

Sports

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(F1C)

Expectations high for Mercy softball

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

When Farmington Hills Mercy became one of eight softball teams still alive in the state tournament last season, the Marlins raised a few eyebrows and stirred talk about their 1988 potential.

Mercy pounded regional host Hazel Park in its first game and nearly defeated highly-regarded Garden City in the final. A win would have put them in the state semis.

The Marlins, who were 19-9 and tied with Birmingham Marian for second place in the Central Division of the Catholic League, return all but one starter from that team, and they are setting their goals high.

Suzanne Brown begins her third year as Mercy's coach, and the team's 15 seniors have been under her tutelage for that long.

"IF THEY DON'T do it now, there's not much else I can teach them," Brown said.

Her first year as coach, when she set out to teach softball fundamentals and expand her players' conception of the game, may have come as a "shock" to some.

The Marlins began putting into practice what they had learned last year, and this season, with a veteran team in camp, could be the year Mercy puts it all together.

"It's their turn to show me what they've learned and how they're going to use it," Brown said. "Not to put pressure on them, but they know what we're thinking."

Mercy's goal is to go a step farther than it did last year and advance to the Final Four in the state tournament, Brown said.

In addition, the Marlins, who open today with a home double-header

softball

against Allen Park Cabriot at 4 p.m., are aiming to win all of their league games, replace Harper Woods Regina as the division champ and capture their first Catholic League title.

IN ITS EFFORT to reach those goals, Mercy has one of the area's best pitchers heading the list of returning players, junior Amy Edward. She had all of the '87 decisions and was named to the second-team Observer honor squad.

"I have her throwing every game," Brown said. "We have a couple back-ups but no one like her."

Edward's ability is not restricted to the mound. She is more than capa-

ble with the bat and is probably Mercy's leading hitter, certainly its best power hitter.

"I've never seen a girl hit the ball as hard as Amy," Brown said. "She hardly ever hits singles. She's definitely an all-round ballplayer."

Jenny Goff, a 6-foot sophomore, could develop into a fine pitcher, too, but she'll play on the junior varsity where she can do just that since Edward has shown she can handle all of the pitching. Freshman Maureen Pavlin also can pitch, but will be used as a varsity outfielder.

"(GOFF) WILL throw with more speed than Amy, but she doesn't have the repertoire of pitches Amy does," Brown said.

Complementing Edward's experience on the mound is senior Nicki Fraser, who was the catcher on the All-Observer team last year. Her

forte is defense, and she is quick on the bases, Brown said.

Junior Lisa Cook, a third-year varsity player, is a stronger hitter and will get playing time behind the plate and also be used as the designated hitter.

The Marlins return their second-and-short combination of seniors Molly McWood (second base), who was an honorable mention all-stater, and Kristin Orlandoni (shortstop).

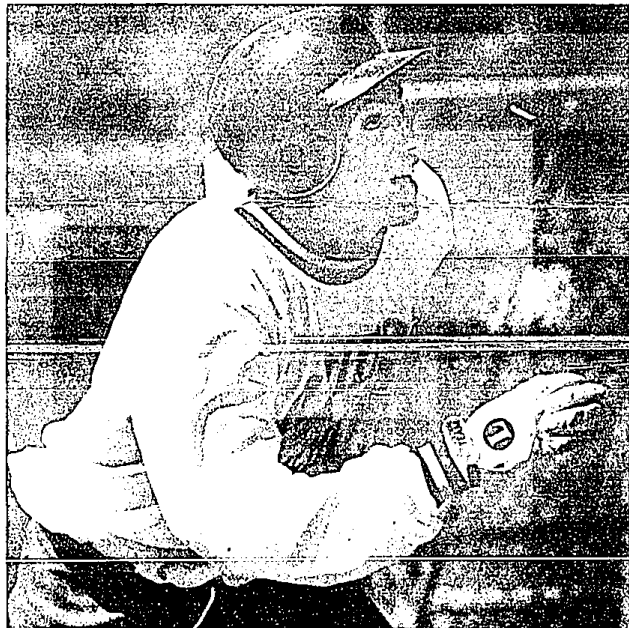
Orlandoni, the leadoff person, batted .300 and is a line-drive type of hitter. McWood, who was second in the order last year, is a good bunter, quick on the bases and the team sparkplug, Brown said.

BROWN MAY rearrange her batting order to get more run production. Too often last season, Orlandoni



Nicki Fraser
All-Observer/lead catcher

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RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Jay Marcoux follows the flight of the baseball during a combined practice Friday between the North Farmington and Farmington teams.

Marcoux will start in the outfield for the Raiders.

Foursome of veterans central to North's diamond campaign

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

North Farmington baseball coach Irv Horwitz will build his 1988 team around a nucleus of four returning starters, a group that includes junior Joe Sturtz.

Horwitz is hoping for a big year from Sturtz, who earned all-Lakes Division honors after hitting .415 with 15 runs batted in and three homers as a sophomore.

"If he has the year he had last year, he's going to be one of the premier hitters around," said Horwitz, adding he believes other teams will try to pitch around the team's center fielder.

The 5-foot-10, 165-pound Sturtz will bat third in the order again, and Horwitz plans to put strong hitters such as senior Scott Simon, another of the key returns, on either side of him to give opponents something to think about if they hope to avoid Sturtz's bat.

"HE'S GOING TO be a good one," Horwitz added. "I think he's going to be college material."

Sturtz, who was a leadoff hitter and hit eight home runs on the JV team before being called up to the varsity, also led the team with 19 runs scored, walked 11 times and had 22 hits in 53 at-bats and produced a 625 on-base percentage.

Simon, who returns at shortstop, hit .323, scored 11 runs, drove in five, and both of his home runs came in the same game against Walled Lake Central.

The Raiders, who were 5-12 last



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Andy Drake is expected to be North's top pitcher.

year, have junior Jerry Hakala behind the plate and Vandy Hill in the outfield again.

Hakala's batting average was .265, and he collected 10 RBI and scored eight runs. Hill, who moves from right to left field this year, hit .320, had 16 hits and nine RBI and scored seven runs.

"WITH STURTZ, Simon and the others, the hitting will be good, and we'll be able to score some runs if we can hold the other teams," said Horwitz, referring to his concern about lack of experienced pitching.

Senior Todd Gesund, who played behind Jerry Haight, takes over at second base and will be a co-captain along with Simon. In 29 plate ap-

pearances, he hit .310 and had five RBI.

Senior Greg Orman also assumes full-time duty at first base, and senior Mike Mackie, who played JV ball last year, completes the starting infield at the hot corner.

Senior Jay Marcoux, a varsity returnee, takes Hill's place in right field where he will have to contend with fly balls on bright, sunny days.

Pitching is the big question mark since North graduated Rick Karcher, who is on scholarship at Indiana University, Rob Knapp and Mark Taylor. The Raiders also lost Trent Hines, their leading hitter a year ago with a .466 average.

RIGHT-HANDED senior Andy Drake, who also can play third, will be the No. 1 pitcher. He is the most experienced, having worked 15 innings and had one decision and a save last year.

Seniors Bob Bullach and Rick Rachner, both right-handers, will spend time on the mound, too. Bullach pitched 13 innings on the varsity, and Rachner played for the JV team.

"We'll have a fairly good defensive team, and if these guys can throw strikes we should do OK," Horwitz said. "The key is for them to get experience, but the season comes and goes before you know it."

"I think we can surprise some people if the pitching comes through," he added. "We're not a contender with John Glenn and Salem, but we can be a spoiler and knock off some people if we get our confidence going."

Trying for two Marlins would like to add track honors

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Coach Gary Servais would like to see his Mercy girls track team do the same as the cross country squad did last October: win the Catholic League championship.

In his first year as coach of the fall sport, Servais guided the Marlins to such heights, and he will try to do the same in track after spending last year coaching the Berkeley boys team and the previous four directing Harper Woods Regina's squad.

That might be asking a lot since Redford Bishop Borgoes and Dearborn Divine Child have dominated the league meet in recent years, but third place would be a realistic goal for Mercy, according to Servais.

The Marlins, who were 4-3 in dual meets and sixth in the league meet, have their top cross country runners out for track, and three promising freshmen help to make the distance runs an especially strong area.

SENIORS MOIRA Kordel and Barb Cheaney were second and 11th, respectively, in league cross country. However, Kordel (tendonitis) and Cheaney (illness) have been slowed in their preseason progress, but both are expected to make key contributions.

"We're pretty loaded in the sprints. We have good ones, but we're not outstanding. That's going to help us, because most teams have one real good (sprinter), but we have four or five good ones."

— Gary Servais
Mercy track coach

"It depends on the teams we're going up against," said Servais of the strength of his distance contingent. "We can't compete with Ann Arbor Pioneer (the state champ in cross country), but we're pretty strong all over against league teams."

"Distance will be strong, and I've never had a team with this much speed. We've got a lot of depth (40 athletes participating, including many freshmen and sophomores).

"We have to find events for everybody and get the relay teams work-

ing together," he added.

MERCY WILL BE just as good in the shorter runs, too. Seniors Michelle Smith and Benita Brown anchor the 400- and 800-meter relay teams, and sophomore Kim Cook, freshman Nikki Glass and sophomore Sue Mello run the 100 and 400 sprints.

Besides being Mercy's best in the long jump and high jump, senior Caroline Semerjian runs the open 400; as well as the mile and 400 relays. Mello, who gives the Marlins two quality people in the 400 relay, has been timed at 55.5 in the 100.

"We're pretty loaded in the sprints," Servais said. "We have good ones, but we're not outstanding. That's going to help us, because

track

most teams have one real good (sprinter), but we have four or five good ones."

Gerick and Sullivan have turned in 2:36.0 and 2:40.0 times for 800 meters, and Servais said Mercy's depth gives him a lot of options from that event on up.

SEMERJIAN, WHO has been nursing an injury, has reached 5 feet in the high jump and 15 feet in the long jump.

Sophomore Mary Beth Strand and a trio of freshmen provide depth in the high jump. Junior Dana Woodley and Strand are Mercy's best hurdlers.

The Marlins look to juniors Charise Sanders, the daughter of former Detroit Lions tight end Charlie Sanders, and Jeanette Turner, to lead the way in the shot put and discus. While both can do either event, Sanders has thrown the shot 33-8 and Turner the discus 90 feet.

Mercy opens the Central Division dual-meet season Wednesday, April 30, against Regina.

No lie! Harrison coach is confident Hawks will do well

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

Farmington Hills Harrison boys tennis coach Bernie Goldstein claims to be telling the truth when he accuses all coaches of fibbing a little during the preseason.

Even he is a guilty party. "Everyone lies a little during the preseason," Goldstein said. "We've got to play each other to see who's good. I lie, too."

But Goldstein claims he isn't blowing smoke when he says the Hawks will put a top-notch team on the courts. They were 4-3 in dual meets and sixth in the 13-team Western Lakes Activities Association last year.

Harrison will miss No. 1 singles player Kenny Davidson, who has graduated. He was a three-time defending conference champion, before losing in the semifinals last year.

"It's obviously a big loss," Goldstein said. "But we've got good, strong depth this year, plus a couple of newcomers and two kids (Brad Small and Jamie Ryke) who really improved."

Small, a junior, played sparingly last year, but has improved enough

tennis

to earn the No. 3 singles spot behind No. 2 Brian Frederick and No. 1 David Jaffe, both seniors. Ryke, who played No. 2 doubles in 1987, earned the No. 4 singles position.

Goldstein expects Small and Ryke to provide enough depth for Harrison in singles play behind Frederick and Jaffe.

"Small and Ryke played a lot during the last year and they want to be good," Goldstein said. "If you make the effort, you get better. These two will earn whatever they get this year, because they've worked hard."

Two of the four doubles teams already have been determined, Goldstein said. Playing No. 1 doubles are junior Sean Haines, a transfer student from Oak, and Rick Erickson.

The sophomore tandem of Todd Horvath and Chris Sandfield make up the No. 2 doubles team.