

Sports

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Pickle predicament

Farmington Hills Mercy softball player Kathleen Berrigan got caught in a pickle in the first game of Thursday's double-header with Ann Arbor Huron. The Marlins had plenty of offense to win both games by shutout. See story on Page 3C.

SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

MSU player's dad questions fairness

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Millard Coleman Sr. said he was fulfilling his parental duty and exercising his right in that role when he questioned the way his son, former Farmington Hills Harrison quarterback Mill Coleman Jr., was used in the Michigan State University spring football game April 27.

The younger Coleman, who led the Hawks to three Class B finals and two state championships, is one of four quarterbacks challenging for starting job at MSU.

Millard Sr. in a story that appeared last week in the Detroit Free Press, expressed concern about the type of plays called when his son was directing the offense and his inability to demonstrate his talent fully.

He said he will meet with MSU head coach George Perles in the near future to discuss the matter and also clear the air.

"I will express the same things and be honest as a concerned parent," Millard Sr. said. "I hope to defuse any perception the coaches might have from the comments that were made."

"I HOPE nobody took it in a negative way. I don't call the shots; I'm not trying to tell anybody how to do their job or making idle threats."

But as a parent I have the right to express my concern about my son's development. I've always monitored Mill's progress to see if I could help, but I have never interfered.

Mill Jr., a redshirted freshman, is competing UCLA transfer Bret Johnson and John Gieselman, both

football

juniors, and sophomore Jim Miller to replace Dan Enos.

In high school, Coleman excelled as a rollout quarterback who could stretch the defense and keep it guessing with his combined running and passing ability. He passed for more than 7,000 yards during his career and became the all-time passing leader in Michigan.

His father thought the type of plays used in the MSU game were more suited for dropback-style quarterbacks. The Spartans showed some diversity, but the offenses were not "heavily weighted" in their use of rollout, bootleg and option plays, according to the elder Coleman, a regional manager for State Farm Insurance.

"I'm concerned about the system at Michigan State utilizing all of Mill's skills," he said. "If they're really going to be fair about assessing talent, they can't do it if one quarterback is more suited to one style and another suited to another."

"THE PORTION of the offense they've put in is centered around dropping back. Mill can drop back, but that's not the most effective way of using his passing skill. If you're going with a dropback offense, you take away a great portion of Mill's ability."

Millard Sr. said the MSU coaches should have allowed the QBs who are dropback passers to run plays suited to their abilities and someone like Mill Jr., a shorter, speedier QB,

to run plays tailored to his talents. They could make a decision after reviewing the scrimmage as to which style and QB was best.

"If you're going to give (Mill) a fair shot, you have to give him a chance to show what he can do," Millard Sr. said. "I'm not trying to say Mill is better than this guy or that guy."

"My intention is not to put my son on a pedestal and expect him to do something he can't do. Mill's record stands for itself in spite of me. I can go to the record book and point to what he's accomplished."

Coleman said he realized his comments might be perceived as meddling and had public relations, but he hoped that wasn't the case and doesn't regret speaking his mind.

"The risk of being silent and not saying anything (is greater)," he said. "They needed to know there was some concern."

"I THOUGHT I said it in such a way that it was not going to be interpreted that way and would not hurt Mill's consideration. I hope I'm dealing with a group of people mature enough to sense that."

"People might make something negative out of it, but I would be more remorseful if I hadn't said anything. I wasn't saying anything I wouldn't say to George or anyone else, because I wasn't criticizing anyone. I just wish we could have seen more of what (Mill Jr.) can do."

Coleman was 4-of-8 passing and ran once for 16 yards as his Green team defeated the White 22-10. Johnson, playing for the opposition, was 11-of-18 for 156 yards. Miller, who

Please turn to Page 3

Rocks best team in Observerland meet

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Plymouth Salem had the best of both worlds in boys track and field last week.

After putting all of their energy into beating Westland John Glenn in a key dual meet Thursday, the Rocks had enough left to come back two days later and win the Observerland Relays.

And their main competition again was defending champion Glenn. Salem scored 83 points to win its second title in five years Saturday at Livonia Churchill, and the Rockets finished second with 70.

"We felt if we could beat John Glenn in the dual we would be in the driver's seat coming into this meet," Salem coach Gary Balconi said.

"We came in believing we were the best team. Their record demonstrates it. They've had three good weekends (winning three straight relay meets), and they've won their duals."

"THESE KIDS love track and field. At the Elks meet, when the weather was so bad, Jim Ramsay

said: 'As long as we're here, we might as well win it,' and we've adopted that as our motto."

The Rocks won five events and scored in all but three of the 16. Salem's last victory came in the 1,600-meter relay, and the Rocks needed a good showing to hold off Glenn.

The Rockets trailed Salem by only five points (73-68) entering that final event. Salem's Joe Pawluszka, Jake Baker, Mike Patterson and Andy Rzeski fought off a challenge from Northville to win it, while Glenn was fifth.

"We had four seniors in there," Balconi said. "We talked ahead of time, and I said 'This is it, guys. This is the greatest event in track; go get it.'"

The Rocks started with two victories in the field events, winning the discus and the long jump, and they were tied for third in the shot put and fourth in the high jump. Salem never competes in pole vault.

Rob Casler, Steve Balog and Brian Schumacher won the discus while Leon Hister, Jim Ramsay and Don Johnson captured first in the long jump.

"We knew we had to get off to a

boys track

running start and we did," Balconi said.

"IT GOES back to being a balanced team. Where we don't have anybody outstanding, we have three good kids in every event. If you have one good one, you might beat us. But if you don't, all three of ours are going to beat you."

Salem started the running finals by winning the 6,400 relay with the team of Steve Boudreau, Derek Cudini, Jason McDonald and John Thomas.

Ramsay got third place in the open high hurdles, and the Rocks were fourth in the distance medley and 800 relays before winning the 3,200 relay with the team of McDonald, Cudini, Thomas and Patterson.

"The base of our team is the distance kids and we work from there," Balconi said. "We wanted to be in the hunt in every event, and there

wasn't an event we didn't think we could score in."

Salem also was third in the sprint medley, and it was sixth in the 100 dash with Matt Perron and the 400 relay. The 1,600 run and shuttle hurdle relay were the only track events in which Salem didn't score.

"It's been a real pleasure to coach this team," Balconi said. "Any time you score 83 points in a meet as tough as this one, all of them contributed."

GLENN'S LONE victory was in the high jump with Chris Vanderburgh, Terry Hewer and Bill Griffiths, but the Rockets had four seconds and scored 30 points in the last five events to narrow the gap between themselves and Salem.

"We were a little spent at the end," Glenn coach Jess Shough said. "We moved on them but not enough. They had us by 18 at one point."

"The difference in the meet is that Salem has real depth. But our guys still did what they could. They gave it all they had, and I'm real proud of them."

Wayne Memorial was third and had five first places, including a meet record of 14.6 by James Grady in the high hurdles. Paul Blawie (Redford Bishop Burgess), Mike White (Salem) and Jason Belaire (Churchill) shared the old record at 14.7.

The Zebras, who won the title in 1988, also were first in the 800, sprint medley and 400 relays, and Alan Buford anchored all three of those teams and won the 100 dash in 11 seconds.

"For having only 14 people, it was an excellent performance," Wayne assistant coach Ken Szamansky said. "Buford and Grady are excellent leaders on and off the track. They work hard and it shows. Buford is just a workhorse, and Grady doesn't slack off either."

Redford Catholic Central was fifth and did best in the pole vault and three distance relays, with second place in all four events.

"WE HAD some young kids who ran really well (in the distance events), but we got no points in the sprints," CC coach Tony Magni said. "We scored in the pole vault and it's not even an event for us (in the Catholic League)."

Farmington was sixth and scored 46 points without all-state distance runner Ben Goba. The Falcons, who were in second place halfway through the meet, won the shuttle hurdle relay and the pole vault, and Jason Tucker had the best individual high jump at 6-4.

"We did real well in the field



JIM JAGGELD/staff photographer

Brandon Richardson helped Farmington win the pole vault Saturday at the Observerland Relays. Chris Marling vaulted 11-8, Richardson 11-0 and Ryan Adams 10-0.

events," Farmington coach Jerry Young said, "and our vaulters were probably the biggest surprise (Chris Marling is a good vaulter but he hasn't done much this year, and we switched one of our distance kids (Ryan Adams) over to vaulting this year. We put him there a couple weeks ago because we needed somebody and it worked out well."

"We thought we would do well (in

the hurdles) Joe Miller ran well all day. He anchored that event, ran the open highs (second) and was on the 400 and 800 relays."

Farmington Hills Harrison won the shot put for the third consecutive year with the trio of Tony Shaieb, Blazo Sarcevic and Leon Jefferson. Canton won the distance medley, and Livonia Stevenson's Rodney Westlake won the open 1,600 run.



JIM JAGGELD/staff photographer

Tony Shaieb, Blazo Sarcevic and Leon Jefferson combined efforts to give Harrison first place in the shot put for the third consecutive year at the Observerland Relays. Shaieb threw the shot 48-11, Sarcevic 47-0 and Jefferson 41-3.