

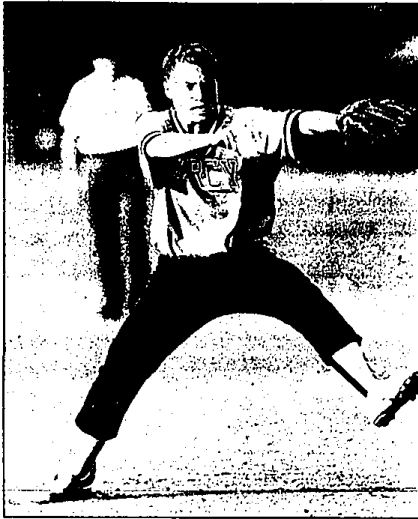
Sports

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Maureen Paulin demonstrates her pitching delivery Tuesday night in the Catholic League championship softball game in the sequence of photos above. The senior tossed a four-hitter



as Mercy defeated Riverview Gabriel Richard 1-0 at King Boring Field in Dearborn. Katie Heffernan scored the only run on freshman Erin Wiehe's sacrifice fly. The Marlins take a 25-8



record in district tournament play this weekend.

PAUL HURSCHMANN/staff photographer

Paulin pitches Marlins to league crown

By Neal Zipser
staff writer

Maureen Paulin didn't run off the field yelling "I'm going to Tiger Stadium" after leading Farmington Hills Mercy to its first Catholic League A-B softball title Tuesday. But the senior pitcher was honored Wednesday as the league's Female Athlete of the Year at Tiger Stadium. The thought of the honor never entered Paulin's head while leading the Marlins over Riverview Gabriel Richard 1-0 at Dearborn's King Boring Field.

"I am excited about going to Tiger Stadium, but I knew I had to put that aside," said Paulin, who surrendered only four hits.

Behind several key defensive plays, Paulin pitched out of several threats and stranded seven Pioneer baserunners.

"The defense came through with some big time plays, and Maureen came through with

some big time strikeouts and key pitches to get the outs we needed," an elated Mercy coach Suzanne Brown said.

BROWN, WHO is in her sixth year as coach, said she wasn't surprised at the team's title but admitted she didn't expect to see her team win the league.

"It has taken six years for them to do what I have told them to do," Brown said. "They can write a book on what I have taught them. I'm not thinking about repeat for a long time, but I'm looking forward to next year."

Mercy (25-8) scored the game's only run on a sacrifice fly in the second inning. Sophomore Katie Heffernan led off the inning with a sharp single to center field, just out of the reach of Richard's Jill Nowakowski. Senior Maura Phenev was then hit in the leg by a pitch, and both runners advanced on a bunt by senior Kim Reichard.

Reichard's bunt was fielded cleanly by the Pioneers' Corrie Glazek, but her throw to third base was late in attempting to force out Heffernan. After a force at the plate, Heffernan scored on a sacrifice fly to left by freshman Erin Wiehe.

Wiehe, who played most of the year on Mercy's junior varsity squad, was mistakenly left off the game's program, left out of the pregame introductions and almost missed during the post-game award announcements. But her run batted in proved to be the game's biggest play.

"WE BROUGHT her up to the varsity after her season on JV was over, and she really cranked the ball off the pitching machine," Brown said. "I needed someone to put the ball in play and had her in the lineup (as designated hitter)."

Reichard also made two key defensive plays behind the plate. In the first inning,

she gunned down Richard's Dana Kibit who was attempting to steal. In the fifth inning, Reichard nailed Nowakowski at second with a perfect throw.

Another big defensive play was turned in by Heffernan. With runners on first and second in the sixth inning, the shortstop made a shoestring catch on a sinking liner to end the Pioneers' threat.

Richard (32-9) got a baserunner in the seventh inning on a walk but couldn't advance her. Mercy ended the game and captured the championship as right fielder Marcy Eastman caught Kibit's fly ball.

"I felt my adrenaline flowing toward the end of the game," said Paulin, who walked three and struck out three while improving to 18-5 on the year. "I was very happy with the defense. I always have confidence in the team."

"WE WERE hitting the ball hard but right

at people and that hurt us," Richard coach Bob Wilkerson said. "We had a good season and today both teams played great. You have to give Mercy credit, but I'm very proud of my team."

The Pioneers, who won their first Catholic League championship last season, lost to the Marlins twice earlier in the season, 6-3 and 9-8.

"We were confident we could hang close with them," Wilkerson said. "It's hard to beat a team three times in one year, but they did."

"The two wins didn't make me confident, because those wins were during the season and the playoffs are the only games that really matter," Brown said. "They were coming off a four-game day when we played them, and I would much rather have this win."

Carolyn Muszynski pitched near-flawless softball after the first inning for Richard.



Leon Jefferson took fifth place in the shot put Tuesday at the WLAA meet. Harrison teammates Tony Shaieb and Blazo Sarcevic were first and third in the event, respectively.

JIM JAGOFFEL/staff photographer

Hawks have best finish among city trio in WLAA

By Brad Emons
staff writer

The odds are usually in Plymouth Salem's favor when it comes to win, place or show in the Western Lakes Activities Association boys track meet.

The Rocks, unbeaten this season in dual meets, Lakes Division champions and winners of three invitational crowns, lived up to their favorite's role by winning their first WLAA crown since 1985 in the 12-school meet, held Tuesday at Livonia Churchill.

"We've been pretty consistent over the years, a couple thirds, a fourth and a second in there, but it's been awhile since we've won it," said Salem coach Gary Balconi, whose team scored 150 points.

boys track

Two-time defending champion Westland John Glenn finished second with 102 points. Plymouth Canton gained third with 78½, finishing ahead of Western Division champion Northville, which settled for a fourth place tie with the host Chargers at 72 each. See statistical summary.

The Rocks followed their game plan to perfection, scoring in all 16 events they entered (with the exception of the pole vault).

"AFTER EVERY EVENT we

looked at, we were always right on the money," Balconi said. "I knew John Glenn was good up-front in the meet, but we were solid throughout. As tough as Glenn and Canton were, we felt we had no weaknesses in any event. We had tremendous leadership from our seniors and everybody dug down in the hot weather."

With temperatures climbing above the 90-degree mark, depth would come into play.

Salem captured two individual titles and two relay crowns.

Leon Hister won the long jump with a leap of 21 feet, 2½ inches. He also teamed up with Todd Forbes, Jim Ramsay and Matt Peron to surprise the 400-meter relay field, posting a first-place time of

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