



Thursday, October 30, 1988 O&E

Farmington boys face final hurdle: bring title home

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Don't look now, but Farmington High School is on the verge of winning its first state championship in any sport.

Jerry Young's powerhouse boys cross country team won the Class A regional at Ann Arbor's Buhr Park last Saturday and will be one of three teams favored to win the state meet Saturday at Flint's Brookline Golf Course.

"Milford Lakeland, Swartz Creek, us and maybe Ann Arbor Pioneer will all be in the hunt," said Young on Monday.

Farmington's all-America runner Chris Inch is a bit more precise: "If we run like we did at the regional, we will win it."

Young saw a potential state championship team in the making two years ago. He had two extremely talented sophomores in Chris Inch and Al Stebbins. Barring injury or attitude maladjustment, he had himself two perennial front-runners. Next step was to piece together a supporting cast — a group of dedicated individuals willing to sacrifice personal glory for the sake of team depth. And finally, should an unexpected element enter the picture — say a talented transfer from Nebraska — make room for him.

And there you have it, a state championship contender. Let's take a closer look at the components of this 1988 Farmington cross country team.

LEADERS OF THE PACK

Inch and Stebbins have been battling each other for four years. As a result of their personal competition, both have become recognized among the top runners in the country. Both earned all-America status as juniors a year ago.

This year, Inch has emerged as the undisputed leader while Stebbins has battled a stomach injury all season.

"From a team standpoint, losing Al didn't really hurt us because we

won all our meets," said Inch. "But for Al's sake, it was terrible. I'm just really glad he's coming back now. It's perfect timing."

While Inch won the regional race in 15:43 Saturday, Stebbins finished a fourth with a 16:09.

Inch, though, is in a difficult position. His talent is such that people take his winning for granted. Often Young has said, "I don't worry about Chris. I know where he'll be at the end. It's the others that I'm concerned with."

Said Inch: "Yeah, there's a lot of pressure. People at school more or less expect me to win. But that is something that goes with the territory. When I was a freshman, I was low man on the pole. Now that I'm up there, I've got to take it. I have to be able to handle the pressure. It doesn't bug me. Not at all."

Said Young: "Chris has a great attitude. If you are going to beat Chris, you are going to have to work awfully hard. He's that way about a lot of things. He doesn't take no for an answer. His attitude is that no one is going to run by him without a battle. He has tremendous self-confidence."

Aside from helping the team win Saturday, Inch will be embroiled in a serious individual battle. Todd Williams of Monroe, last year's state champ, and Anthony Hamm of Flint Northern will be with Inch step for step Saturday.

"I will not settle for anything less than third place," Inch said. "Getting first will be awfully tough. I kind of feel like I'm seeded No. 2. Anything lower than third and I'll be disappointed. I know I have to run hard. This is the biggest meet of the year and I don't want to look like a choke artist."

"Put it this way, if I don't win, the team sure better."

THE TRANSFER

Brandon London appeared on the Farmington cross country scene like an answer to Jerry Young's wildest

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DILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Jennifer Kiel led the Farmington girls team to a state-qualifying third-place finish at Saturday's Class A regional meet in Ann Arbor. She set a school record with a time of 18:40.

Next stop: state meet

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

All season long, the Farmington boys cross country team has had to endure the burden of being favored to win. That can get awfully heavy.

But true to their form, the Falcons carried that burden to a Class A regional championship Saturday at Ann Arbor's Buhr Park. The Falcons amassed 52 points to nip host Ann Arbor Pioneer (58). Adrian placed third with 146 points. The top three teams advance to the Class A state meet Saturday at Brookline Golf Course in Flint.

The storyline was a bit different for the Farmington girls team. Despite being ranked No. 1 in Observer-land all season, the Lady Falcons were going to have to scratch and claw to qualify for state. Of the 18 teams running at Buhr Park, six had been ranked among the state's top 10.

But the Falcons came through, placing third behind Ann Arbor Pioneer (61) and Ann Arbor Huron (74). The Falcons totaled 117 points, 30 fewer than South Lyon and Howell, the fourth and fifth place teams.

cross country

HOW TOUGH was the Ann Arbor regional? Ask Plymouth Salem girls coach John Gravin:

"We had six girls run under 22 minutes, each one was a personal best time. And we came in seventh. We didn't even come close. It was unbelievable."

Farmington coach John Barrett agreed.

"There's no doubt this was the toughest regional in the state. That was the topic of conversation out there and a lot of the coaches were commenting that it wasn't fair. And it's not. I don't know how to remedy the problem, but something has to be done," he said.

The boys race wasn't exactly devoid of talent, either.

"We knew Ann Arbor Pioneer would be tough because they were state-ranked," said Farmington boys coach Jerry Young. "Still, we figured if we ran our best — and we did

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Hawk runners qualify

Livenia Ladywood and Farmington Harrison were the big winners at the Class B regional cross country meet Saturday at Marshbank Park.

Ladywood and Harrison placed 1-2 in the girls race, while the Harrison boys took third. All three teams will compete in the Class B state meet Saturday hosted by Chelsea.

Ladywood, which scored 24 points to Harrison's 59, was paced by Janine Kline. Kline was the individual winner in the girls race with a 26:20 clocking. Harrison's Jenny Anderson placed second (21:08).

Harrison got a fifth-place finish from Edye Fleischer (22:22) and a 13th from Almee Jarvenpa (24:35). "We're just tickled pink," said

Harrison coach John Schumacher.

"We knew the guys' race would be between six teams and that it would be close. In the girls race we figured the competition wasn't going to be as stiff as it had been in previous years."

It's the first time a Harrison cross country team, boys or girls, has qualified for state.

CENTER LINE WON the boys race with 64 points. University of Detroit High was second (71) and Harrison third (107).

Chris Hart led the Hawks' contingent placing sixth in 17:35. Jeff Barringer placed 14th (18:00) and Dave Fos 25th (18:21).

Persistence pays Mercy zeros in on division title

The road was far from smooth but it took the Farmington Hills Mercy basketball team where it wanted to go.

With a thrilling come-from-behind 52-50 win against Harper Woods Regina, coupled with Marian's surprising 48-46 win against Ladywood, the Marlins are in a superior position to claim the Catholic League Central Division championship.

Mercy needs only to defeat Bishop Gallagher Thursday to claim the title. Marian and Mercy have equal 7-2 league records, but Mercy has outscored Marian in the teams' two head-to-head matchups.

Tuesday night's game was symbolic of Mercy's struggle this season.

Mercy trailed Regina by 10 points late in the third quarter. Two long-range baskets by Yvette Malson and another by Jan Herberholz pulled the Marlins within striking range. With two minutes left in the game, and Mercy down by three, Regina went into a delay game. A steal and a basket by Margaret DeMattia and a basket off an offensive rebound by Jennifer Slosar helped bring the Marlins to within one.

With 50 seconds left, Patty Chapp — who had been inserted into the lineup strictly for defensive purposes — came up with a steal and fed DeMattia for a layup that gave Mercy a 49-48 lead.

After a Regina miss, Maria Dietz — who was inserted into the lineup in place of Chapp for her offensive skills — was fouled and made one of two free throws. Later, Malson sank two more free throws to put Mercy up 52-48. Regina scored its final hoop with three seconds left.

It was Mercy's sixth consecutive win after losing two of its first three league games.

"We were real pleased with our win tonight," Mercy coach Larry Baker said. "We came out flat and didn't shoot particularly well in the first half. But the girls played an ex-

girls basketball

remely smart game when they got behind. They didn't panic and were very patient with the ball. It was a good win. Regina plays us very tough in our gym."

Last year Mercy beat Regina on Margaret DeMattia's put-back shot at the buzzer.

Mercy (11-4 overall) got 15 points from both Herberholz and DeMattia and 13 from Malson. Slosar chipped in with 15 rebounds. Mercy is still without the services of injured starter Adrienne Clark. Baker said her status is "day to day" and he expects her back before next week's Catholic League playoffs.

Regina (5-4 in the league, 9-6 overall) had three players score 10 points.

W.L. CENTRAL 62, N. FARMINGTON 42: Not unlike the first meeting between these two Western Lakes Division teams, Walled Lake Central came storming out of the gates to a 15-8 lead. It never looked back.

Pam Fitzgerald led the Vikings with 14 points and 11 rebounds. Leah Vislides added 13 points. Central is 13-3 overall and 10-3 in the league.

Jenny Basford scored 11 points to pace North (6-7 in the league, 7-9 overall). Suzi Butcher added 10 points and seven rebounds. Renee Fishell scored six.

CHURCHILL 52, HARRISON 21: Playing without starters Lesley Devine (ankle injury) and Kris Waldmann (thumb injury), Farmington Harrison faced a tough assignment Tuesday.

Julie Seruggs (9) and Tracy Greenwald (9) combined for 17 points to lead Churchill (8-5 in the league, 9-5 overall).

The winless Hawks got nine points from Laura Bisiolek and six from Tracey Radke.

SALEM 79, FARMINGTON 17: Four Plymouth Salem players, led by Dena Head's 24, combined for 64 points Tuesday.

The Rocks (13-0 in the Western Lakes, 15-1 overall) led 26-0 after a quarter and 33-6 at the half.

Stacy Swanderski led Farmington with seven points. The Falcons fall to 1-12 in the league and 1-15 on the season.



RANDY BORSI/staff photographer

Renee Fishell scored six points in North Farmington's loss Tuesday.

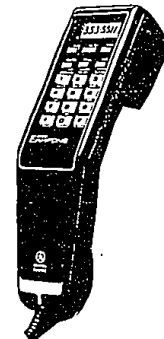
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