Long day ends in AAU success

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

The Western-Wayne Wildcats found out what it's like to *really* work overtime Sunday in the Under-16 girls basketball AAU state tournament.

After losing in overtime, 61-59, late Sunday morning to the Michigan Defenders, the Wildcats went on to win three more games within the next six hours and capture the state AAU championship at Plymouth Canton.

The title earned the Wildcats a berth in the national tournament, scheduled for June 28-July 6 in Johnson City, Tenn.

Coach Fred Thomann's team deserves the time off. The Wildcats were 7-1 throughout the three-day tournament.

"This team did not fold at all and was very resilient (after losing the first game Sunday in the double-elimination tournament)," Thomann said. "They did a great job putting that loss behind them and going on to the next game. At that point and time in the tournament it becomes a game of who's got the best conditioned players and the where-with-all to play in adverse conditions. Four games in eight hours is tough."

Livonia Franklin's star junior guard Dawn Warner and Flint Powers' center Lisa Negri sparked the Wildcats' Sunday rally. After losing the overtime game to the Michigan Defenders, the Wildcats ousted the defending-champion Brick-City Bombers, 64-53, to reach the final round against (none other than) the Michigan Defenders.

girls basketball

NEGRI SCORED 19 points and Warner 16 as the Wildcats handed the Defenders their first defeat, 55-45. In the tourney's final game, the Wildcats jumped out to a five-point halftime lead and behind Negri's 19 points, defeated the Defenders, 59-51.

Warner's most-impressive game might have come Saturday when she scored 21 in a 63-54 win over her former teammates, the Brick-City Bombers.

Other Observerland players who excelled for the Wildcats included Salem's Darcie Miller, Franklin's Patty Shea, Canton's Julie Nicastri and Farmington Hills Mercy's Mary Bieniewicz.

"(Warner and Negri) are awfully good, and the other thing is we had good balance from other people," Thomann said. "Nicastri didn't score a lot, but did a lot of other things nicely, like keeping the ball alive on the glass, playing defense. Miller made some big free throws and rebounded real well."

The weekend, which also included the 18-Under championships, drew about 800 to 1,000 fans for the weekend at the three sites (Salem, Plymouth Canton and Northville), Thomann said.

"I'm already looking forward to next week (April 5-7 when Salem, Canton, Northville and Mercy host the 13-Under, 12-Under and 11-Under championships)," Thomann said.

THE 18-UNDER championship was won by the Michigan Defenders, a team coached by West Bloomfield's Ronna Greenberg. The Defenders cruised through the tourney with no losses in six games.

After winning the opener Friday night over the Oakland County Lady Knights, 92-86, the Defenders won their next five games by an average of 21.6 points.

Six players averaged in double figures for the Defenders, including North Farmington guard Eve Claar, who scored at an 11.0 clip. Claar scored 19 in a 90-65 win Sunday over the Michigan Royals when the Defenders clinched the title.

The Defenders also are scheduled to play in the national tourney, June 28-July 6 at Johnson City, Tenn.

"Eve Claar had a very, very good weekend and was real consistent," Greenberg said.

Claar was the first guard off the bench, playing behind this year's Miss Basketball, Markita Aldridge (Detroit King), and next year's leading candidate for the award, Tannisha Stevens (Mount Clemens). West Bloomfield guard Amira Danforth, who missed her senior year with a severe knee injury, played four minutes over the weekend and is eligible to play in the national tournament.

Livonia Ladywood players Rebecca Willey and Leslie Catanarite also contributed.

basketball

ALL-WESTERN LAKES ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION
BOYS BASKETBALL TEAMS

All-Conference: Jake Baker, senior, Plymouth Salem; Randy Calcatarra, senior, Livonia Churchill; K.C. Kirkpatrick, senior, Plymouth Salem; Paul McCreadie, senior, Northville; Keith Roberts, junior, Livonia Franklin; Andrew Smith, senior, Farmington Harrison.

All-Lakes Division: Bill Chwalik, senior, North Farmington; Steve Gallagher, junior, Farmington; Dan Gibbons, senior, Livonia Stevenson; Matt Grodzicki, junior, Livonia Stevenson; John Hoffmeyer, senior, Plymouth Salem; Joe Sharpe, senior, Walled Lake Central.

Final division standings: 1. Livonia Stevenson, 5-0. 2. Plymouth Salem, 4-1; 3. North Farmington, 3-2; 4. Walled Lake Central, 2-3; 5. Westland John Glenn, 1-4; 6. Farmington, 0-5.

All-Western Division: Paul Gilyydis, junior, Farmington Harrison; Kevin Holmes, senior, Plymouth Canton; Jeff Kubik, senior, Walled Lake Western; Steve McCool, senior, Livonia Franklin; Derrick McDonald, junior, Plymouth Canton; Mike Thomas, senior, Livonia Churchill.

Final division standings: 1. Farmington Harrison, 4-1; 2. (tie) Plymouth Canton, Northville and Livonia Churchill, 3-2 each; 5. (tie) Livonia Franklin and Walled Lake Western, 4-1 each.

HONORABLE MENTION

Plymouth Salem: Cliff Lee (senior), Mike Mulder (senior), Chris Tebben (senior); Plymouth Canton: Tony Coghatti (junior), Brett Howell (senior), Mike Stalford (sophomore); Livonia Stevenson: Phil Woods (senior), Colin Stockton (junior), Paul Rockwood (senior); Farmington Harrison: Andy Fitzpatrick (junior), Dan Hight (junior); Northville: Ryan Huzyak (junior), Mike Lang (senior); Livonia Churchill: Scott Bowser (senior), Brian D. Johnson (junior); North Farmington: Chris White (senior); Livonia Franklin: Steve Stasevich (senior), Dave Roman (senior), Russ Keberly (junior); Walled Lake Central: Ryan Dowd (senior), Chris McFarlane (sophomore); Walled Lake Western: Brent Mackowiak (sophomore); Farmington: Jayson Chudnow (senior), Rob Cook (senior).

ALL-NORTHWEST
SUBURBAN LEAGUE
BOYS BASKETBALL TEAMS

First team: Mohammed Abdrabboh, senior, Dearborn (league MVP); Derek Zion, senior, Dearborn; Derek Lowe, senior, Dearborn Edsel Ford; Nick Mulafis, senior, Garden City; Bill Malecki, junior, Redford Union; Ernie Nemeth, senior, Woodhaven.

Second team: Randy Nickel, senior, Dearborn; Paul Smith, senior, Dearborn Edsel Ford; Matt Johnson, senior, Garden City; Adam Malaynia, senior, Garden City; Chris Mulka, senior, Redford Union; Brad Shaw, senior, Woodhaven.

Honorable mention: Steve Harworth, junior, Dearborn; Ali Abdrabboh, sophomore, Dearborn; Jeff Schade, senior, Dearborn Edsel Ford; Jim Dapprich, junior, Dearborn Edsel Ford; Scott Marlbugh, senior, Garden City; Steve Zinbalatti, senior, Redford Union; Reeve McNitt, senior, Redford Union; Rafal Zorski, senior, Woodhaven; Ben Haynes, junior, Woodhaven.

All-Academic: Scott Marlbugh, 3.809 grade-point average, Garden City; Paul Parana, 3.684, Dearborn Edsel Ford; Reeve McNitt, 3.587, Redford Union; Paul Smith, 3.591, Dearborn Edsel Ford; Rafal Zorski, 3.5, Woodhaven; Jeff Moulton, 3.398, Dearborn; Brian Bolton, 3.388, Woodhaven; Matt Johnson, 3.238, Garden City; Derek Zion, 3.060, Dearborn; Randy Nickel, 3.009, Dearborn.

Allyson Newman
conference champion

Farmington's Newman wins Mid-Am title

Allyson Newman of Farmington and Eastern Michigan University won the all-around title Saturday in the Mid-American Conference gymnastics championships.

Newman scored 37.40 to capture first place in Mount Pleasant. She was third on the balance beam with a 9.50 score and fourth on the uneven bars with a 9.45. She also scored 9.30 on floor exercise and 9.15 on vault.

Newman advances to the regional championships April 6-7 at Auburn University. In a meet on March 9 in Radford, Va., Newman broke her school record on bars with a 9.75. The old record was 9.70.

college sports

Baseball season has begun — collegiately speaking. Indeed, some teams are quickly approaching the mid-point of their campaigns, having played more than 20 games already.

One player off to a fast start for University of Michigan's team is junior righthanded pitcher Todd Marion, from Plymouth Salem. In a 9-8 Wolverine win over South Alabama, Marion notched his fourth save in as many attempts, then added his first win of the year in U-M's 6-5 victory over Notre Dame.

Marion, who holds the school record for saves in a season, could not have a better record. He's pitched eight innings in six appearances, allowing six hits and a walk while striking out nine. He has yet to surrender a run. Through 11 games, U-M was 8-3 . . .

SOME OTHER Observer products are enjoying quick starts. Included is Redford Thurston graduate Art George. Playing for the University of Evansville, George was batting .324 through 11 games, with four doubles, one home run, six runs batted in and six stolen bases in seven attempts. His batting average was second among regulars on the Aces, who were 7-3-1.

Tim Dowd's Central Michigan University team wasn't off to a great start, going 5-6. But Dowd, a senior from Plymouth (Salem), was doing his share. The outfielder had played eight games and was hitting .417. His 10 hits, two doubles and eight RBI were tied for second among the Chippewas . . .

SOFTBALL IS well underway, too. So is University of Detroit junior Denise Tackett, another Salem HS graduate. Tackett was third in batting in the Midwestern Collegiate Conference at .375, her 15 hits ranked second. She had six RBI for the Lady Titans, who were 8-7 overall . . .

NOW BASKETBALL. We'll start with academics. Jessica Handley, a senior at Saginaw Valley State from Salem HS, was named to the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference all-academic squad. Handley, who set a new school career record for assists, carries a 3.70 grade-point average, with a pre-law major.

Most schools hoop season has concluded, so here are some final stats on Observer players.

Katie McNulty, from Livonia Ladywood, averaged 6.5 points and 5.4 rebounds a game for Bowling Green State, which finished 14-15 overall (9-7 in the Mid-American Conference). She led the team in blocked shots with 30 and was second in rebounding, despite averaging just 17.7 minutes a game.

Sue Nissen, from Redford (Dearborn Divine Child), completed her collegiate basketball career the same way she played it throughout — in style. Nissen averaged 16.3 points, 7.1 rebounds and 3.2 assists, making 49.5 percent of her shots, while guiding the Lady Chippewas to a 21-8 record. She finished her career with 1,938 points — best in school history and third-highest in MAC history.

Jennifer Okon, from Westland (John Glenn), is also done with basketball. Okon's Northern Michigan team did not end its season without a fight, however, reaching the NCAA Division II regional finals before bowing out. Okon averaged 8.5 points and 5.2 rebounds as a starting forward, making 46 percent of her floor shots and 84 percent of her free throws. NMU finished 22-9.

Bill Vitti, a junior at Saginaw Valley State from Redford (Catholic Central), was the chairman of the boards in the GLIAC this season. Vitti led the conference in rebounding with a 9.7 average; the 6-foot-6 center also averaged 10.7 points while making 58.8 percent of his shots, third-best in the GLIAC, and had 50 blocked shots. Vitti was second-team all-GLIAC and was a member of the all-defensive team. The Cardinals finished 13-14 overall.

The fate of Parrish Hickman's Michigan State basketball team was widely witnessed. The Spartans bowed out in the second round of the NCAA tournament with a double-overtime loss to Utah. Hickman, a junior from Redford Bishop Borgess, filled his sixth-player role by averaging six points and 3.7 rebounds a game. His best games: 15 points in a win over Northwestern, 10 boards in a loss to Nebraska.

Jill Estey, a sophomore at the University of Illinois, saw her team struggle to a 9-19 record (6-12 in the Big Ten), but she had a solid season. Estey averaged just 3.7 points, but the point guard also dished out 5.5 assists and made two steals a game. Her best games: 14 points, seven assists and five rebounds in a win over Minnesota, and twice dishing out 11 assists in a game . . .

SALEM YAFFAI, a senior on University of Michigan's wrestling team from Plymouth (Salem), won his first match at the NCAA Tournament before losing twice in the 118-pound division. His first loss came against eventual champ Chad Zaputil of Iowa.

Yaffai finished with a 17-7-2 overall record, 9-1-1 in the Big Ten. In the Big Ten meet, Yaffai lost to Zaputil in the championship match . . .

TWO KALAMAZOO COLLEGE swim team members selected to the all-Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association have Observerland backgrounds. Sophomore diver Jim Davis, from Canton (Wayne Memorial HS), and Cindy Grush, a sophomore from Farmington (Mercy HS), were each honored.

Grush placed third at the MIAA meet in both the 100-yard and 200-yard breaststroke and was fifth in the 500 freestyle. Kalamazoo College won the MIAA women's title and was second in the men's . . .

NORTHERN MICHIGAN'S hockey team will be playing for the NCAA championship this weekend in Minneapolis-St. Paul, thanks in part to the play of senior goalie Bill Pye and junior winger Mark Beaufait.

Pye, from Plymouth Canton HS, was an all-Western Collegiate Hockey Association selection and was named MVP of the WCHA playoffs for the second time in three years. He has a 2.68 goals-against average, with four shutouts. Beaufait, from Livonia, was named to the all-WCHA playoff team; he has 18 goals and 27 assists for the 36-5-4 Wildcats . . .

BRIAN MULCAHY completed his sophomore season as a member of the Kent State hockey team strongly. The Livonia native was third on the Golden Flashes in scoring with 14 goals and 14 assists (28 points). His best scoring effort came against Miami of Ohio, when he netted a hat trick. Kent State finished 10-22-3.

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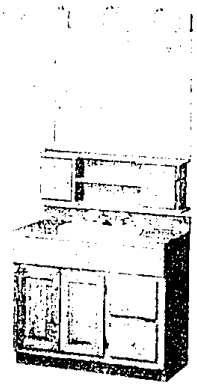

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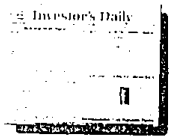

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