

Hawk all-American enshrined at EMU

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Bruce Howell might've been the last one into the pool, but certainly not last one in it.

Which is why the former Farmington Harrison swimmer was named as an inductee into the Eastern Michigan Athletic Hall of Fame recently. Howell, who didn't start swimming competitively until he was a sophomore at Harrison, is being enshrined in his first year of eligibility.

Despite the delayed start, the late bloomer turned into a big boomer

for both Harrison and EMU.

At Harrison, where he was an all-American and all-state swimmer, Howell won the state Class A championship in the 100-yard breaststroke during the 1974 season. Howell won seven Mid-American Conference championships, mostly in the breaststroke events, and was selected "Outstanding Senior Swimmer" in the MAC while at EMU.

His school-record time in the 200-yard breaststroke of 2:05.5 still stands after nine years. His school mark of 54.4 in the 100 breaststroke didn't fall until this season.

O.K., NEED another reason why

Howell made it into the hall of fame in only his first year of eligibility? Here it is:

"He's probably the best swimmer we've ever had," said EMU coach Mike Jones.

That did it. The bronze plaque was practically engraved with that statement.

The 26-year coach, whose team has won eight conference championships since joining the MAC in 1973, doesn't pass out such accolades like leaflets.

Such compliments are definitely earned. And Howell started earning them

in an unusual fashion. One day, while in the school pool, Harrison coach Mark Holdridge happened to be watching.

Holdridge asked Howell to swim a 50-yard breaststroke just for the heck of it.

"The next thing I knew Bruce was standing at the end of the pool," recalled Holdridge. "I said, 'Bruce, you sure you finished the whole thing?'"

Howell was kicking in the breaststroke ever since.

"I WAS KIND of a late bloomer," said Howell, who teaches in Long Beach, Calif. "I was a recreational swimmer, just swimming in lakes and stuff."

Howell considers his late start in swimming as both a help and a hindrance. With swimming in a relative short time, Howell avoided the burnout that some swimmers encounter.

With a few more years of seasoning, though, he felt he could've attained more success in the pool, especially after he graduated.

Howell made it to the finals of the United States Olympic team trials in 1980. He was then disqualified in the final for putting his head under water during a turn.

That was the year the U.S. boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics to protest the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan.

"We found out about it sometime in June (1980)," said Howell about the boycott. "We kept swimming, but the intensity kind of left."

Howell won't be boycotting the dinner, honoring him and other hall inductees June 13. He's being enshrined with former Pittsburgh Steeler defensive back Ron Johnson.

"I WAS surprised," said Howell

about the induction. "You have to be out of school at least seven years to be inducted."

Only one other swimmer inhabits the EMU hall. His name is Mike Jones, whom Howell credits with making the EMU swimming program what it is today.

And Howell also credits Jones for the type of swimmer into which he developed.

"He's there 12 to 13 hours a day and gives 100 percent of himself," said Howell of his former coach. "As far as I found him, he was like a father to me in college. I could always go to his office and sit down and have a cup of coffee with him."

"With that talent he had, plus the work ethic he developed here," said Jones of Howell, "it was an unbeatable combination."

And made last-place finishes unheard of.

Gymnastics regional in Flint

Fans of gymnastics in this area will get a rare opportunity to witness the top performers in the midwest this weekend as the United States Gymnastics Federation's Region V Championships come to the Genesee Valley Gymnastic Club in Flint.

Some 174 gymnasts have quali-

fied for the two-day event Saturday, May 31, and Sunday, June 1. There will be 68 Class III girls, 68 in Class II and 38 in Class I.

Here is the competition schedule: Class III compulsory, 10:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturday; Class I and Class II compulsory, 4:45-8:30 p.m. Saturday; Class III optionals, 10:45

a.m.-1:30 p.m. Sunday; Class I and Class II optionals, 4:45-8:30 p.m. Sunday.

Region V includes Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Kentucky and Michigan.

For more information on the meet, call the Genesee Valley club 313-742-2151.



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college sports

• TARTARS MAKE GRADE

Several members of Wayne State's baseball team received all-Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Association honors recently.

Pitcher Kevin Diaz, a graduate of Redford Bishop Burgess, was selected to the all-GLIAC first team after a 4-1 season in conference play. Diaz, a sophomore, finished second in the GLIAC in terms of earned run

average, posting a 2.98 ERA.

Outfielder Brad Silverstein of West Bloomfield made the all-GLIAC second team after batting .264 this season with a .862 fielding average. Silverstein, who transferred from the University of Toledo, was the only Tartar to appear in all 33 games this season.

Pitcher Rich Wood, a product of Livonia Franklin, was selected on the all-GLIAC honorable mention

team. Wood, who was on the all-GLIAC first team in 1984, was still tabbed on the honorable mention squad despite leading the league in game appearances (8), and complete games (4). Wood was also third in the conference in strikeouts (28) and second in saves (3).

WSU was third in the GLIAC with a 10-8 mark. The Tartars were 19-14 overall.



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