

Madonna's goal: national crown

By C.J. RISAK
Staff Writer

The opportunity has arrived for Madonna University.

It's been a half-dozen years since the Livonia-based school started its push in intercollegiate sports. Now, another level has been reached: Today, a Madonna team will compete in an NAIA national tournament for the first time.

The sport, of course, is volleyball. The accomplishment is hardly unexpected; indeed, coach Jerry Abraham has had his team on the verge of the NAIA Tournament.

The 1993 edition finally broke through. It did not come easily, though. A pair of five-set wins, first over Spring Arbor in the championship match of the NAIA District 23 Tournament and then over Cincinnati Mount St. Joseph in the Bi-District playoff, were necessary.

"There was a lot of pressure put on us (this season) because Northwood was out, plus Julie (Wood) and I were coming in," said senior middle hitter Kari Van Deusen.

Northwood University led District 23 volleyball for most of the past decade, but switched to NCAA Division II this season. That left the door open for Madonna.

Going for gold

But, as Van Deusen noted, finding an open door and getting through it can be two different things. The Lady Crusaders managed it, compiling a 43-6 record all the way.

"We've got their trip to the nationals, a five-day December vacation in San Diego. Whatever else they accomplish is icing — right?"

Wrong. "We're going out there to win it all," vowed Van Deusen. "We're going for the gold."

Abraham seconded that attitude, telling Van Deusen as she left practice Monday: "We're on a business trip, Kari."

It's difficult to predict how the Crusaders will fare. Remember, only two starters from last year's team returned this season. And there are only two seniors.

Two freshmen, a sophomore and two transfers are among the top seven players. No one associated with the team — including the coach — has ever reached this level of competition.

That's the dark side. Here's the bright: Two players, Van Deusen and Julie Wood, have competed in a national collegiate tournament. Both played at Scholera College, making two trips apiece to the NJCAA Tournament.

Also, Abraham has been to the past two NAIA Tournaments as an observer. "I've

VOLLEYBALL

talked to a lot of coaches," he said. "I know some teams have gone out there and lost every game, after getting caught up in all the hype." He's learned enough to avoid that pitfall.

Third, Northwood's success at past tournaments is noteworthy. The Northwood women reached the tournament semifinals in '91 and have been to the quarterfinals on two other occasions. That speaks well for this region's strength in volleyball. And Madonna has battled Northwood for first place in District 23 for the past few years.

Talent is there.

Madonna seeded eighth among the 20 teams contesting for the championship, hosted by Point Loma Nazarene. Included in its five-team pool is No. 1 seed Montevallo College (Alabama), which comes in with a 42-3 record. Other pool members are Westmont (Calif.), Nova (Fla.), 29-6; and St. Andrew's (N.C.), 25-10. They are unseeded.

Abraham, like Van Deusen, is confident. "I'm really excited about it," he said. "We are definitely capable of doing it. I really think we can play with any of these teams."

"They're really playing strong right now. Getting over that hill in the Bi-District (against Mount St. Joseph's) gave them a whole lot more confidence."

The abilities of Van Deusen, Wood, setter Mazie Pilut (from Redford Bishop Burgess), outside hitter Kelly McCausland (Redford Union), middle hitter Julie Martin (Livonia Stevens), and outside hitter Mo Paulin (Livonia/Farmingville Hills Mercy) cement that confidence.

Van Deusen led Madonna in kills with 581 (a .415 kill percentage, 4.3 a game) and in blocks with 49 (3.18 a game) during the regular season. Martin was next in both, with 527 kills (and a team-best .463 average, 4.2 a game) and 310 blocks (2.5).

Paulin led the Crusaders in digs (801 total, 6.89 per game) and was third in kills (340, 3.92, 2.5), while Wood was second in digs (576, 4.5) while collecting 306 kills (2.81). McCausland had a strong all-around season with 265 kills (3.12, 2.0), 295 digs (2.2) and 251 blocks (1.96).

Pilut was extremely impressive at setter, totaling 1,675 assists to kills (12.8 per game). She also had 340 digs (2.6).

"The key is simple," said Abraham. "We have to maintain a good, sound defense, and pass and serve well. And we have to block at our best."

If the Crusaders keep focused on the goal at hand, those keys can be reached. Which could take them a long way toward an NAIA title, and another step up the athletic ladder for Madonna.

O'Meara from page 1B

The Harrison team that lost to Rice wasn't the same one I saw hold Glenn to 107 yards and scoreless for four quarters eight days earlier. It was Wednesday of the next week before his players had their feet back on the ground, Herrington said.

The Glenn game was a big game for Harrison, which had lost to the Rockets earlier, and the Western Lakes Activities Association title was at stake.

For Rice, the Harrison game was the championship game it didn't get to play in the Catholic League. Rice had to win to get in the playoffs; Harrison didn't. The Warriors had everything to gain; Harrison had nothing to lose.

Likewise, I suspect Rice wasn't at the same emotional peak to play Seaholm the next week, and I doubt the Maples, following their 14-13 upset of the Warriors, were quite the same team the next week against Fraser.

I think it was remarkable Harrison pulled itself together after its loss, continued its season another four weeks and won its sixth state championship.

Unlike Catholic Central in Class AA, both teams made the playoffs and had the same opportunity. Harrison kept winning; Rice didn't.

The Warriors were huge favorites going into the tournament, and the way was wide open for the other teams when Rice lost to Seaholm.

There's no doubt the Hawks, anticipating a possible semifinal rematch with the Warriors, received new life and were recharged mentally with that news.

In subsequent games, Harrison soundly defeated the team (Fraser) that defeated the team that defeated Rice. In the four weeks of the tournament, the Hawks were clearly the best team in Class A.

What if department

When Harrison and Dearborn Fordson entered the ninth-game crossover agreement with the Catholic League in 1992, the Hawks had won the Class BB title and were considered the No. 1 team in Michigan overall.

Harrison was perceived as the more powerful of the two and was matched with the third-place team in the Central Division, Fordson the fourth-place team. It has been suggested here previously it should have been the other way around since Fordson is the bigger school. If that had been the case this year, consider what might have been.

Rice and Fordson (the eventual AA champion) would have played, with each needing a win to get in the playoffs.

If Fordson wins, the Rice-Harrison issue is a moot point. The Warriors are done and nobody doubts Harrison is the best team.

If Rice wins, the same holds true because Seaholm upsets Rice and there's no Harrison-Rice

playoff game. Furthermore, we have a different AA champion, CC gets in the playoffs instead of Fordson, and we most likely have an all-Observerland final between Glenn and CC.

Unexpected success

At the start of the year, one might have thought the Hawks were a year away from winning another state title.

I think everybody knew they had talent and would be better. But Harrison was coming off a 4-6 season, and there were some questions that needed to be answered.

When the Hawks beat Dearborn Divine Child in the first game, I knew they had potential. When they played well (but lost 24-19) against Glenn the next week, they more resembled the old Harrison teams than a 4-5 team. When they beat Northville 21-6 in the third game, I believed anything was possible and it was.

The Hawks won the championship without any all-stars — no Mill Coleman, John Miller or Roy Granger — and without much size, but they were still as effective as past Harrison teams.

"We proved you don't need a lot of superstar on a team," Herrington said. "If you play with a good team concept, you can get the job done. To win the title (with just one 200-pound lineman) speaks well for what kids can do with technique."

"It was like 1981 when we won

with small kids. There was a little less pressure, because teams like the '88 team were expected to win every game and win by big scores."

The Hawks will probably face a different but familiar situation at the start of next season. They will have a number of three-year starters back, including fullback Nick Williams and receiver Kevin Bryant, and tailback Scott Gurke gained an extra semester of eligibility after suffering a knee injury. "I'm sure we'll be rated in the top 10 preseason because of the players we have coming back," Herrington said.

"But preseason rankings don't guarantee anything. We have to keep the team hungry with the same desire to win the championship as they had this year."

That leads to another question I've frequently been asked in the last week: How does Harrison manage to do it, being a public school?

The short answer is the program, of which coaching is a large part. Herrington and Bob Sutter have been doing the same thing for more than 20 years, which gives the program continuity and stability.

"People are always looking for other reasons," Herrington said. "They think kids flock to the school and the kids are recruited. But if they came and looked at the facts they would know differently."

"The quarterback is the key in big games, and that's why Pesci was so valuable to us this year."

Herrington will move junior Jake Lawson, who played monsterback on defense and is a catcher on the baseball field, from backup to quarterback. He and freshman Kevin Bambeck, who led the JV team to a 7-2 season and the WLA title, will contend for the job.

"We definitely should be able to run the ball," Herrington said, "but in crucial situations we still have to pass."

"We have to get the ball to Bryant. He's going to be a big threat, and we have to make sure we have someone who can get him the ball."

Hawks from page 1B

to reclaim the division crown, which they had held from 1982-91.

"We had to win that game to have a shot at the winning the league," Herrington said. "We knew nobody else was going to beat them, and that was the key win."

"Winning the league was as big a challenge as anything, maybe more so than the state. Being able to beat Northville and (Class AA runner-up Westland) John Glenn was a great accomplishment."

The Hawks lose a good many senior starters but not all as they did after winning the Class BB championship in 1991.

Shabek, Bryant, Williams, Struble, Granger, Marc Lesperance, Jefferson and Hensel will be

returning starters next year, and the Hawks will have Scott Gurke back too.

Gurke started at tailback and defensive end last year but injured a knee in the preseason. He was granted an extra semester of eligibility and will be able to play again next fall.

Herrington said the University of Michigan doctors, who performed surgery on Gurke's knee, told him Gurke is one of the fastest recovering patients they've had with that type of injury.

"We'll have three Division I prospects next year, which is exceptional," said Herrington, referring to Gurke, Williams and Bryant. "So we think we should be a very strong team."

Gurke's return will present a

nice dilemma for Herrington — Who to play at tailback? Granger started there all year, but Williams was a huge success in the playoffs running from that position.

"We can use all three of them in our offense," Herrington said. Gurke and Williams can play backup. Granger and Gurke swing back. The Hawks also have a fine sophomore running back moving up from the JV team in Jeff Asochoff.

Quarterback priority

But Herrington's big task in the off season will be to develop a quarterback who can lead the team like Pesci did.

"We have no quarterback who has thrown a pass in a varsity

THIS WEEKEND ODDS & ENDS, NEW & USED SKI SALE

FRI, DEC. 3, 12-9 • SAT, DEC. 4, 10-8 • SUN, DEC. 5, 12-5

WE HAVE GATHERED UP ALL THE USED ALPINE & CROSS COUNTRY MERCHANDISE, ODDS & ENDS, NEW & USED (OVER 1000 Pairs of ALPINE BOOTS, SKI BINDINGS, POLES and SKIS) COZY COTTAGE CUMBERLAND FOR MEN, WOMEN & KIDS) FROM OUR 13 BAVARIAN VILLAGE Ski Shops & PUT IT ALL TOGETHER DOWNTOWN 1 HOUR BIRMINGHAM STORE, 101 TOWNSEND, CORNER OF PEARCE, DOWNTOWN BIRMINGHAM. GO TO THE CHECKOUT FOR SALE.

CASH AND CARRY ONLY. LOTS OF CLOTHING TOO! LAST YEARS STYLES & BAROQUE PRICED. IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR SOME GOOD USED SKI GEAR, THIS IS IT! SO BARGAIN HUNTERS PARADISE.

THE WEATHERVANE

"Old Time Folk Art Shows"

Christmas in the Country

Flint, MI

December 3, 4, 5, 1993

IMA Sports Arena - 1401 St. Clair (100-120 Artists)

MAJOR MILE BIRMINGHAM • GALEN MILLER BIRMINGHAM

CHIMNEYS

- Cleaned
- Screened
- Repaired
- New

ROOFS

- Repaired
- Re-Roofed
- New
- Leaks Stopped

Karney Denderian's CROWN CONTRACTING, INC.

4291 W. 10 Mile, Novi
4270-3981
SINCE 1952

• LICENSED
• INSURED
• GUARANTEED

Senior Citizen Discount

Bond Seminar

The West Bloomfield Public Schools' bond issue, recently approved by voters, will be sold to investors on or about Tuesday, December 14, 1993.

Kemper Securities, Inc. as a Senior Managing Underwriter of the bonds, will offer a free seminar, open to the public, with:

Len Elder
Investment Consultant
Kemper Securities' Birmingham office

Orchard Lake Middle School Media Center
6000 Orchard Lake Road
Tuesday, December 7, 1993 • 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Elder will discuss the bonds from an investment point of view and attendees will have the opportunity to register for information on the bond when they are offered for sale.

(313) 644-2100
255 S. Woodward Avenue • Suite 150 • Birmingham, MI 48009
*Subject to availability.

Kemper Securities, Inc.
Member NYSE • Member SIPC

ON THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE

Get up-to-the minute Open House information!

Listed by city, on our easy to use voice telephone directory, just call from any touch tone telephone and hear the latest real estate information — it's as easy as 1-2-3.

1 Call 953-2020 from any touch tone telephone

2 To hear listings in Oakland County PRESS 1, in Wayne County PRESS 2 and for Additional Areas PRESS 3, or press the number following the city you are interested in:

3 Choose your price range and listen to the listings for the city you've chosen.

• To back up, PRESS 1

• To pause, PRESS 2

• To jump ahead, PRESS 3

• To exit at anytime press*

OAKLAND COUNTY-

Birmingham.....4280
Bloomfield.....4280
Farmington.....4282
Farmington Hills.....4282
Millard.....4288
Novi.....4286
Rochester.....4285
Royal Oak.....4287
Southfield.....4283
South Lyon.....4288
Troy.....4284

Walled Lake.....4286
Lakes Area.....4281

WAYNE COUNTY-

Canton.....4261
Garden City.....4264
Livonia.....4260
Northville.....4263
Plymouth.....4262
Redford.....4265
Westland.....4264
Dearborn.....4315

ADDITIONAL AREAS-

Livingston County.....4342
Washtenaw.....4345
Other Suburban Homes.....4348

THE Observer & Eccentric NEWSPAPERS

HOMELINE
953-2020