

SPORTS

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MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 1993

FARMINGTON SPORTS SCENE

United '77 wins title

Livonia Youth Soccer Club United '77 moved up to the girls under-19 age division and captured first in the Jeff Wyler/Head and Shoulders Soccer Classic Aug. 7-8 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Coached by Pat McCaul and Ian Falzbrother, United '77 won five matches, including the first three by an average margin of four goals, en route to the title.

United '77 defeated the Cincinnati Buckeyes in the championship match 3-1 after edging the '73 Cleveland Cobras in the semifinals. United '77's overtime goal by German exchange student Rebecca Brandmeyer-Daley.

Captain Lenay Truchan and Theresa Cisco were named tournament co-MVPs.

Other members of United '77 include goalie Lindsey Bryant, Angie Snyder, Emily Lawrence, Lisa Bernardo, Jessica Vurstanen, Jill Schmidt, Heather Hulsing, Wendy McCaul, Ali Lord, Margaret Wirth, Heather Richards, Amy Marcoe and Candace Perkins.

United '77, which has captured 15 tournaments over the past 15 years, returns to action Labor Day weekend in Troy.

Blazers 17th in nation

The Motor City Blazers, a 15-and-under girls basketball team with nine area players, placed 17th among 63 teams in the AAU national tournament last month in Ogden, Utah.

The Observerland players include four from Farmington Hills — sisters Maury and Kerry Duggan, Andrea Salzer and Kara Walter. Erin Jeffrey (Redford), Erin Lesage (Livonia), Walter and the Duggans play for Ladywood High School. Salzer attends Farmington High.

The Detroit trio of Lazandra White, Latrea Cunningham and Octavia Satchel play for Bishop Borgess. The other team members are Julie Henderson and Liz Freedman, both of Ann Arbor and Greenhills High; Shannon Kulick (Riverview); Becky Murray (Ashley), St. Johns High; and Liz Barker (Huntington Woods), Birmingham Marian.

The Blazers, who survived regional and state tournaments to qualify for the nationals, advanced from pool play into the championship round. The team is coached by Pete Pullen (Ann Arbor).

Senior Olympic records

Sandy Darvin of Farmington Hills set three women's swimming records in the 80-84 age group at the Michigan Senior Olympics Aug. 4-7 in Holland.

Darvin was first in each event, swimming 3:13.85 in the 100 backstroke, 1:40.47 in the 50 breaststroke and 1:25.09 in the 50 backstroke.

Farmington Hills had three other winners: Jack Main, 60-64 table tennis; Jennie Hughes, 70-74 100-meter dash; and Dolores Fox, who teamed with Seymour Tate of West Bloomfield to win the 65-69 mixed doubles bowling.

Engine problem costly

The SCCA Trans-Am competition at Watkins Glen (N.Y.) began exactly the way Jim Stevens of Farmington Hills had hoped on Aug. 7.

Even though the engine in his Ford Mustang ran with a miss during qualifying, Stevens turned in a time fast enough to earn his first start in the Kentwood Fast Five Shootout during the Dallas Grand Prix in October.

But the Roush Racing Team was unable to locate and fix the engine miss, and it turned a hopeful weekend for Stevens into disappointment. He watched as one after another of the Trans-Am competitors snatched positions until Stevens finished the 42-lap race in 13th place.

"We think it's a problem with second gear," Stevens said. "If it would have rained hard throughout the race instead of just at the start, we'd have been in a lot better shape. But, as it was, just had the power on me. It was real frustrating."

After running the first eight laps under race conditions while the Watkins Glen circuit dried, Stevens initially could find off his competitors.

For the first six laps under the green, Stevens battled with former champion Greg Pickett (Camaro) and George Robinson (Camaro) but lost ground after the full-course yellow and restart.

Charity golf shootout

The Ronald McDonald Children's Charities Hole-In-One Shootout will be Aug. 13-22 at Country Club Village in Northville (Higerty and Six Mile roads).

The event is open to all individuals who are not professional golfers. For a \$5 daily entry fee, participants will receive three golf balls to try their luck at the 110-yard qualifying hole. Additional balls will cost \$1 apiece.

The five participants who are closest to the pin or make a hole-in-one each day will win prizes and advance to the finals. There will be 46 finalists. Men finalists will shoot from a distance of 160 yards, women from 160.

The top prize of \$1 million will be awarded to the first finalist to hit a hole-in-one. Each finalist will have one chance. If no one makes a hole-in-one, the finalist closest to the pin will win \$10,000. For more information, call Country Club Village at 420-0144.

Verdura to coach Farmington girls



Veteran boys basketball coach John Verdura of Farmington Hills has enjoyed good years coaching at River-view Gabriel Richard and hopes to take the Farmington High girls program to the same level.

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

John Verdura has coached boys basketball teams a lot of years and has been very successful at it.

Now he will apply his talents and try to generate the same success as coach of the Farmington High School girls varsity team.

Verdura, who replaces Brian Swinehart, also coaches the River-view Gabriel Richard boys and has compiled an impressive 90-49 record over the last six seasons with the Pioneers.

"I enjoy coaching, it's a way to supplement my income and it's a challenge," he said in response to why he sought the Farmington position. "Basketball is what I know and enjoy doing."

The 12-year Farmington Hills resident, who lives just a mile from the school, teaches physical education at Richard and had hoped to land a teaching job in the Farmington district, too.

"I enjoy it at Gabriel Richard, but it is a 60-mile drive back and forth,"

he said. "It's not that big a task for me to coach at another school, because it's not that far from home. I'm not the first coach who's had that situation."

"It's always better to be in the school when you're starting a program, but it's nothing that can't be overcome. If you work it the right way, you can still be successful with it."

Besides his work as a camp instructor, Verdura's only previous experience coaching girls was with the Birmingham Groves track team. He might have to adjust his coaching, but players are players in the end, he said.

"I found out this summer — and I told the girls — they listen better than boys," the 43-year-old Verdura said. "That's a nice situation because when you're talking to one you know the others are tuned in to you."

"At the same time, the jury is still out on work ethic. We're not talking about checkers or chess. It's a game that requires you to run and exert some energy. I have to see how coach-

able they are, how they take criticism and react in stressful situations.

"But when it's all said and done, there's not a whole lot of difference. The girls who are there, like the boys, want to be there and improve as individuals and as a team."

In his second season at Richard (1989), Verdura guided the Pioneers to an 18-9 record and appearance in the Class B state semifinals. He followed that with consecutive 19-5 seasons.

Verdura wasn't able to organize trips to team camp this summer, but he conducted open-gym sessions for the Farmington girls. He wanted to go slow at first, letting the players get to know him and vice versa.

"I hope a year from now to say we had a great summer," Verdura said. "I didn't want to lose anybody in July. We implemented some drills and worked on the offense a bit. It all has to be reviewed when we have the whole team together."

The Falcons, who were 5-16 last season, will have only one senior, and a new coach beginning with a young team is a good situation, Verdura said.

"A year from now, I hope to go to team camp and everyone to know the terminology and what it's all about," he said. "Learning to win games doesn't happen overnight. It's a



John Verdura

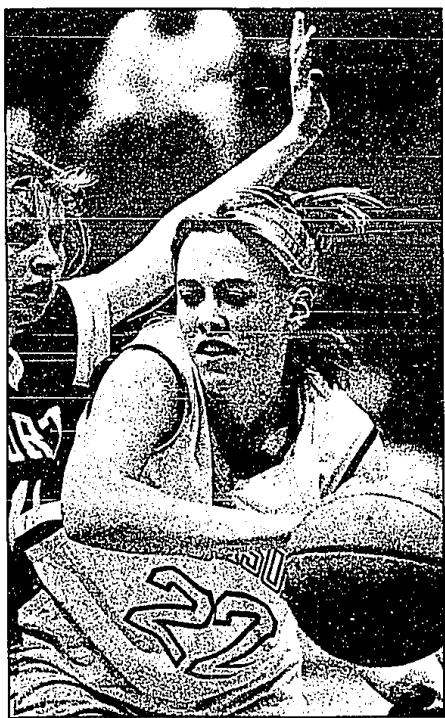
building process.

"I do like what I see. If we get them to play hard and be fundamentally sound, we'll be a respectable team and we'll start with that on Monday."

Verdura, who was raised in Detroit and attended Redford St. Mary High School, also taught and coached at Dearborn St. Alphonsus, Southgate Aquinas and Royal Oak Shrine. He was an assistant coach at Redford Bishop Borgess in the mid-1980s.

See VERDURA, 2C

Fall sports season



BILL BRADLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Preps in preparation: The calendar says it's still summer, but high school athletes are starting to prepare for fall sports. Senior Amanda Ault and her Harrison basketball teammates began practice today. The Hawks open the season a week from Thursday.

Area players figure in MIAA grid plans

BY C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

No one could relate to a life as the bulls-eye better than Albion College quarterback Mike Montico.

He's been it since he became the Britons' starter as a freshman. It wasn't so easy. As the Detroit Country Day graduate recalled: "I still remember my first league game as a freshman fumbling my first snap. I think coach (Pete) Schmidt has a lot more confidence in me now."

Sure Schmidt does. He should. As Montico enters his senior year, he's started every game in his career. He was the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Association's MVP last year, has led the conference in passing efficiency and has tossed a school-record 40 touchdown passes (in 28 games) in his career.

But most importantly, he has guided Albion to three-straight MIAA titles. His return, combined with the return of 18 other starters from last year's 8-1 squad, made choosing the pre-season favorite at Thursday's media day in Alma a no-brainer.

The coaches picked Hope College to finish second, followed by Adrian, Olivet, Kalamazoo and Alma.

Sure, the pressure is on at Albion. But Montico can live with it — by now, he's used to it.

Besides, goals remain. There's still the matter of the NCAA III championship.

Albion has made the playoffs once in Montico's tenure, losing to defending NCAA III champ Allegheny (Meadville, Pa.) 24-21 in 1991. This year, the Britons are ranked anywhere from 10th to 17th in major national publications.

"I think everybody should be shooting for a national championship," reasoned Montico, who completed 122 of 202 passes (60.4 percent) for 1,613 yards and 14 touchdowns, with nine interceptions, last season.

Doesn't that sound overconfident? What about the league season? Replied Montico: "Well, we aren't going

OUTLOOK

to get a shot at a national title if we don't win the MIAA. And coach Schmidt takes a real good perspective. He keeps us focused on one game at a time."

Despite the overwhelming factors favoring Albion, winning the MIAA and reaching the NCAA III playoffs won't be easy. The Brits have road games at Ohio Wesleyan, at Adrian and at Hope; Wesleyan beat Albion 21-17 last year in Albion, ruining any playoff hopes, and Hope and Adrian are figured to be the Brits toughest challengers in the MIAA.

"I worry about us being complacent," said Schmidt. "There are no guarantees. But we have 12 outstanding seniors, perhaps the best group of seniors we've ever had."

Schmidt's concern has had an impact on his quarterback — Montico thinks this may be the toughest league season Albion's experienced since he was a freshman.

"My freshman year, every (MIAA) game was tooth and nail," he said. "Everybody's been gunning for us all these years, but I think it'll come back to what it was like my freshman year a bit and be a lot closer this year."

It wouldn't bother him if that didn't happen, though.

Players to watch: Derek Masur, a 5-foot-11, 190-pound junior defensive back from Southfield (Royal Oak Shrine) who led Albion with five interceptions in '92; Tom Camavanaugh, 6-0, 190, junior defensive back from Troy (Madison Heights Bishop Foley); Mike Branstetter, 5-11, 225, sophomore inside linebacker from Birmingham (Seaholm); Bill Erminger, 5-11, 175, sophomore defensive back from Troy (Athens); Brian Lee, 6-1, 200, sophomore wide receiver from Farmington (North Farmington); Steve Lieger, 5-11, 220, sophomore offensive lineman from Detroit (Redford Catholic Central); Kevin Curtis, 6-3, 210, freshman tight end from Garden City (Garden City HS); Mason Hicks, 6-11, 200, freshman running back from Orchard Lake (St. Mary's); Saxon

See MIAA, 2C

Elezovic ready, eager for U-M challenge

BY BRAD EMONS
STAFF WRITER

It's Pete Elezovic's last shot, so the Redford Catholic Central High proponent won't be holding back when it comes to kicking the football during his final season as a Michigan Wolverine.

But the Wolverines' kicking game was much maligned during the 1992 season, so much so that some followers and media observers said it cost U-M, which finished 9-3 overall, a shot at the national championship.

Elezovic, who started his career in 1989 as a walk-on, is now a scholarship player trying to hold onto the No. 1 job as placekicker.

He welcomes challenges from hol-

dovers Erik Lovell and Remy Hamilton, along with highly touted freshman Nate DeLong, the latter who could also make a bid for the starting punting job against incumbent Chris Stapleton.

Competition doesn't hurt

"I had some field goals last year that I should have made," admitted Elezovic, who hit seven of 12 a year ago. "I think it helped me to kick in the big games. And with the competition this year, it puts more pressure on me, but that's what I like."

"They (the coaches) are going to wait to see if I improve. They want to see what I'm made of. I'd rather have it that way."

A closer look at the 1992 statistics shows that Elezovic's first full season as kicker was far from a disaster.

He made 52 of 65 PATs, three shy of a Michigan record. He also had a field goal in Michigan's 17-17 tie with Notre Dame and opened the Rose Bowl against Washington with a career-long 41-yarder.

His last-second 39-yard boot earned Michigan a 22-22 tie with Illinois, which clinched a second straight Big Ten championship. And if that wasn't enough, Elezovic recovered a fumble in a victory over Oklahoma State. He also ranked third on the team in total points (73) behind Tyrone Wheatley and Derrick Alexander.

Not all went well

But other points to his extra-point misses against Ohio State (a 13-13 tie) and Illinois as negatives, along with another major downfall — short kickoffs.

"The kickoffs, I've worked on that this summer," said the Farmington Hills native. "But even more important than that is consistency. I feel I have the ability to make it, but I need to be more consistent. That's the thing I need to improve upon each and every day."

During Friday's initial gathering with the media, head coach Gary

See ELEZOVIC, 2C