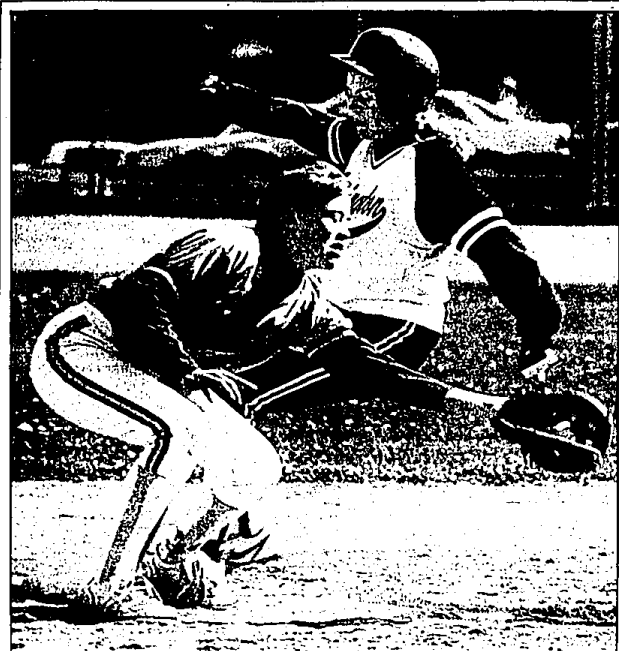




SHARON LAM/EOJ/staff photographer

Safe at second

Kerri Finlayson of Farmington arrives at second base just ahead of the throw to Harrison infielder Amanda Ault in softball action

Tuesday. The Falcons won the game 8-7. See story on Page 2B for details on that and other games.

SF coaching rule stirs controversy

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

The repercussions from the case against accused child molester James William Stoller are being felt in the South Farmington Baseball Club.

Stoller is the Southfield man charged with sexually molesting boys between the ages of 10 and 13 while he was a coach in the Garden City Youth Athletic Association. He is awaiting trial in Oakland County.

As a result of the alleged incidents in that league, the South Farmington board of directors passed a rule April 30 that will prohibit any adult without a child in the program from coaching or managing a team following the end of the 1991 regular season.

The rule would affect approximately 10 of the nearly 250 adults who serve as volunteer coaches or managers for the organization's 83 teams. South Farmington has some 1,200 children between 7 and 16 participating in its boys baseball and girls softball programs.

The rule has caused a furor within the organization. Those directly affected believe they have been unfairly singled out with no basis for such action, and league officials say they are being accused of conducting a witch hunt.

"WE JUST want to do things that protect kids," said Roxanne Fitzpatrick, commissioner of the SFBC. "If we jumped on something because of the Stoller situation, then we're not being fair. We never did it to go after one person. If we acted too hastily because we're nervous, that's all they can get us on."

When the accusations against Stoller made news, Fitzpatrick said

youth sports

she and other board members were besieged by parents asking what safeguards the league had in place to protect their children.

Fitzpatrick asked the local police about having background checks done on coaches and managers but was told it wasn't possible because of legal reasons, though it is done for people who sign up to participate in the Helping Hands program, she said.

The board decided the best alternative was to prohibit people without a child on one of the SFBC teams from being an authority figure.

"We felt we would have more control if we had coaches with kids in the program," Fitzpatrick said. "We're not saying all single people are going to do anything to kids. All we're saying is, if we can't check, let's go this way."

Geno Grabinski is one of the coaches affected by the rule. The 27-year-old former SFBC player is married and has no children, but he has coached in the league for eight years.

THERE HAS never been an incident of coaches abusing players in the league, according to Fitzpatrick, and Grabinski has never been accused of any misconduct. But he doesn't like the doubt cast on his character by the new rule.

"The way it sounded to me is we won't be allowed to coach because we're a risk," he said. "I think I'm being mistreated. I think we're being singled out. If they considered us a risk, why are they going to let us fin-

ish coaching this year? That makes no sense."

Grabinski said he and the other coaches affected have proved themselves to be worthy members of the organization. He said he coached the freshman team at Birmingham Brother High School this year based on the recommendation of Farmington Hills resident and Rice varsity coach Ron Kalczynski, a former SFBC coach and parent.

"Now they're telling me 'You don't have a child in the league; you're a risk; you're done,'" Grabinski said. "It upsets me. (Fitzpatrick) said they might have panicked, but this was the decision they were making."

Fitzpatrick was asked if she thought the rule inadvertently casts aspersions on the character of those coaches who don't have a child playing in the SFBC.

"When we put it into effect, we never thought of that, and we didn't think they would turn around and (simply) we were accusing anyone who had worked with us for years."

"I REALIZE we may end up eliminating a lot of good people. But we looked at the whole Stoller situation and said, 'Maybe we need to keep a little more control over the people.' If we made a rule that looks like an injustice to someone, we're sorry but we didn't do it to hurt anyone."

"I'm having a difficult time understanding why they can't see the good in us. They're only seeing the bad. It's as if I don't have enough to do, that I sat up all night thinking this up."

Grabinski, a lifelong resident of Farmington, said he plans to pursue recourse on the issue.

"I'm very irritated with what

Please turn to Page 4

Prep stardom as QB no college guarantee

I WOULD BE REMISS if I didn't say something about the Mill Coleman situation at Michigan State.

Just because you throw for more than 7,000 yards, win two state high school titles and are a great student doesn't guarantee you anything when it comes to big-time college football.

MSU has four quarterbacks competing for Dan Eno's job and it appears Coleman, a red-shirt freshman from Farmington Harrison, is behind Bret Johnson, the transfer from UCLA.

Coleman's father, Mill Sr., expressed concern earlier this month in an article in The Observer that his son is not getting a fair shot. He says the offensive scheme implemented in the recent spring game is not tailored to his son's talents, and that it's better suited for others (Johnson for one).

Ironically, in 1987 Coleman originally made his mark as a high school transfer student, coming to Harrison from Albion as a sophomore. I'm quite certain that Harrison coach John Herrington "tailored" or altered his offense to suit Coleman's talents, while those who had been groomed for the quarterback job suddenly were shifted to other spots and given reduced roles as backups.

I'M SURE those people silently complained; but didn't air their gripes out in the press.

Mill Sr. won't be the first or the last parent of a recruit to feel a bit betrayed.

One of my old neighborhood acquaintances, Gary Forsyte, slipped through the cracks at Notre Dame, even though he was one of the most heralded prep passers in America after playing for Bill McCartney at Dearborn Divine Child High.

Forsyte was recruited by Ara Parseghian, but quickly fell out of favor after Dan Devine took over. When Forsyte finally got his chance in a game against Pittsburgh, he was crushed on a blindside hit by Hugh Green, suffering a serious shoulder injury. (He was playing behind Joe Montana, among others.)

Another great Observerland quarterback also comes to mind, Rich Hewlett. He ran the option as well as anybody I'd ever seen coming out of Plymouth Salem High.

Hewlett, who was heavily recruited by such schools as Tennessee and



Brad Emons

Alabama, chose Michigan (where he sat the bench much of his career). But Hewlett had one problem. Star wide receiver named Anthony Carter wasn't getting the ball enough.

HEWLETT, however, was a surprise starter (as a true freshman) against Ohio State (1979). During that game, he moved the team effectively before going out with an injured ankle.

He opened the 1980 season as a starter, getting the call against Northwestern. Despite a driving rainstorm, that made it impossible for even Dan Marino to excel, loyal U-M fans got impatient with a lack of offense, booing Hewlett unmercifully every time he threw an incomplete Carter's way.

John Wampler relieved Hewlett in that game (a 17-10 Michigan win) and again the next week in a 29-27 loss at Notre Dame.

Hewlett, because he was an option quarterback trying to make it as a passer, was relegated to the bench the rest of the season, while Wampler was leading the Wolverines to a Rose Bowl triumph over Washington.

As the story goes, Hewlett red-shirted in 1981, converting to defensive back.

He earned a couple of starts his final two years, but did not become the "Next Charlie Waters" as one U-M assistant, Bob Thornbladh predicted he'd become.

But the Hewlett story isn't a sad one. He has since earned a law degree and is a member for a Big Detroit firm.

Another former Observerland quarterback, who I'd mention in the same breath with Coleman and Hewlett, was Livonia Stevenson's Dave Hall.

was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

U-M went back to the option attack with Steve Smith, and the 6-foot-5 Hall became a backup.

Hall's career, however, wasn't wasted. Because he was such a good athlete, he ultimately earned letters in basketball and track at U-M, but languished on the bench in football (He had only one start and appeared in one Rose Bowl when Smith got hurt.)

But the story isn't a sad one. Hall went on to graduate school at the University of Texas to obtain his MBA and was invited to the Olympic Trials to compete in the decathlon, only to bow out because of sore knees.

Is Coleman situation's any different?

Hardly. Let's face it, he's on his own now in the big city.

Bret Johnson, as I recall, is no slouch. The El Toro, Calif., native was mentioned in the same breath coming out of high school as Todd Marinovich, who recently quit Southern Cal to go to the NFL (despite his off-field troubles. Marinovich was a first-round pick of the LA Raiders.)

Johnson has something the other three quarterbacks don't have, and it's experience. He started an entire season at UCLA before transferring where he was unhappy there with his playing status.

THIS IS BIG-TIME college football and if MSU coach George Perles was sold on Coleman, Jim Miller or even John Gieselman (the other contenders at QB), he wouldn't have allowed Johnson to transfer to East Lansing.

Yet another MSU quarterback recruit, Handy Vanderbush of Franklin, Ind., has made a successful switch to the defensive backfield. He was selected Defensive MVP for the spring game.

So what are Coleman's options?

He can stick it out for a year, patiently wait his turn, change positions, or most importantly keep working toward his degree (following the leads of Hall and Hewlett, who were in similar situations).

Coleman could also transfer to another school (Eastern Michigan, I am told, could use a quarterback.)

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