

SPORTS

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Hawks challenge but victory elusive



After years of struggle, Farmington Hills Harrison is among the top girls basketball teams in the Western Lakes Activities Association. Now the Hawks are trying to take the next step and beat the WLAA's perennial powers.

By DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Harrison has made great strides with its girls basketball program, but the Hawks were students learning from the master Thursday at Plymouth Canton.

Canton finished 9-2 in the Western Lakes Activities Association and tied Plymouth Salem for second place. The Chiefs are 15-2 overall and will get the No. 2 seed in the playoffs based on their win over the Rocks.

Harrison was 3-3 in the WLAA regular season and shares fourth place with Walled Lake Central. The Hawks (10-7) are seeded No. 4 seed and will play Central in the first round of the playoffs Thursday.

Pete Mantyla, the second-year Harrison coach, said he has tried to model his program after the successful teams at Canton and Salem — annually among the best in the WLAA.

"I feel like the Pistons when they were playing Celtics," he said. "We're knocking on the door; we're getting there. The girls and I believe we can win."

"In the big games, we know we haven't done things as well as we can do them, but that's to the credit of the teams we're playing."

The one thing Harrison failed to do was adequately protect the basketball against Canton's pressure defense, according to Mantyla.

The Hawks committed 24 turn-

Hopkins picks school, 2C

overs — nine in the first quarter and 15 in the first half when the Chiefs established leads of 12-5 and 23-17. ("Canton coach) Bob Blohm said you have to do three things to be successful: rebound, take care of the ball and play defense," Mantyla said. "We did two of those. We played defense and rebounded, but they didn't allow us to take care of the ball."

"They play great man-to-man defense and we struggled getting the ball up the floor. They made it tough

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Poor sports ruin soccer reputation

I'm sure this is going to endear me to soccer people everywhere, but I think it's got to be said.

Soccer players are undoubtedly the worst sports in sports.

Want proof? Go to a game, especially now, during the state tournament, when stakes and emotions are high. I'm not blasting a particular team or school; if anything, it seems to be consistent throughout the sport.

I've seen a dozen games (at least) this fall, at all levels — college and prep. Know how many times I've seen a player knock an opponent flat with a hard foul, then help him to his feet?

Once. He's more apt to step or spit on him. And it isn't just "dirty play" that I'm referring to, the kind that leads to fights, causing games to be canceled before they're completed (that's happened twice this season: Oakland University vs. Grand Canyon, and Schoolcraft College (men) vs. Eastern Michigan).

That's not all

There's so much other stuff. Players disagree with an official's out-of-bounds or foul call, so they kick the ball away. How childish can you get?

I know what coaches will say. It's all part of the game — strategy, they'll insist, a way to slow down the opponents' attack. Help them to their feet or hand them the ball and you'll be out of position and at their mercy.

Sorry, but that's a hard argument to buy. It sounds more like an attempt to justify poor sportsmanship — which is something soccer players in general are very good at doing. They always have an excuse.

At the Catholic Central-Ann Arbor Pioneer match last week at Plymouth Salem, more examples of the kind of temperament infesting soccer appeared.

The game ended scoreless; during the break before the start of overtime, one of the lineups approached Gary Balconi, assistant athletic director at Salem, and told him he was leaving unless something was done about some unruly fans hurling all sorts of stuff out of the stands at him.

The "fans" in question were apparently part of another local prep soccer team. Why they chose this particular official to attack, while his back was turned, is anyone's guess.

After CC scored in sudden-death overtime to gain the win, the referee was submitted to a verbal barrage from a pair of Pioneer players who were on the sideline with injuries. "You're bleeding terrible," was one player's summary. "What're you going to do, bleeding red-card me? Go ahead!"

When Balconi confronted both "children," he got more of the same. "Why don't you hire some bleeding good officials?"

The officiating might not have been the best in this match, but it was not the deciding factor — a view few soccer players will share with me. I'm sure. However bad it was, this kind of stuff was totally out of hand (by the way, officials are assigned by a committee, not chosen by the schools).

Coaches share blame

A lot of coaches allow this kind of behavior. Indeed, their own poor treatment of officials encourages it.

It's cheap and ridiculous, and it certainly makes a mockery of that little ditty announcers read prior to state tournament games, the one sponsored by the Michigan High School Athletic Association about good sportsmanship.

You'd think a player's very existence was at stake. Playing hard and tough is one thing, but playing to injure (something I witnessed at the CC-Stevenson district final, in which one player fell on the opponent and locked his legs around his neck before getting to his feet) is unforgivable.

I've seen athletes in other sports, at a much higher level of competition, show far better sportsmanship.

Olympic swimming is one example — offering congratulations, or a hug, to a swimmer in the next lane who just edged you for the gold medal, something for which you had trained four to six hours a day for two full years, takes a lot of heart.

It's something I have seen little evidence of in soccer. Coaches have to bear some of the responsibility for this, but parents who coddle their soccer-playing children are equally at fault.

Don't you think this win, whatever the cost still is getting a bit out of control?

I await our public's reply (my office number is 953-2108). Adjectives like those so eloquently used by the Pioneer players are optional; written responses are encouraged (Please, we do have a certain editorial code, so use printable language.)



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Swim dual: Shannon O'Brien was second in the 1M (above) and first in the backstroke Thursday as North defeated Farmington to complete a successful dual-meet campaign.

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Panthers avenge gridiron loss to Falcons

By NEAL ZIPSER
STAFF WRITER

There weren't any Halloween costumes that could have disguised the ugliness of Redford Union's 16-6 victory Friday over visiting Farmington.

The game featured numerous unsportsmanlike and roughness penalties.

Even with the sluggish play, the game ended like any other RU win, with the Panthers dousing coach Shawn McGowan with a bucket of water.

"It was very cold ice water," the RU coach said. "It started last year after we won. It's their rite of passage."

But as the teams exchanged handshakes after time expired, tempers began to flare. Farmington's Stanley Lewis punched an RU player after al-

legedly being spat at.

The punch began a large melee. Several fights broke out before coaches and security guards were able to restrain the participants and escort the teams off the field.

"You could see it coming by the way the game was going," RU's Tim Hopson said. "They were doing a lot of talking. They were a dirty team."

"We told all the kids to keep their helmets on, just shake hands and let's get out of here," Farmington coach Bernie Call said. "But they were intimidating Lewis all night and then spit in his face."

"But I blame the officials. They let the game go and caused a lot of frustration on the field. They let it get out of hand."

The Panthers avenged a 13-9 loss to the Falcons last year and finished

5-4 for the second straight season. Farmington finished 1-8.

RU opened the scoring with a six-play, 64-yard drive. A 22-yard scamper or by senior Jason Anderson set up a 1-yard touchdown plunge by senior Jeff Tulppo. Kurt Coulter kicked the extra point.

RU drove 80 yards on its next possession to make it 13-0. After a 25-yard rush by senior Tom Blalock, Tulppo sprinted 29 yards to the end zone.

Tulppo paced the RU offense with 78 yards on 10 carries, and Patrick Mueller rushed 15 times for 70 yards.

The Falcons got their offense going after recovering an onside kick on the second-half kickoff.

Junior Mike Tokar lofted a pass into the end zone for Lewis, who outjumped the RU defenders and

hauled in a 17-yard touchdown. Tokar completed 10 of 27 passes for 145 yards, and Lewis caught seven passes for 114.

After Tulppo recovered a Farmington fumble, Coulter nailed a 32-yard field goal to make it 16-6.

Call was disappointed about the Falcons' season but optimistic about the future.

"When we went into the season, we knew we had a lot of young players and knew it would be tough," Call said. "But we have a good group of juniors and sophomores coming back. This year we had too many turnovers and didn't get any breaks."

"It's too bad we don't have any more games because we're all fired up now. We can't wait until they come over to our place next year."

Hawks, Raiders fall short in '92 finales

It was deja vu for visiting North Farmington, which was stopped shy of the South Lyon goal line in the final minute for the second straight year Friday.

After the playoff-bound Lions scored to take a 27-20 lead, North drove to the South Lyon 8-yard line where a fourth-down pass fell incomplete with eight seconds remaining.

The Raiders lost 12-7 last year in the season finale when they were stopped at the 1 on fourth-and-goal from the 3 with 46 seconds left.

"We dominated this football game," North coach Jim O'Leary said. "That was not the case last year. The only thing we didn't do was win the game."

The Raiders outgained South Lyon 410-277 as Anderson rushed for 195 yards on 28 carries in his final high school game.

Anderson set school records this year with single-season and career rushing totals of 1,353 and 2,550 yards.

"He doesn't have the speed of a (former North star Scott) Selzer, but he sure has the heart," O'Leary said. "He's one heckuva kid."

The Raiders held South Lyon tailback Billy Ray Porter to just 50 yards on 16 carries, but fullback Ken Nelson gained 129 and scored three touchdowns on 22 attempts.

North took a 7-0 lead after a 40-yard run by Anderson and extra-point kick by Ben Sommers, but South Lyon's Nelson had scoring runs of 9 and 17 yards for a 14-7 halftime lead.

Nelson's 24-yarder made it 21-7 in the third quarter, but North senior Jason Danielewicz, who recovered from a broken collarbone to play one

more game, ran 1 yard for a TD and passed 7 yards to Scott Lord for another to pull the Raiders within 21-20 in the fourth quarter.

"The kids played a spectacular ballgame," O'Leary said. "I'm real proud of them. They were playing for pride — and they showed it. Obviously, we're disappointed with the record (4-5), but I think the kids showed tonight they have a lot of heart."

Jason Kong added 63 yards rushing. Danielewicz was 3-of-14 passing for 64 yards but deserved a better fate, according to O'Leary.

"We threw the ball well; we just didn't catch it," he said, adding two touchdown passes were dropped."

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