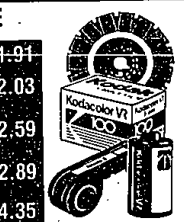
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