

Sports

Chris McCosky, Brad Emons editors/591-2312



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Harrison bursts Canton's 'A' bubble

By Tom Panzenhagen
staff writer

You gotta have heart, and Farmington Harrison had plenty as they swept past North Farmington and Plymouth Canton to claim the Class A district baseball title.

The Hawks — 15-10 on the season — stormed by North Farmington, 11-1, in the semifinals Saturday morning, then toughed out a 6-3 win over Plymouth Canton in the championship game that afternoon. They now advance to the regionals June 8 at Plymouth Canton against Livonia Stevenson.

Pitcher Mike Inch, 7-2, won both games for Harrison, hurling three innings and allowing one run on one hit in

the opener, then going the distance in game two, giving up three runs and scattering eight hits.

"I was ready to pull him (Inch) probably five times," Harrison coach John Herrington said. "But he has so much heart that I had to go with him."

HERRINGTON also credited the Warriors' hearty defense. "They played real well, and that play in the third may have turned the game around," he said.

With one out in the third inning and Canton's Chris Siler on first, Inch struck out second baseman Tom Kenyon, and Warrior catcher Mike Colovos cut down Siler trying to steal second.

In the opening inning, Harrison first baseman Vince Enright and third baseman Dan Murray turned diving stops on hard grounders into put-outs that kept leadoff hitter Siler from scoring.

And in the fifth inning — with two out, the bases loaded and the Warriors up 6-3 — Murray robbed Kenyon of extra bases with a leaping grab of a line drive that was headed into the left field corner.

The Chiefs weren't discouraged, though, and again loaded the bases in the seventh inning before Inch ended the drama by getting Jeff Lyle to pop out to second baseman Ken George for the final out of the game.

FOR CANTON — 23-6 overall — it was a heartbreaking and anticlimactic defeat following their heart-stopping, come-from-behind win in the semifinal matchup against host Walled Lake Western.

Western's Dan Gabriele — considered a top pro pitching prospect — and the Chiefs' Mark Coburn hooked up in a pitchers' duel that saw Coburn ahead in stats but Canton trailing 3-1 going into the seventh inning.

To that point, Coburn had allowed two hits while striking out eight. Fastballer Gabriele had yielded six hits and struck out 10.

In the seventh, Gabriele retired the

first two Canton batters, then walked Kenyon, Mark Stevens (who had homered in the sixth) and Dwayne Bennett, loading the bases for Pete Morrison.

The count on Morrison went to 2-and-2 before the slender first baseman drilled a low hard one on one hop to the fence in left-center field, scoring all three base runners for a 4-3 Canton lead.

Coburn would have gotten the side in order in the bottom of the seventh but, with two outs, he flubbed a tapper back to mound, allowing Western's number nine hitter, Dave O'Kragly, to reach first.

It turned out most appropriately, though, because the last out of the game belonged to hitting hero Morrison, who pulled in a soft liner off the bat of Western's Danny Atwell to wrap up the win.

"YOU COULDN'T ask for more in a comeback," Canton coach Fred Crissey said. "We battled back — that was the difference in the game. And we stopped striking out after the first three innings."

Gabriele finished the game with 11 strike outs — only four of which came after the third inning.

Crissey said Morrison had the hit sign in the seventh, even though Gabriele had walked the last three batters. "I couldn't hold him (Morrison) in a situation like that. I felt he might come in with a pitch."

Morrison said: "I was nervous but confident that I could make contact if I swung at strikes and laid off the balls." He called the game winner his biggest hit of the year.

Western coach Chuck App said, "There's no doubt he (Gabriele) got tired at the end, but I don't want to take anything away from the Canton kids. Sometimes that last out is hard to get. We needed one more and we couldn't get it."

JOHN LENDERS started the championship game for Canton, but his selection of off-speed, sidearm and three-quarters pitches posed no mystery to Harrison hitters.

Brian Smolinski — who batted .430 during the regular season but struck out three times in game one — led off with a double on a towering fly ball that the left fielder misjudged.

He scored when John Miller lashed a hanging curve ball over the center fielder's head for a triple. Miller rode home when cleanup man Mike Colovos sent a change-up over the left field fence, making it 3-0 Harrison.

Later in the first, Inch singled and went to second on a wild pitch, then



RICK SMITH/staff photographer

Happy Warriors Mike Colovos (in catcher's gear) and Ken George embrace after Saturday's 6-3 win over favored Canton in Class A district baseball finals. Farmington Harrison had advanced to the finals by beating North Farmington 11-1. They now advance to regional action against Livonia Stevenson June 8.

scored on Shawn Brennan's pop double into shallow right-center field.

Those were all the runs Harrison eventually needed, but they picked up two more on a Smolinski home run off Lenders in the fourth, making it 6-3 Harrison.

Canton scored its three runs in the fourth on three walks, a fielder's choice where everyone was safe and key singles by Bennett and Tony Aiken. They came close to breaking the game open until Harrison third baseman Murray took the hit away from Kenyon.

MIKE CLARK pitched exceptionally well in relief of Lenders, allowing no runs after coming in with bases loaded and no one out in the fifth inning and setting down the side in order in the sixth.

Crissey said he doesn't regret not going to Clark earlier.

"I wouldn't have done anything differently at all. John (Lenders) was 4-0 for us at the end of the year and did an outstanding job, and he deserved to be in there."

"We may have shot our wad a little bit in the first game. It was difficult for us to get back into the second game. I think we tended to lay back, just a bit," Crissey said.

Herrington wouldn't predict how Harrison may fare in the regionals but said, "Anything can happen in the state tournament, but we can't expect Inch to win it all for us. The key will be whether we can come up with a second pitcher along the way."



photos by RICK SMITH

Losing pitcher John Lenders (above left) was removed from the game after giving up six runs to eventual Class A winner Harrison. His coach, Fred Crissey, said: "I wouldn't have done anything differently at all. John was 4-0 for us at the end of the year and did an outstanding job, and he deserved to be in there."

Close, but no cigar

Falcons track run comes up 2 points shy

By Brad Emons
staff writer

It didn't take long for the Livonia Churchill boys track team to get back into the winners circle.

The Chargers, who relinquished their stranglehold on league track titles last year to Plymouth Salem, regained first place at the Western Lakes Activities Association (WLAA) meet, Wednesday at home.

It was Churchill's second crown in three years since the WLAA was formed. It was also the Chargers' 13th league title in 14 years, dating back to the old Western Six circuit.

Churchill took a big lead in the field events and then held off Farmington in the 1600-meter relay, 118-116. Defending champion Salem was a distant third with 82 points (see statistics).

"The kids remember that last year was our first loss in 12 conference meets," said Churchill coach Fred Price. "They had a score to settle and our 21 seniors wanted to leave on top."

Five league records were shattered, including two by Salem's Mike White. He won the long jump with a leap of 22 feet, 8 1/4 inches and later captured the 300-meter low hurdles with a record time of 38.3. He might have set a new WLAA mark in the 110 hurdles, but tripped and did not place.

CHURCHILL, meanwhile, piled up its share of firsts to go along with depth.

Dave Mize defended both of his titles in the shot put (51-3) and the discus (163-3). His toss in the discus established a new WLAA record.

Teammate Mike Meehan, mean-

while, topped his own record by three inches in the high jump, leaping 6-6.

Other Churchill winners included Doug Plachta in the 1,600 run (4:28.0) and Gordon Babcock in the 110 hurdles (15.4). The Chargers also got a big boost when its 800 relay team of Babcock, Eric Williams, Dave Gluth and Ernie Healy took first with season team best of 1:32.7. Churchill was also second in the 3,200 and 1,600 relays.

For us to win the 800 relay with Farmington and Salem having better times going in was a plus," Price said. "And we got another big boost in the 3,200 relay."

"Nobody had bad performances. I think the kids were keyed for the meet and they were well rested. I gave them four days off and told them to work a couple of times on their own. Evidently they did that or rest was the key. We were mentally sharp and we ran from the heart."

FARMINGTON, which lost a close dual to Churchill earlier in the season, captured four first places.

Recording individual firsts for the Falcons were Nathan Case, 100 dash, 11.7; Mike Forge, 400 dash, 51.5; and Chris Inch, 3,200 run, 9:45.7. Farmington's 1,600 relay team of Forge, Dave Cunningham, Mike Kramer and Al Stebbins finished first with a time of 3:28.6.

In addition to White's pair of firsts, Salem's Craig Morton took the 200 dash in 23.0.

Plymouth Canton, a surprising fourth in the team standings with 53 points, received a strong showing from its 400 relay squad of Tom Bowles, Matt Flower, Pat McDow and James Ratliff,

who crossed the line first in 44.6.

Livonia Bentley, fifth in the team standings with 47 points, rode the strong middle distance running of Mike McCormick. The senior standout set a league record in the 800 run, edging Farmington's Al Stebbins by a one-tenth of a second with a time of 1:55.7.

WESTERN LAKES ACTIVITIES ASSOC.
BOYS TRACK MEET
Wednesday at Livonia Churchill

Team standings: 1. Livonia Churchill, 118 points; 2. Farmington, 110; 3. Plymouth Salem, 82; 4. Farmington Canton, 55; 5. Livonia Bentley, 47; 6. Farmington Harrison, 40; 7. Livonia Stevenson, 38; 8. Walled Lake Central, 20; 9. Northville, 13; 10. Walled Lake Western, 0.

FINAL RESULTS

Discus: 1. Dave Mize (LC), 183 feet, 3 inches (league record); 2. Matt Pulick (LS), 154-0; 3. Dave Richards (LC), 140-7; 4. Ab Hazen, 147-7; 5. Craig Petersen (F), 145-1; 6. Pat Conway (LS), 144-8.

Shot put: 1. Dave Mize (LC), 51-3; 2. George Serech (FH), 48-8 1/2; 3. Tony Besure (LS), 47-5; 4. Craig Petersen (F), 47-7; 5. Steve Brooks (LC), 47-2; 6. Marc Cyprian (PS), 22-4 1/2 (league record); 7. Bryan Widson (PS), 21-11 1/2; 8. Tom Bowles (PC), 20-11 1/2; 9. Ed Strickland (LC), 20-5; 10. D. LeFaire (W), 19-7 1/2; 11. Eric Williams (LC), 19-3 1/2.

High jump: 1. Mike Meehan (LC), 6-6 (league record); 2. Ab Hazen (F), 6-3; 3. Jim Rintala (LC), 6-1; 4. Steve Gonyak (PC), 6-1; 5. Brian Loefer (F), 6-1; 6. Matt Levesque (PC), 5-10.

Pole vault: 1. John Vasek (FH), 12-4; 2. Eric Guiderman (LB), 12-4; 3. Mike Harwood (PS), 12-0; 4. Ed Brandemil (LC), 12-0; 5. Bob Hute (F), 11-8; 6. Scott Fetter (LC), 11-8.

100-meter dash: 1. Nathan Case (F), 11.7; 2. Tom Bowles (PC), 12.6; 3. Chris Nichols (F), 12.0; 4. James Ratliff (PC), 12.1; 5. Bryan Waldron (PS), 12.1; 6. Jim Appels (LB), 12.1.

200 dash: 1. Craig Morton (PS), 23.0; 2. Eric McCormick (LS), 23.0; 3. Brian Loefer (F), 23.7; 4. Pat McDow (PC), 23.7; 5. D. Brandemil (LC), 23.7; 6. John Nelson (PS), 23.7.

400 dash: 1. Mike Forge (F), 51.5; 2. Eric Williams (LC), 52.0; 3. Don Chapin (WLC), 52.6; 4.

McCormick also anchored the Bulldogs to a first place finish in the 3,200 relay, teaming up with Todd Walker, Gregg Brown and Jim Maddox for a time of 9:45.0.

In the pole vault, Farmington Harrison's John Vasek cleared an Observer-Led best at 12-4.

Dave Cunningham (F), 52.1; 5. Bryan Waldron (PS), 52.3; 6. Chris Heyosh (PC), 52.9; 7. 100 run: 1. Mike McCormick (LS), 1:55.7 (league record); 2. Al Stebbins (F), 1:55.8; 3. Madsen (H), 2:01.2; 4. Scott Steiner (PS), 2:04.7; 5. Scott Wala (F), 2:09.9; 6. Brian Vasek (PS), 2:09.5.

1,600 run: 1. Doug Plachta (LC), 4:28.0; 2. Bruce Kraft (F), 4:29.1; 3. Jeff Madden (WLC), 4:32.4; 4. Chris Hart (FH), 4:34.7; 5. Kevin Gail (LB), 4:35.8; 6. Rob Annett (LB), 4:37.8.

3,200 run: 1. Chris Inch (F), 9:45.7; 2. Jeff Madden (WLC), 10:05.5; 3. John Korte (PS), 10:14.4; 4. Kevin Gail (LB), 10:15.5; 5. Rob Annett (LB), 10:22.7; 6. Tony Atwell (PS), 10:23.2.

110 high hurdles: 1. Gordon Babcock (LC), 15.4; 2. Tony O'Neil (FH), 15.5; 3. Brian Whaley (PC), 14.9; 4. Lamont Burgess (FH), 10.4; 5. Dan Houdek (PC), 18.4; 6. Dean MacKenzie (LB), 16.4.

300 low hurdles: 1. Mike White (PS), 38.3 (league record); 2. Gordon Babcock (LC), 39.5; 3. Greg Feenstra (F), 40.3; 4. Lamont Burgess (FH), 40.8; 5. Dean MacKenzie (LB), 40.8; 6. Jeff Gieson (LB), 41.8.

400 relay: 1. Canton (Tom Bowles, Matt Flower, Pat McDow and James Ratliff), 44.6; 2. Farmington, 45.1; 3. Stevenson, 45.4; 4. Bentley, 45.8; 5. Churchill, 45.9; 6. Northville, 46.3.

800 relay: 1. Churchill (Gordon Babcock, Eric Williams, Dave Gluth and Ernie Healy), 1:32.7; 2. Salem, 1:32.9; 3. Farmington, 1:33.4; 4. Canton, 1:34.8; 5. Stevenson, 1:36.3; 6. Harrison, 1:37.0.

1,600 relay: 1. Farmington (Mike Forge, Dave Cunningham, Mike Kramer and Al Stebbins), 3:28.6; 2. Churchill, 3:28.8; 3. Salem, 3:32.6; 4. Canton, 3:35.1; 5. Bentley, 3:37.6; 6. Harrison, 3:37.8.

3,200 relay: 1. Bentley (Todd Walker, Gregg Brown, Jim Maddox and Mike McCormick), 9:45.0; 2. Churchill, 9:45.0; 3. Salem, 9:45.0; 4. Stevenson, 9:45.0; 5. Northville, 9:45.0; 6. Canton, 9:45.0.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Brian Loefer of Farmington turns into the bar during Wednesday's Western Lakes meet. He cleared 6 feet 11 in the high jump to place fifth.