

Sports

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(F10)

Best tankers
stay focused

Farmington girls rank high

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

In swimming, focus is everything. Those goggles they wear should concentrate on narrowing the vision considerably.

Because that's what high school swimmers need — the ability to channel all their energies into two or three days of competition per season. The remainder of the time they devote to their sport is for training for those few moments.

The Observerland's best swimmers, therefore, are those who do the best at the biggest high school meet of the season: the state championships. The top swimmers will train hard during the summer, rest and taper sometime early in the fall to reach state qualifying standards, then go back into heavy training for the state finals.

Two underclassmen share the title as Observerland's best, according to these standards — Farmington Hills Mercy junior Erika Smith and Livonia Stevenson sophomore Mandi Falk. They were the only two from the area to score in two individual events at the Class A state finals.

FALK BOASTED the best individual finish, and it came in what was easily the best event for Observerland swimmers. She placed fourth in the 100-yard breast stroke, one spot ahead of Mercy senior Katie Knipper (two of the three championship heat qualifiers in individual events from the Observer area).

Three Observer swimmers placed among the top seven at the Class A meet in the 100 breast, and another — Farmington Hills Harrison's Dana Dixon — finished ninth in the 100 breast at the Class B-C-D finals.

Mercy claimed top team honors, finishing 10th in Class A. Stevenson was 17th, Livonia Churchill 25th and Plymouth Canton 25th. Of the 12 individuals lauded as the best of the year, five are underclassmen who will get a chance to come back next fall and repeat.

Here are the Observerland's top female swimmers for 1991.

All-Observer Individuals

Erika Smith, Mercy, 200-yard freestyle: Smith finished fifth in the state in the 200 free in 1:56.06. It was one of five events she qualified for and one of four she scored in. The junior also placed 11th in the 100 free in 53.85 and was part of Mercy's 200 medley relay and 400 free relay.

Smith was the Catholic League champion in the 50-yard free for the Catholic League champs, and at the all-Oakland County meet she placed second in the 100 free and third in the 50 free.

Mandi Falk, Stevenson, 100-yard breast stroke: Falk has two more seasons of high school swimming left. Surpassing her sophomore campaign will be difficult.

A transfer from Bedford Thurston who was first-team all-area last year, Falk was unbeaten in dual-meet competition and captured the Western Lakes Athletic Association championships in the

Erika Smith
Farmington Hills
MercyKatie Knipper
Farmington Hills
MercyStacy Krause
Farmington Harrison

all area swimming

1991 ALL-OBSERVER
GIRLS SWIM TEAM
First-team individuals

200-yard freestyle: Erika Smith, junior, Farmington Hills Mercy
200-yard individual medley: Jia Marks, sophomore, Plymouth Canton
50-yard freestyle: Mandi Falk, sophomore, Plymouth Canton
Diving: Amy Kodak, senior, Plymouth Canton

100-yard butterfly: Katie Knipper, senior, Farmington Hills Mercy
100-yard freestyle: Elen Lissig, senior, Livonia Churchill
500-yard freestyle: Jamie Anderson, senior, Livonia Stevenson
100-yard backstroke: Jenny McCombs, junior, Farmington Hills Mercy
100-yard breaststroke: Mandi Falk, sophomore, Livonia Stevenson

First-team relays

200-yard medley: Macy, Jenny, McCombs, Knipper, Mandi Falk, Erika Smith
200-yard freestyle: Churchill, Elen, Strauss, Liz Sorocka, Tara Dickhoff, Elen Lissig

200-yard individual medley and 100-yard butterfly
At state, she placed fourth in the 100 breast in 1:07.32 (one of three events she qualified for) and was 11th in the 100 free in 59.85. She was also part of

400-yard freestyle: Stacy (Mandi) Falk, senior, Farmington Hills Harrison
400-yard individual medley: Elen Lissig, senior, Livonia Churchill

At-large individuals

Stacy Krause, senior, Farmington Hills Harrison
Dana Dixon, senior, Farmington Hills Harrison
Jennifer Knapp, senior, Livonia Stevenson

At-large relays

200-yard medley: Stevenson (Luka Perisic), Knipper, Mandi Falk, Jennifer Knapp
200-yard freestyle: Carlson (Jia Marks), April Elden, Beth Berger, Jen Cooper
400-yard freestyle: Carlson (April Danks), Jia Marks, Janet Roberts, Jen Cooper

Honorable Mention

North Farmington — Katie Kraus, Sheri Richardson, Mandi Terrell, Carrie Worthen
Farmington — Jia Marks, Becky Wasy, Farmington Hills Mercy — Michelle Welch, Katie Scalen, Nancy Harvey, Amy Domrowski, Plymouth Canton — Katie Williams, Alyssa Solos, Candie Dones, Amy Austin, Plymouth Canton — Selena Bastine, Farmington Harrison — Dana Dixon

Stevenson's ninth-place 200 medley relay team
Sparsen coach Gary Phil described Falk simply: "Mandi is a great swimmer with a great future."

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Stingrays busy
hosts of eventBy Steve Kowalski
staff writer

The hard work of directors Dave and Sharon Knipper will be recalled this weekend when the Michigan Stingrays Swim Club hosts its Winter Invitational for 'A' level swimmers at Eastern Michigan University's Jones Natatorium.

For the last three months the Farmington Hills couple has prepared for the second-annual event, which will bring more than 700 swimmers together from seven states and Canada. The Stingrays are one of six local clubs sending swimmers to the event.

The meet is sanctioned by Michigan Swimming Inc. on behalf of United States Swimming and will begin at 5:15 p.m. Friday with the first of five sessions. Admission is \$1 per adult each session or \$8 for the entire weekend.

Twenty-five clubs participated in last year's event, compared to 50 this year, according to Dave Knipper. There will be 84 individual races and 16 relays for boys and girls who are mostly between the ages of 10 and 20.

"It's really gotten intense the last couple weeks (of preparation)," Dave Knipper said. "I got tied up at nights and weekends (recruiting teams and making preparations). We could have had more clubs, but it's the individual numbers that make the difference."

THE KNIPPERS would prefer a closer location than EMU but say the 10-lane pool on the Ypsilanti campus is capable of hosting several top-notch swimmers from across the country. In last month's girls state swimming championships, one new state record and several near misses were recorded in the pool, which produces faster times because of its 17-foot depth.

'It's really gotten intense the last couple weeks.'

— Dave Knipper

Besides the Stingrays, the other local clubs expected to send swimmers to the meet include the Birmingham Bloomfield Atlantics; the Birmingham Blue Dolphins; the Clarenceville Swim Club; the Livonia Novi Spartans; the Oakland Live Yers; the Troy Area Gators.

Medals will be awarded to participants who finish in first through eighth place in each event.

Of all the swimmers expected to compete, the most renowned name is Steve Crocker, who swims with the Rockwood Swim Club in St. Louis, Mo. Crocker in 1988 just missed qualifying for the U.S. Olympic team behind eventual gold medalist Matt Biondi.

"THE NUMBER of entries from our Michigan and out-of-state clubs is great testimony to the popularity of competitive swimming in the Midwest," Stingrays coach Jeff Cooper said. "We have had advertising and service support from several businesses. The convention bureau of Ypsilanti has also given us good direction in our planning."

Added Sharon Knipper: "The facility gives us space to host a larger meet and also is a respected fast pool in the Midwest and country. It really attracts out-of-state performers."

The Stingrays are a non-profit organization and use the event to "support our budget," Dave Knipper said. "It's important to run a quality meet. We're really trying to fulfill a big portion of our budget by money we will raise this weekend."

Styers hoping for sweet
return to pro boxing ringBy Steve Kowalski
staff writer

Considering the support Jeff "Sweet Ice" Styers has drummed up in the last six months, it's hard to believe anyone could sour on his return to the boxing ring.

After more than a two-year absence from professional boxing—the 1984 Wayne Memorial graduate has moved up two weight classes and also received new direction. Styers, now a middleweight, is managed by Wolfgang Mueller, trained by Ernest Houser and weight trained by Guy Monarche, the manager of Powerhouse Gym in Farmington Hills.

Styers' previous manager, Johnny "Ace" Smith was shot to death in 1989 after Styers had built an 8-0 record as a lightweight (135). After Smith's untimely death, Styers took the long sabbatical but returned last June when he knocked out Milwaukee's Donald Tucker in a welterweight (147) fight on a card at Livonia's Laurel Park.

Mueller is trying to set up his next fight, as a middleweight, for some time in February.

"I don't want to call it a 'come-back' because I was undefeated (prior to the time off)," Styers said. "But with the incident that happened to 'Ace,' that was Point F in my career. I was young, but I've matured, and I'm out of the ring."

"I don't fight because it's a way out for me. It's not a pipe dream, there's just a desire in me to be a world champion."

MUELLER, who works with the Plunkett & Cooney law firm out of Detroit, said Styers is a marketable fighter. Along with devoting much of his time to boxing, Styers works as an account representative at Microvare Distributors in Farmington Hills.

"Jeff is the antithesis of the stereotypical boxer," said Mueller, a new comer to the sports agent business who also represents Tampa Bay Buccaneers player Robert Martinez. "You don't see a lot of fighters giving motivational speeches to youth groups, being actively involved in the church. I talked to a writer from Ring Magazine, which is the bible of boxing, and he said Jeff is the thinking man's boxer, which sets Jeff apart."

"Jeff is a prime example of what a positive role model should be as an athlete. He's one guy who won't be

boxing



'I don't fight because it's a way out for me. It's not a pipe dream, there's just a desire to be a world champion.'

— Jeff Styers
pro boxer

like a William Bedford or Reggie Rogers. A fighter's personality carries so much, my role is to not only direct his career but also of importance is to provide for a secure financial future."

Styers said he has moved up to middleweight because it is a more visible weight class and because his metabolism got to a point where he can't keep his weight down anymore.

Working out at Powerhouse Gym has become just as important to Styers as the time he spends in the ring because moving up in weight has put more premium on being stronger.

Styers' typical day begins at 8 a.m. at the Powerhouse Gym where he works on strength and conditioning, followed by an eight-hour day at Microvare, and a four-mile run after work. At night he trains at the Livonia Boxing Club.

STYERS SAID WHEN he first began weight training last fall, the maximum he could bench press was 160 pounds. Now he can bench 225.

"Guy has been instrumental in making the transition happen."

'My role is to not only direct his career, but also of importance is to provide for a secure financial future.'

— Wolfgang Mueller

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