

Sports

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Bump, set, spike

City netters ready for '91 season

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

With one of the area's top hitters and a pair of experienced setters, North Farmington hopes to contend for the Lakes Division volleyball championship this year.

The Raiders were runners-up to perennial power Livonia Stevenson in the division last year, finishing 6-4 in the Lakes and 15-12 overall in the regular season. North placed fourth in the Western Lakes Activities Association tournament.

North graduated its leading hitters from a year ago, Courtney Knapp and Vikki Seamon, but the losses are offset by the return of 5-foot-7 senior Eve Clair, who will be the main attacker in 1991.

"Her hitting has improved tremendously," North coach Sandy Lubieniecki said. "She can tip the ball and put it anywhere on the court. She can block anybody; it doesn't matter how tall they are."

Clair, a two-time, all-area basketball player who accepted a scholarship from Central Michigan in that sport, was the team's No. 3 hitter last year. She had 123 spiking kills and 68 tips for point. Clair had an impressive .29-percent attacking

volleyball

rate, and she also was second in serve reception and digging.

"She's an all-around good player," Lubieniecki said. "Spiking, tipping or blocking, she should be one of the top girls out of the 12 teams (in the WLA)."

Setting the ball for Clair and the other attackers will senior Dana Botwick and junior Karen Seremet, both of whom gained experience at that position last year.

Seremet missed the last quarter of the season with mononucleosis, but both players are of sufficient ability that Lubieniecki plans to use a 6-2 alignment with both staying in the game.

"Both setters are hitting this year, which they're enjoying," Lubieniecki said. "Both are two of our top athletes, so we want both of them on the floor."

Having two capable setters like Botwick, who led the team in assists, and Seremet also helps to lessen the loss of Knapp and Seamon. They

are backed up by senior Andrea Borico.

"This year our setters are experienced, and the hitting is coming along well," Lubieniecki said. "Those are the toughest spots to fill when you lose your setters."

"Both were first-year varsity players last year. We were hurt when Karen missed the end of the season, but both got a lot of time. The game really comes along when you get the setting."

Joining Clair in the front row will be 5-8 junior Sarah Lundgren and 5-5 junior Karen Miller. Both started in the back row last year, but they're versatile enough to play in the front, according to Lubieniecki. Lundgren also will be the No. 1 server after grading 92 percent last year.

"Sarah and Karen didn't play a lot in the front row, but they got a lot of experience. We had a tendency to go to other girls, and they didn't get a lot of attacks."

"We used (Miller) in the back row, because we had some taller girls and she was one of our top passers and servers."

North's sixth starter will be 5-10 senior Christy Krall, an outside hitter who was a varsity reserve. She will serve as tri-captain along with Clair and Botwick.

"She really helps us blocking and hitting," Lubieniecki said, adding Krall is a "dynamic server."

Other varsity players are junior Yui Nakamura, Liz Whiteman and Tracey Miller, sophomores Stefanie White and Michelle Bohne. Nakamura is a back-row player, and the others are hitters.

In their only competition thus far, the Raiders were third in the Harrison tournament. North was 4-2 in pool play but lost in the semifinals. The Raiders beat Farmington 15-9 to win the consolation game.

"I think our division is stronger all the way through," Lubieniecki said. "I feel if we play as we're capable of playing, we can compete with any of the other five teams."

HARRISON

With a veteran team, the Hawks hope to move up from the Western Division cellar this year.

Harrison finished last and was 5-22 overall with a young team that included only two seniors a year ago.

Now the Hawks are more experienced and boast six seniors among their nine varsity players.

"As a team, we've shown a lot of improvement in skills, but we have to put it together on the floor yet," Harrison coach Ron Shortt said. "With all the seniors, I'm hoping they'll come through and get the team to jell."

"One problem is we've been a team of younger players for years and years, and these players have to learn to be leaders. There's a lot of desire on the part of the kids to do well."

The seniors are Lisa Vosler, Carrie Hentnik, Kari Harder, Melanie

Alcantara, Shelly Bouwens and Cheryl Monahan.

Vosler is a 5-6 setter entering her third year as the starter. She is an attacker, also.

Hentnik and Alcantara are returning starters at hitting positions. Hentnik, the team's tallest player at 5-9, is one of the middle hitters, and Alcantara plays outside hitter.

The other middle hitter will be sophomore Julie Hest, who started in the front row for the first time last year. She always has been an excellent passer and back-row player, Shortt said.

Harder has shown a lot of improvement, according to her coach, and will start opposite Alcantara at outside hitter.

Bouwens, who was a setter last year, and Monahan, a part-time starter, will rotate at the hitting positions along with junior Josh Whitehead, who begins her second year of volleyball and first on the varsity.

The Hawks must refine their hitting, according to Shortt.

"What I've seen so far is we're passing much better, but the hitting is not quite there," he said. "We have to work on our choice of when to hit the ball hard and when to place the ball."

"But we have a tendency to get the ball to the setter a lot better than we have in the past. Hopefully, the rest comes around."

The setting aspect of Harrison's game is fine with Vosler and freshman Amanda Ault, who will start in the two-setter lineup.

"Lisa has a real good head on her," Shortt said. "She knows when to dump the ball and when to get it to people. (Ault) has played AAU volleyball the last two years, so she brings a lot of experience to the team."

In their own tournament last month, the Hawks played well but just didn't score enough points, Shortt said, adding Harrison lost several games by 15-11, 15-12 margins.

"It was a learning experience," he said. "With a couple more games under our belt, I think we'll be an improved team, hopefully better than last year."



Patti Hansen returns for another year with the Falcons and will be one of Farmington's main attackers, playing middle hitter.

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staff photo

Carrie Hentnik is one of six seniors on the Harrison volleyball team, one of the most experienced squads the Hawks have put on the court.

St. Mary's rally falls shy in tourney loss to Lakers

A second-half rally pulled St. Mary's College to within a point of Grand Valley State Saturday, but the Eagles couldn't keep the momentum going and eventually bowed 105-89 in the final of their Eagle Alumni/Optimist Basketball Classic at Dom Jrowski Fieldhouse.

St. Mary's slipped to 9-7 with the loss, its second this season to Grand Valley. The Lakers are 9-2. The Eagles are currently on the road at the National Catholic Basketball Tournament, a 16-team annual affair in Dubuque, Iowa.

A first-half Grand Valley barrage put St. Mary's into a hole it could not climb out of. The Lakers had a 56-48 halftime lead and increased it to 17 early in the second half before the Eagles started to battle back. A Jimmy Bolden three-pointer pulled St. Mary's to within 81-80 with 7:52 left.

But the Eagles never overtook Grand Valley. Part of the problem was Bolden's foul trouble (he had four in the first half), combined with the loss of point guard Penny Butcher, out for two weeks with a strained knee.

IN SPITE of his foul problems, Bolden came within a rebound of a triple-double (14 points, 10 assists,

basketball

nine boards) The Eagles were still within striking distance in the final three minutes, trailing 88-84 after a James Gillespie basket.

But a three-point play by the Lakers' Joe Schintema pushed the gap to seven (91-84). Garth Howard closed it to 91-86 with 1:39 left, but Grand Valley hit its free throws, outscoring St. Mary's 14-3 down the stretch.

Howard led the Eagles with 24 points. Gillespie netted 20, but he made just three of 21 shots. Jeff Suspek added 12 points. Shawn O'Mara's 19 points paced Grand Valley, with Brent Wirlhizer getting 18, Todd Jenks 17, Charlie Mandt (from Troy) 15 (and six rebounds) and Schintema 14.

Against Lake Superior State in its opener Friday, St. Mary's used a pressure defense to effectively increase the tempo of the game, and that helped the Eagles post a 98-87 win. Grand Valley defeated Union College (Ky.) 97-82 Friday.

THE MOST points allowed in a game by Lake Superior (74) prior to this game was 72, so St. Mary's did what it had to do to win. Five Eagles reached double figures in scoring, led by Suspek's 21.

Marvin Morrison had 18 and eight rebounds. Bolden had 17 (including 11-of-11 free throws) points, 13 assists and five steals. Gillespie netted 12 points and nine boards, and Howard scored 12.

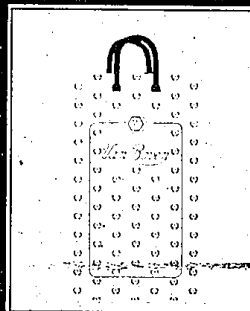
Bobby Allen collected 23 points and 10 rebounds for Lake Superior, with Brett Zuerer scoring 16, Rick Gray 14 and Carlos Fordham 12.

St. Mary's played its opener in the National Catholic Tournament yesterday against the College of Notre Dame (from Belmont, Calif.), and the Eagles were hoping for something better than their previous tournament slumps. They had not won a first-round game in three previous appearances under coach Glen Danahue.

St. Mary's meets Viturbo, the No. 1 seed in the tournament, at 4 p.m. today. Wins by the Eagles in both rounds earn them a place in Saturday's semifinals. A loss Wednesday or Thursday will put St. Mary's in Friday's consolation round.



Van Boven
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