

Gravlin a hit in 2nd season

By Brad Emmons
Staff writer

After his first season of coaching varsity baseball at Plymouth Salem, John Gravlin was wondering if he had made the right decision to succeed Brian Giltes, who led Salem to the state Class A semifinals in 1983.

Gravlin went 13-9 that first year, but wasn't completely comfortable.

"With the Salem baseball program there's so much to do it's unbelievable," Gravlin said. "I had to ask myself: 'Is this something you want to do.'"

"I finally said to myself: 'If you're going to do it, then do it well.'"

Gravlin dedicated himself early and the hard work paid off as Salem won the Western Lakes Conference, winning 12 of 13 league games, to go along with a 18-8 overall record.

"It was a combination of commitment from our players and acceptance toward our team goals," Gravlin said. "And there was no question who the coach was."

"It boiled down to hard work. The 23 of us got together and established the goals. We were fortunate to achieve them — it was a little luck and hard work."

The Observer sports department has selected the second-year Salem mentor as Coach-of-the-Year in baseball.

Several other Observeland coaches turned in stellar jobs in other sports. Here are the remaining Coach-of-the-Year honorees:

Jim Lentz, Garden City, girls softball: The first-year Garden City coach took a sophomore-laden team and finished 16-4 overall after an 0-13 Cougar season in 1984.

Lentz directed the Cougars to a 7-3 Northwest Suburban League record, good enough for second place behind first-place Livonia Franklin, the state runner-up.

Norene Divens, Livonia Stevenson, girls soccer: Under the coaching of Divens, Livonia Stevenson recapitulated the state championship after finishing second in 1984.

In 1983, Divens led to Spartans to the state crown.

This year's Stevenson squad finished with a 10-0-1 record, winning the Western Lakes Soccer League for the second straight time.

Fred Hanert, Livonia Bentley, boys track: Also in his first year, Hanert guided Bentley to one of most successful track seasons ever.

Bentley won nine dual meets and made a strong showing in the Livonia City Meet, finishing second behind perennial area power Churchill.

Ironically one of Bentley's best track seasons ever came in the final year of the school's existence.

Bob Richardson, Plymouth Canton, girls track: It's been a slow process building a track program at Plymouth Canton, but the Chiefs arrived in 1985 behind the veteran Richardson.

Canton won the Western Division side of the Western Lakes Activities Association with a relatively young team.

It was the Chiefs best overall dual meet season since the school opened in 1972.

230 soccer teams meet at Schoolcraft

Michigan's largest ever youth soccer tournament will be launched Friday at Schoolcraft College.

The sixth annual Wolverine Tournament will draw 230 elite youth soccer teams vying for titles in 11 age categories.

The tournament, which will host an estimated 4,000 players, includes teams from Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, California and Canada for the three-day event.

A major highlight will be a 14-and-under boys team competing from Scotland.

"This is the largest we've ever had, and the soccer will be excellent," promised Walt Peterman, tournament chairman. "Michigan is one of the leading soccer-producing states in the U.S. and our youth classic is considered one of the best."

The tournament, hosted by the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association, also features several college All-American and Olympic-bound players.

TOURNAMENT GAMES will be played at 26 different fields — 13 at Schoolcraft, nine at Livonia's Bicentennial Park and four at Livonia's Jaycee Park. All fields are within a four-mile radius.

Qualifying matches begin at 8 a.m. both Friday and Saturday. The championship games are scheduled for 10 a.m. Sunday at Schoolcraft.

Schoolcraft College is off Haggerty between Sixth and Seven Mile roads. Bicentennial is on Seven Mile and Gill, west of Newburgh; Jaycee Park is on Seven Mile, between Farmington and Merriam roads.

The Observer and Eccentric coverage area produced six Wolverine V champions including the Troy Blue Streaks, girls 12-and-under; Troy Lightning, girls 14-and-under; Livonia Diamonds, boys 14-and-under (Division I); Vardar III, boys 14-and-under (Division II); Troy Tornado, boys 16-and-under (Division III); and the FLIP Rowdies, girls 18-and-under.

Admission is \$1 per car for the action at Schoolcraft College.

Mercy selects new AD

Ellen Sekerak is the new athletic director at Farmington Hills Mercy High School.

Sekerak, who has been the assistant athletic director and softball coach at Dearborn St. Alphonsus the past eight years, replaces De Loris Yager who stepped down last year.

"I'm stepping into a fantastic program," Sekerak said. "My goal is to keep the good things about the program good and make the mediocre things better."

YAGER, MERCY'S first AD, took a low-keyed approach to her athletic director's chores. In fact, she never really considered herself an AD, concentrating more on her extensive duties as swim coach and teacher.

"I was hired as a full-time AD," Sekerak said. "I know Mrs. Yager had other responsibilities. I am not teaching and I don't plan on coaching. I know the coaches have had to pretty much run their programs. They are going to have to deal with me a bit more now. But, having been a coach myself, I know what to expect of my coaches and they'll know what to expect of me."

It hasn't taken long for the Mercy coaching staff to accept their new AD.

"We're very delighted to have her," said basketball coach Larry Baker. "I'm sure she'll do an excellent job."

—Chris McCosky

Livonia team grabs title

The Livonia Harps boys under-14 squad defeated city rival Livonia United last weekend to win the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association championship at Schoolcraft College.

The Harps, coached by Pat McCaul, advance to U.S. Youth Soccer Association Midwest Regional July 10-22 at Overland Park, Kan.

Members of the State Select Cup championship team include forwards James Shrock, Steve McCaul, Mike Rose, Gordon Buckler and Mike Schroeder; midfielders Scott Ryan, Mickey Hynes, Jesse Nagzy and Trifon Dimitrijevic; fullbacks Mark Thomas, Mike Patzsch and Eric Conkright; goalies Brad Burgess and Jovan Trovati; Jerry Hicks and Larry Patzsch served as the team's assistant coaches.

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