

SPORTS

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FARMINGTON HILLS SPORTS SCENE

SC stuns Mott CC

At least once every season, it happens. It was Mott CC's turn this time.

The Bears probably came into Wednesday's men's basketball game at Schoolcraft College with confidence. After all, they were atop the Eastern Conference; SC was at the bottom.

Add to that their superior depth — Mott had 10 players, SC six — and SC's recent struggles (five straight losses, most by lopsided margins), and the outlook for a rout seemed bright.

Surprise! The Ocelots pulled off a shocking upset in dramatic fashion, 85-83, on a three-pointer at the buzzer by Mohammed Abdrabbuh Wednesday at SC.

The defeat dropped Mott (16-6 overall, 9-3 in the conference) into a virtual tie for first with Oakland CC and Macomb CC, all with three losses. SC is 2-10 in the conference, 6-16 overall.

The game's final seconds were as improbable as SC's being in the game at all. After all, the Ocelots had been blown out by 40 points by OCC four days earlier.

But they had Jarvis Murray back, an all-conference center last season. Murray missed seven straight games because he had to rewrite an English assignment to complete a first-semester class. SC was 1-8 without him.

Shawn Brannum was missing, though, after suffering a broken nose against OCC and having surgery Tuesday. Brannum is expected back for Wednesday's game at Alpena CC.

The Murray-led Ocelots built a 43-33 lead by halftime and increased it to 19 points with just under 11 minutes left in the game.

That's when the Bears rediscovered their shooting touch, hitting five straight three-point shots in a 15-4 run. Ron Thompson had three of those; he scored 16 points.

A Kevin Polite triple trimmed SC's lead to 82-81 with less than a minute left. The Ocelots were struggling; they were 0-6 from the free throw line in the last two minutes. Steve Whitlow missed two with 12 seconds left.

Then Abdrabbuh fouled Kevin Pretet, the conference's leading scorer (SC held him to 12 points). With eight seconds left, Pretet sank both free throws to put Mott ahead, 83-82. Its first lead since early in game.

SC got the ball to half-court and called timeout with four seconds left to set up a play with Murray as the first option. "We just wanted to get the ball inbound, drive to the basket and get fouled or something," said coach Dave Bogataj.

But Abdrabbuh couldn't inbound the ball. In desperation he tossed it to Whitlow, who was barely able to keep from going out of bounds before passing back to Abdrabbuh. Abdrabbuh's long shot banked off the glass and went in — the win belonged to SC.

Murray sparked in his return engagement, scoring 23 points and grabbing 11 rebounds. Abdrabbuh had 22 points, and Whitlow and LaMonte Fendren scored 15 apiece. Fendren had 10 boards, and Whitlow dished out six assists. Vince Turner had nine assists.

Polite's 18 points was best for Mott. Jeremy Trent had 11 and Derrick Wyatt scored 10.

It was another in a long line of upsets for SC, which two years ago knocked Macomb out of first. How many more wins can SC muster? Impossible to tell, but few will be this surprising.

SC women peaking

When they needed it most, the Lady Ocelots got a superior performance from point guard Becky Piotrichowski.

Trailing by a basket with 25 seconds left in regulation, Piotrichowski nailed a jumper to tie Wednesday's game at Mott CC at 69-69 and send it into overtime. She then scored all eight of the Lady Ocelots' OT points to lift them to a 73-77 victory.

It was SC's second-straight Eastern Conference win, improving its record to 3-8 (9-10 overall). Mott fell into a tie with SC for the conference's final playoff spot at 3-8.

"We're peaking at the right time," said Lady Ocelot coach Jack Grenon. "We had to have this."

They got it, thanks to Piotrichowski's 23 points, 21 more from Dana Hudson and 18 from 5-10 freshman center Alisa Wechter, who played all 45 minutes. Mott got 21 points from Amy Fabat. SC, which led 42-34 at the half, didn't help itself at the free throw line, converting 4-of-13 to Mott's 14-of-22. But the Lady Ocelot defense was tough enough — they twice forced five-second calls in the last five minutes of regulation.

Record run

Going into last weekend's games, at home against Michigan and Michigan State, Illinois senior point guard Jill Estey (from Plymouth Salem) was nine short of the school career record for assists. Estey is averaging 6.7 assists per game this season and has 498 for her career. The Illinois record is 507, held by Jenny Johnson.

One reason for Estey's record-setting performance is her durability. Although only 5-4, she's started 91 consecutive games for the Fighting Illini. She's also averaging 9.4 points and a team-best 2.3 steals. Estey already holds the Illini career record for steals with 229.

Illinois was 7-10 overall and 2-6 in the Big Ten going into the weekend's games. Before her career ends, Estey could move up as high as sixth on the Big Ten's career assist list.

North's Orow champ at Observer

■ Traditional high school wrestling power Redford Catholic Central was in the familiar role of champion in the Observer-land tournament.

By DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Redford Catholic Central regained some of its old glory and returned to wrestling prominence Saturday in the second annual Observer Tournament.

The Shamrocks, following a couple of down years, put six wrestlers in the championship round and were assured of winning the team title before the finals were contested.

CC, which placed fifth in the first tournament, scored 204 points to finish ahead of Westland John Glenn, Livonia Stevenson, Plymouth Salem and host Garden City.

"We decided we would win one instead of getting beat on all the time,"

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CC coach Mike Rodriguez said. "We needed one. We've had a lot of injuries, and we're just starting to get the team back to where it should be."

"The seniors are finally starting to get ahold of what it's all about. This is the kind of senior power we've had over the years, that we didn't have at the beginning of the year."

CC senior Jason Krueger (171), sophomore Bill Lamb (103) and senior Steve Burke (130) took first place. Seniors Marc Braken (189), Todd Lackey (275) and Mike Madden (140) and junior Liam O'Donohue (152) finished second.

"Our team did a great job today," Krueger said. "We lost to Salem and were fifth in the (area) rankings earlier in the year. It's nice to come in here and prove we're a good team and we deserve to be on top."

Krueger and Garden City senior heavyweight Jason Peterson were the only returning champions and both were two-time winners. Peterson, Glenn senior Mike Reeves and Plymouth Canton senior Nick Spano shared the most valuable wrestler award.

Peterson pinned his first three opponents in the first period and stopped Lackey midway in the second, being his record to 31-2.

"There's nothing better than winning a tournament once but, if you're lucky to win it twice, the second time is just as good as the first," Peterson



JIM JACQUEL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A big lift: North Farmington's Dave Orow lifts Mark Burley of Plymouth Salem off the mat Saturday in the final in the 125-pound weight class at the Observerland Invitational. Orow won the match, 8-0.

said. "I thought I'd do well, but I didn't think I would pin the guy through it. The last one was the toughest; he's a good kid."

Krueger (31-1) defeated Wayne's Verlon McLendon 10-1 in the final but had a tough match with the taller opponent. He led 6-0 after two periods.

"He looked like he was wrestling well before that, so he didn't look like any slouch. I expected a good match," Krueger said.

Reeves (24-0) won the 160 title, resulting in a better experience for him. He was disqualified last year for using an illegal move that resulted in injury to his opponent and was removed from the tournament by coach Dave Hill.

"I wanted to come here and show everyone I didn't have to hurt anyone to be a better sport," Reeves said. "It was something I felt I had to do, come back here and do it with a little class."

Reeves wrestled North Farmington's Jared Lawrence for the first time and, though he was ahead all the way, had a tough match despite the eventual 15-8 score.

Spano (30-0), who was third at 130 last year, won three bouts on pins before defeating Farmington's Mike Frough 8-2 in the final.

"I was mad last year because I had a bad call against me in the semifinals," he said. "I should have been in the finals today. I was pretty confident this time. This year I pretty

much knew I was going to win it."

Stevenson had three winners — Scott Goldman (140), Chris Mullett (145) and Craig Martin (189) — and all three are sophomores.

The future looks good for the Spartans "as long as we have sports," coach Don Berg said. "It's probably our best day at Stevenson as far as the team is concerned."

Goldman and CC's Madden had one of the best matches. Goldman got an escape and a takedown late in the third period for an 11-0 lead and held on to win 11-10.

The other winners were Glenn's Anthony Underwood (112) and Gerry Simoneau (162), Redford Thurston's Lucy Haddad (119) and North's Dave Orow (125).

Hawks extend basketball winning streak

Farmington Hills Harrison capitalized on its free-throw advantage Friday to win its fifth consecutive basketball game, 74-61 over visiting Livonia Franklin.

The Hawks, who outscored the Patriots 22-13 in the third quarter to bring a 27-27 halftime tie and 47-24 in the second half, made 21 of 45 free throws and Franklin seven of 11.

Harrison has won six of its past seven games and improved to 6-1 in the Western Lakes Activities Association, 6-7 overall. The Patriots dropped to 0-7 and 3-9.

Calvin Pruitt scored 15 points for the Hawks. Don Bryant 12, Keyo Smith 11 and Aaron Weiss 10. Bryant also grabbed eight rebounds.

Harrison starting guard Jeremy Teachman and top reserve Rich Ruffin didn't dress because they were sick.

In their absence, Weiss and Charles Bambenek (three points, five assists, four rebounds and good defense) came off the bench and played well, according to coach Mike Teachman.

"We've got a real tough week coming up," Teachman said in reference to games Tuesday against Westland John Glenn and Friday with Walled Lake Western. "We can't afford to have people out. That's why we had the two guys sit tonight, so we can have them back next week."

(Weiss and Bambenek) stepped in

tonight and give us some depth, but the chemistry is going pretty well right now."

Franklin's Clem Herrera scored 16 points, Paul Kruschka and Jason Facione 15 apiece. Kruschka had 12 points in the first half and Facione eight in the fourth quarter.

Franklin coach Dan Kennedy was assessed two technical fouls and will not be allowed to coach Tuesday when the Patriots play at Farmington.

■ STEV. 55, FARMING. 50: The host Spartans rallied in the fourth quarter Friday to defeat Farmington.

The Falcons led 34-32 after three quarters but were outscored 23-10 in

the finale.

Farmington slipped to 3-4 in the WLA and 6-7 overall. Stevenson raised its league record to 2-5 and improved to 5-7 overall.

Brian Farr scored 11 points and Matt April 10 for Farmington, which led 23-22 at halftime.

Stevenson substitutes John Brown and Steve Jacobs finished with 17 and 13 points, respectively. Mark Harry added 10.

■ GLENN 70, NORTH 45: Westland John Glenn won its seventh-straight WLA game without a loss Friday at the expense of visiting North Farmington.

See BASKETBALL, 3C

Prep soccer stars make college choices

By DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Mike Giese and Anthony Verrino have been neighbors and friends for years, and both are accomplished high school soccer players.

Despite all of that, their soccer careers rarely crossed paths and apparently won't again in the future.

The Farmington Hills residents went to different high schools — Giese starred for Farmington High and Verrino at Redford Catholic Central — and both have accepted scholarship offers from different colleges.

Both chose successful programs, however. Giese will play next season at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and Verrino at Oakland University.

"We visited U-of-D together and thought about going there," Verrino said, "but he got a good offer and so did I from somewhere else, so we ended up going our own ways."

Giese, who was twice an All-Observer player, chose UWGB over Michigan State, Detroit-Mercy, Bowling Green, Hartford, Dayton and Wright State.

"The situation was right for me," said Giese, adding Wisconsin-Green Bay was nationally ranked in Division I last season. "Hopefully, I should be playing my freshman year. It was too good to pass up."

Giese's scholarship covers all but \$700 of the an-



Mike Giese
Farmington



Anthony Verrino
Catholic Central

Lomphear (Churchill) and Jeff Gold (Plymouth Salem) when UWGB plays Wisconsin-Madison next season.

Giese, who had 54 goals and 37 assists during a four-year high school career, expects to play either forward or an attacking midfielder next season.

"I think I'd rather play forward. I don't know if I could play midfield at the collegiate level my first year," he said.

"That's where the game is won or lost, and I don't know if I'd want that kind of pressure right away. I'd like to get in the swing of things first."

And, for those who think Giese is headed for the frigid north, UWGB has underground hallways between buildings, so students don't have to go outdoors as much, Giese said.

Verrino will join former Farmington High goalkeeper Mike Sheehy and fellow CC graduate Dominic Scialuna at OU. John Gentile, another one-time Observerland star at Livonia Churchill, also plays for the Pioneers.

"I was torn between playing soccer or going to the University of Michigan and concentrating on academics," Verrino said. "I figure a four-year scholarship will help me. Their academic programs fit what I want to go into."

Verrino, who plans to study engineering or possibly medicine, will have his tuition/fees and two-thirds of room and board paid by the athletic school.

See SOCCER, 3C