

Blazers look for coach to replace Kavanaugh



BRAD EMMONS

They're looking for a new basketball coach at Livonia Ladywood High, but talk about the recently fired one may go on for quite some time.

Who wants to replace Ed Kavanaugh? That's anybody's guess.

Great situation? Not so fast. But how can anyone explain a school firing a coach with a career record of 289-61?

On the surface the decision appears ludicrous, but if you dig a little deeper, this final episode has been brewing for quite some time.

New athletic director Sal Malek made the final move not to renew Kavanaugh's contract after a meeting last Wednesday. He had to do a little work. Malek's only mistake was that he should have called in Kavanaugh's assistants to inform them of the final decision as well.

A.D. showed guts

But give Malek credit, too. He called in Kavanaugh's assistants to inform them of the final decision as well.

Malek also emphasized that Kavanaugh's firing had nothing to do with the team's performance this year.

State-ranked Ladywood, however, fizzled down the stretch in 1993 with disappointing defeats to Dearborn Divine Child (in the Catholic League playoffs) and Plymouth Canton (in the Class A district final in Northville).

Hopes were high this season after the Blazers reached the Class A quarterfinals in 1992.

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The two parties simply weren't on the same page when it came to running a girls basketball program, especially in the Catholic League's tough Central Division.

Kavanaugh wanted unlimited access to the newly constructed and spacious gym, but Smith cramped his style. She said Sunday practices were taboo and Saturday's practices must be approved.

Kavanaugh also complained about lack of transportation to certain games, while Smith says the school vehicles must be shared by all teams.

Kavanaugh didn't feel confined, he felt shackled.

Principal backed A.D. Smith told me she backed Malek's decision not to renew Kavanaugh's contract, even though she was not there for the final meeting.

"Yes, I was a part of it," the Sister admitted Friday. "I felt at this time it was the best decision to make a change for the girls."

"Anybody could be disappointed with the results that our team had this season because we certainly had talent. But it could have happened to any team."

Kavanaugh, however, does not blame Malek for his termination. It goes straight to the top.

Meanwhile, some of his players reportedly feel betrayed, especially the ones Kavanaugh brought in with him. Kavanaugh reportedly mentioned at the meeting that some may transfer.

But the outgoing Ladywood coach also admitted to me that he had some unhappy campers this season on his ball club, not to mention some disgruntled parents. The chemistry was not quite right.

What does future hold? So where does Ladywood's once-proud basketball program go from here?

"We've had quite a few calls already," Sister Smith said. "The next coach certainly has to know their stuff. And once he's part of the program, we want that coach to develop all the girls to their fullest potential. And we want someone who is willing to work with the parents. There's a lot of things to be given and take to make it successful."

A plum job? I'm not so sure. Ladywood is undergoing its fourth coaching change since 1987. (Don't forget the painful exits of Ken Bechard and Toni Gasparovic.)

But one thing is crystal clear. Sister Smith is the boss, like it or lump it. She runs the school and the athletic program. The new coach will ultimately answer to her.

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Volleyball from page 1C

Besides returning the other five regulars, the Hawks have North Farmington transfer Carey Perkins to take the place of Heist in the middle.

"From what I've seen, everybody has gone up a notch," coach Ron Shortt said. "Last year we had a core group of five players and Julie Heist."

"We're not so much a one- or two-person show. The whole team is a lot more balanced this year."

The top returning player is senior Amanda Ault, a setter and outside hitter who received a scholarship to play for CMU.

"She's always been a real fine setter, and so far she's the best hitter on the team," Shortt said. "She's the most experienced and skilled player on the team."

Perkins, a 5-10 senior, will help fill the void in the Harrison offense created by Heist's departure.

"Carey is always upbeat and wanting to know what she can do to improve," Shortt said. "As far as spiking the ball, Mo and Carey are our big power hitters."

The other returning starters are senior Maggie Chavez, the other setter in the 6-2 offense and a hitter, and juniors Krista Snow, Lori Hubble and Jenny Mysynski. Snow will play middle hitter again, Hubble and Mysynski weak-side hitter.

"We're working with (Snow) on some things Julie did," Shortt said. "She doesn't hit the ball as hard as Julie, but she's interested in getting some quicker sets. She wants to expand her range of hitting instead of having it set right to her."

Hubble, though she's only 5-3, is a good jumper as well as a good defensive player and server, according to Shortt. Mysynski became a fixture in the lineup by the end of last season, and Shortt hopes she will contribute more as a blocker this year.

Harrison also returns junior Jodie Barringer, a tennis player who has a "heckuva serve," and sophomores Kristen Kozlars and Erika Greene. Varsity newcomers

are senior Laura Concepcion and sophomores Sera Rauch and Sheryl Wolf.

"We have real high hopes," Shortt said. "The kids are working hard and I'm real excited. If things go well, hopefully, we can contend (for the league title)."

The Hawks were host for the Harrison Invitational Saturday and will play Novi at home Wednesday in their first dual match.

Farmington High

The Falcons have two things in common with Mercy. They must train a new setter and fill the void left by the graduation of their top hitter.

Michelle Lorenz ran the 5-1 offense for three years, and Debbie Schroeder earned second-team, all-area honors with 290 kills and 568 attacks.

The new setter is junior Natalie Kozera, who didn't play last year but did as a freshman.

"Right now she's getting back into it," coach Julie Ingalls said. "The girls are real helpful to her in that they know how important her role is going to be."

"We've started out trying to get her skills back intact and now we're trying to find out what each hitter likes. She's very intelligent and has the strategy part down."

Kozera will have no shortage of quality hitters for whom to set the ball despite the loss of Schroeder.

Five-foot-10 senior Maggie Frum, is the top returning hitter and an all-around player. She had 81 kills and 21 blocks last year.

Laura McWilliams takes over at Schroeder's front position. She will be the No. 2 hitter after making big strides in her game late last season.

Junior Krislay Mahon is an all-around player and was the No. 3 hitter behind Schroeder and Frum. She had 49 kills and 15 blocks on an 88-percent passer and 87-percent server.

"She's very consistent," Ingalls said. "She knows when to hit away and when to keep the ball in play."

Senior Erin Phelps is another quality, all-around player. She has improved her hitting and back-row passing, according to Ingalls. Phelps was an 80-percent server and had 31 kills.

The Falcons, also return junior Jessica Guibord in the back row and sophomores Kim Washnock and Beth Wilson in the front row.

Washnock was used mainly as a blocker last year, but Ingalls plans to involve her more in the offense.

The varsity also includes junior Jenny Neu, the other setter in the 6-2 offense, and sophomores Erica Gwynn, Dana Aon, Teresa Lindemann and Alina Hetinek.

Farmington, which finished 15-19 overall and eighth in the Western Lakes Activities Association, is a young team with only three seniors.

"I'm not real concerned about the new year, because we had over 60 girls try out and I was able to get the 13 best athletes who were there," Ingalls said.

"No one person can control a game," Ingalls said. "We need a team concept of everyone working together and communicating. They're talented athletes; if they put all that together, good things are going to happen."

The Falcons, who had one of the top academic teams in the state last year, played in the Harrison Invitational Saturday and have a home match tonight against Bloomfield Hills Lusher.

North Farmington Coach Sandy Lubieniecki is confident the Raiders have improved since last season when they finished last in the Western Lakes Activities Association and won only three matches.

North returns nine varsity players and has more experience. The Raiders also have the most players (14) in six seasons under Lubieniecki, and seven sophomores will be pushing for court time.

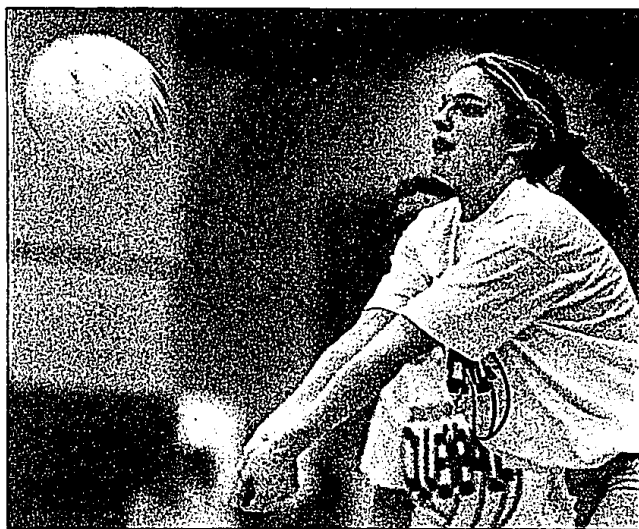
"We will be a much-improved team, and our level of play will get better and better," Lubieniecki said. "Our goal is to be as competitive as the other 11 teams (in the league) by February."

The Raiders have experience at setter, something they lacked a year ago.

Senior co-captain Keegan Keuffer is a middle hitter who led the team in blocking, but she also handles some of the setting.

Sophomore Cooker Perkins has a year of varsity experience as an outside hitter and setter, and junior Jasmine Khambhatti and sophomore Amy Finkel also can play the position.

"It was something we had to develop," Lubieniecki said. "It was Keegan's first time setting



DAN DEAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hawk veteran: Krista Snow is one of five returning starters on the Harrison volleyball team, which hopes to have another successful year.

and Cooker's first year on varsity. Now they've played here plus, the new girls are challenging and have added depth."

They will be setting the ball for juniors Ali Lord and Christin Glavok and sophomores Emily Ofermann, twins Lee and Laura Nelson and Natalie Reje. The first three are varsity veterans; the Nelsons and Reje played JV.

Lord and Ofermann are improved hitters, Lubieniecki said, and Glavok is the strongest player as "far as hitting the volleyball."

"Because of the talent, I think by midseason we can go to just about anybody in the front row and get the point or sidout in a crucial situation," she said.

Seniors Becky Thuraam, the other co-captain, and Amy Kelman are the leading servers and back-row specialists. Returning senior Carrie Reje is the top passer and another solid defensive player. Sophomore Heather Cornwell will help in the way of serving and defense.

"(Defense) was always something our program was noted for, and it was probably the weakest point of our game last year," Lubieniecki said. "This year it's much improved. We're much faster and more skilled."

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Falcons from page 1C

overs, and at the end we were just trying to get the ball back."

Scott Menser scored 21 points to lead Farmington. Kevin Affenbaugh came off the bench to contribute 16. Mike Tokar had 15, Steve Juncaj 12, Stan Lewis nine and Jason Jackson eight.

The Panthers were led by Jason Mitchell, who finished with 20 points. Bryan Berryman had 14 in a non-starting role, Jeremy Rice 10, John Hunter nine and Greg Knight seven.

Farmington led 20-12 after one quarter despite having 10 turnovers, but RU kept the score close and stayed within nine (37-28) at halftime.

The Falcons outscored the Panthers 12-2 early in the third quarter to build a 51-33 lead. Farmington forced a streak of turnovers and converted a stream of fast breaks. The Falcons made 11 of 19 shots in that quarter.

"We make a lot of mistakes and probably gamble more than I'd like, but the kids play hard and score a lot of points," Mikel said. "We have to cut down on some of the mental mistakes, but at this point I'm pretty happy with where this team is at."

Mitchell hit a three-point basket to start the fourth quarter and kept the Panthers with 10 (61-51), but RU couldn't stop Farmington and the teams traded baskets in the final.

Despite the loss, Smathers was more pleased with his team's performance than he was after a 92-51 loss to Walled Lake Central in the opener.

"That was a 41-point loss and this was only 15, so maybe that's improvement," he said. "Tonight, for us, it was a better game. I feel the kids gave the effort, physically."

"They've got four starters back, and they played with some poise, as a bunch of seniors should," Smathers said, regarding Farmington. They looked like a good team. They had 19 points against (Waterford) Kettering, so they have staying power; they're not going to role over."

Mikel would like to see his team improve on its free-throw shooting after making only 15 of 38 Friday and 17 of 34 against Kettering. RU was 19-of-29 at the line.

■ OAK PARK 87, HARRISON 62: The host Redkins took a 46-26 halftime lead Friday and never trailed the lead. Farmington dominated the boards to defeat Farmington Hills Harrison.

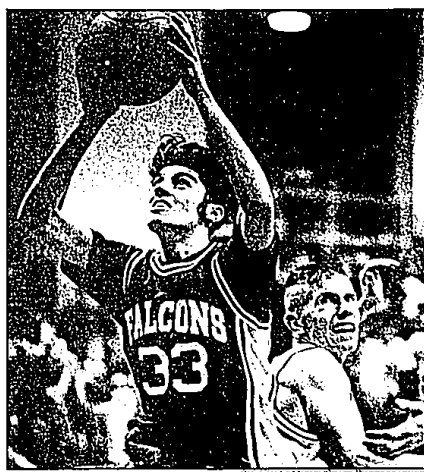
The Hawks (1-1) led 6-2 early in the game, but Oak Park made an 11-0 run and led 25-14 after one quarter and 66-40 at the end of three.

Byron Perryman, a 6-foot-7, 225-pound forward who has signed with Dayton, has rebounded to with his 23 points for the Redkins (2-0).

Senior guard Rodney Hampton scored 25 points, including five three-point baskets, to lead Oak Park, and senior forward Alex Rodgers added 11.

Senior Dave Bennett came off the bench to score a team-high 10 points for the Hawks. Seniors Calvin Pruitt and Charles Bambenek and junior Jeremy White had eight points apiece.

■ EAST CATHOLIC 82, RICE 58: Brother Rice had a three-point lead with just under six minutes left but couldn't hold on in its season opener Friday.



SHARON LEHMAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Post move: Steve Juncaj of Farmington drives past Red-Ford's Jason Mitchell to the basket Friday.

"We made a couple turnovers and (East Catholic) scored points off the steals and we never realized the lead. Rice coach Frank Carrico said. "It was a good first game as long as we learn from our mistakes. We didn't shoot well (22-30) and being a perimeter team that makes it tough."

Rice led 19-17 after the first quarter, but East Catholic outscored the Warriors in the remaining quarters, including a 17-13 edge in the third.

Senior guard D.J. MacAlone paced Rice with 16 points and senior John Tzagarat dipped in 10. Leonardo Salter's 11 points led East Catholic (2-0).

Rice plays host to Andover on Tuesday.

Schoolcraft men lose conference cage debut

Dave Bogataj could sum up what led to the downfall of his Schoolcraft College men's basketball team in three words: "We couldn't score."

If you can't score, you won't win. SC wasn't quite as ineffective as Detroit's "professional" six-point-a-quarter team, but it was close: The Ocelots managed just 28 in the second half in losing 81-63 to St. Clair CC in their Eastern Conference opener Wednesday at SC.

"That killed us," Bogataj said after his team slipped to 5-5 overall. "I'm not taking anything away from (St. Clair), but we destroyed ourselves. I can't blame one person. It was a concerted effort, by everybody."

"The last time they ran an offense was last Saturday. It's not like they didn't try. The ball just wouldn't go in the hole."

The first half was bad, but the Ocelots trailed by just 39-35 at the break. With 15 minutes left in the game, the score was tied at 49-49.

Unfortunately, SC did not make a basket for the next nine minutes. To make matters worse, the Ocelots were 3-of-13 from the free-throw line in that stretch, with Abu Hamilton — one of the team's leading scorers — missing

five times. By the time the streak ended, St. Clair had a 65-52 advantage.

It never got close after that. Todd McNeil led SC with 24 points. Steve Whitlow had 14, Tony Macleffewski scored 12 and Hamilton netted 11. Clair Volk's 22 led the Skippers. Brian Coleman had 20, Curtis Clark 10, and Jason Schaffer 10.

St. Clair is also 5-5 overall, but is a game ahead of SC in the conference at 1-0.

■ ST. CLAIR 89, SC 61: In women's basketball, the Lady Ocelots fell behind by 10 at the half and never recovered in losing at home to St. Clair CC Wednesday.

Cindy Muha led SC with 14 points. Angie Cerme added 13. Alicia Kollmorgan's 24 was best for the Lady Skippers, who have won the past two Eastern Conference titles.

"The difference was they played harder," said SC coach Jack Grenan. "They had tougher defense, in our face. Their pressure disrupted our offense."

"We didn't play hard. We did not play as a team. I'm disappointed, upset — there was no intensity. This is the worst game we played."

SC slipped to 4-3 overall, 0-1 in the conference.