

Sports & Recreation

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Observer
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on the web: <http://observer-ecentric.com>

FARMINGTON — FARMINGTON HILLS SPORTS SCENE

Cobras comedy night

The 13-year-old NFWB Cobras travel baseball team will have a comedy night fund-raiser Sunday, March 22, at Vladimir's Banquet Hall, 28126 Grand River, Farmington Hills.

The evening begins with a 6 p.m. cocktail hour followed by dinner at 7 p.m. and the show at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$18 per person. There will be a cash bar.

Tickets are available by contacting Marilyn Smith at 477-0764.

Trojans lose match

Livonia Clarenceville suffered its second Metro Conference volleyball loss of the season Thursday by visiting Macomb Lutheran North, 15-8, 15-12. The Trojans are 29-8-1 overall and 5-2 in the Metro Conference.

Agnieszka Palarz had 10 kills in 17 attempts, while teammate Melissa Berry made good on six of 10. Jackie Kilbiko led the defense with 67 digs with only five errors.

On Wednesday, Kristin Jabor served 14 straight points, including five aces, in the third and deciding game as the Trojans won at Dearborn Heights Crestwood, 15-8, 3-15, 15-0.

Palarz was the top attacker once again with seven kills in 12 attempts.

Nagano stars coming

The best in Olympic figure skating, both past and present, will be coming to Detroit's Joe Louis Arena in Champions on Ice May 2.

Included in the cast of stars from this year's Olympics are gold medalist Tara Lipinski, silver medalist Michelle Kwan and bronze medalist Lu Chen for the ladies; gold medalist Ilia Kulik, silver medalist Elvis Stojko and bronze medalist Philippe Candeloro for the men; gold medalists Oksana Kazakova and Artur Dimitriev and silver medalists Mandy Woetzel and Ingo Steuer in pairs; and gold medalists Pasha Grishuk and Evgeny Platov in dance.

Past skating champions include Todd Eldredge, Oksana Baiul, Victor Petrenko, Rudy Galindo, and Elizabeth Punsalan and Jerod Swallow.

Tickets will be \$55, \$40, \$30, and will go on sale at 10 a.m. Monday at J.L.A. Fox Theatre Box Offices and all Ticketmaster locations. For more information, call (313) 983-6066.

Oakland signs goalie

All-Observer goalkeeper Mike Skolnik (Livonia Churchill) signed a national letter-of-intent Friday to play soccer at Oakland University.

The 6-foot-1, 180-pound Skolnik was named to the Michigan High School Soccer Coaches Association Dream team.

"We think we have one of Michigan's best goalkeepers, if not the top goalkeeper in Michigan," OU coach Gary Parsons said. "Mike will have a real opportunity to compete for the starting job at Oakland this fall."

Twisters have tryouts

The Wayne County Twisters football organization will have a pro-style combine for all those interested in playing football at the semi-pro level. Candidates must be at least 18 years old and in excellent condition.

The cost is \$20, payable at the time of the tryout. There will be two tryouts: 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28, and 2 p.m. Saturday, March 7, at the Wayne-Westland YMCA, located at 827 S. Wayne in Westland.

To pre-register, call one of the following numbers: (734) 981-7141; (313) 359-3457; (313) 513-8264.

MHSAA ticket offer

The Michigan High School Athletic Association is offering group ticket pricing for the boys basketball finals in East Lansing March 28-29.

Groups of 10 or more can obtain a discount off the standard ticket price for any session of the semifinals and finals.

Tickets will be priced at \$3 for each semifinal session and \$4 for each final session. The discount will only be for upper deck bench seating.

Orders must be submitted by Friday, Feb. 27. Order forms can be obtained from the Breslin Center, One Birch Row, East Lansing, MI 48824, or can be downloaded from the MHSAA web site at www.mhsaa.com. Call (617) 432-6000 for information.

Pennala's 22 paces North victory



STAFF PHOTO BY ANTON MITCHELL

Heavy traffic: North senior guard Ray Lousia finds the lane unsuitable for driving to the basket as Farmington players Justin Milus (left) and Ryan Gargol stand in his way. The Raiders won, 56-38.

■ North Farmington heads into the league tournament with momentum on its side after defeating Farmington behind a 22-point effort by senior guard Al Pennala.

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

From now on, whenever Al Pennala takes some good-natured kidding from his older brothers, he can remind them of what he did on the basketball court Friday night.

The senior guard, who is the fourth Pennala to play for North Farmington, scored a career-high 22 points to lead the host Raiders to a victory over cross-town rival Farmington, 56-38.

Pennala enhanced the family tradition begun by brothers Rick, Dean and Jon Pennala — none of whom can take a verbal jab at Al's shooting percentage this time.

"My brother just said that today," Al Pennala said. "He said I shoot the most but have the lowest shooting average. I guess I have something to say back to them now."

Pennala, who shot 7-of-15 overall and 4-of-10 behind the arc, scored 14 points in the third quarter when North outscored Farmington, 17-6.

In the third quarter, he knocked down three triples, converted a three-point play with a free throw and sank a transition layup after making a steal.

"Al just shot the ball well," North coach Brian Swinehart said. "Al gets hot and you know it's going in, and that's what happened tonight."

"He had a shot on the wing, and I was saying 'No, no, no, be patient!'" Then he buries it, and it's 'Yes, yes, yes!' It was the best game he's played all year without a doubt."

The victory allowed the Raiders to finish one place above the Falcons in the final Western Lakes Activities Association standings.

North ends with a fourth-place record of 7-4. Farmington tied with Walled Lake Western for fifth place at 6-5, but the Falcons get the higher seed based on their victory over the Warriors.

That means Farmington will be back at North as both teams will meet again in the first round of the WLAA playoffs Friday. Both teams are 11-6 overall.

Pennala's big third quarter helped the Raiders expand a 24-19 halftime lead to 41-24.

The Falcons didn't score the last 3½ minutes after a Trevor Gaines dunk.

Please see RAIDERS, D3

Hawks enter playoffs with momentum

BY NEAL ZIPSER
STAFF WRITER

BASKETBALL

Tournaments are often won by the hottest team entering the tournament. If that's the case, Farmington Harrison has to like its chances.

The Hawks won their eighth straight game Friday and locked up the Western Division title in the Western Lakes Activities Association, by holding off visiting Plymouth Canton, 63-55.

Harrison improved to 15-2 overall and 9-2 in the WLAA — good for a second-place tie with Westland John Glenn and one game behind Plymouth Salem.

The Hawks will be the No. 2 seed in the WLAA tournament and will play host to Walled Lake Central Friday.

"Winning the division for the second year in a row means a lot, especially considering we lost our first division game of the season (to Livonia Churchill)," Harrison coach Mike Teachman said.

"I think the title would mean more if we played everyone in the division twice, home and away, but we'll still get another trophy for our case."

"People are talking about John Glenn being the hot team, but I think we have the momentum. I like the way we're playing."

Harrison controlled much of the game against the Chiefs, who are hav-

ing an uncharacteristic down year. The Hawks built their biggest lead at 54-29 with 6:58 remaining, and it appeared to be over.

But with Harrison's second string in the game, the Chiefs (6-11, 4-7) went on an 18-2 run over the next five minutes. Leading the charge was junior guard Joe Cortellini, who scored 11 straight points.

After nailing a jumper, Cortellini hit a three-pointer and was fouled. His free throw cut the deficit to 56-47 with 1:55 remaining.

Teachman put his starters back in the game, and senior forward Jared Hopkins got the momentum back for Harrison with two layups. But Cortellini wasn't finished as he was fouled on a

triple try.

Cortellini hit the first two foul shots and missed the third on purpose. He got the loose ball, hit a short jumper and was fouled again. His free throw cut the Harrison lead to 60-52 with 43 seconds remaining.

"We've tried that play before but couldn't execute it, because it's hard to do," Canton coach Dan Young said. "But Joe is a great worker and a great listener. He continues to improve and he sets the tone for the rest of the team."

Canton got to within six at 61-55 with 21 seconds left but failed to get any closer.

"I wanted to get the subs in and get

Please see HAWKS, D3

Farmington boys coach to retire at season's end

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

SWIMMING

After 14 seasons as coach of the Farmington High School boys swim team, Ross Bandy has decided it's time to turn the coaching reins over to someone else.

He plans to retire at the end of the current season.

"I'm happy to coach the kids, because they give me 100 percent," Bandy said, citing a number of "distractions," including concerns about his health. "But I don't feel I've given them 100 percent."

"I've missed more practices this year than I have in all the years I've coached, and it just isn't fair to the boys."

Bandy, 41, said he is disappointed in

a lot of things, one being a lack of participation. Quite a few boys decided not to return for the 1997-98 season.

"That sorta sends me a message," he said. "The kids who are there seem to like me and have asked me to stay."

"I feel someone can come in who is young and enthusiastic who can turn the program around. I'll miss it dearly, but think it's time for a change."

In addition, there is no feeder program in Farmington-anymore, Bandy said, citing no middle school program "to give these kids the skills they need" and a declining number of boys entering the Stingrays program.

Please see BANDY, D2



STAFF PHOTO BY NEAL MITCHELL

Coach to retire: Ross Bandy plans to step down as Farmington High School boys swim coach at the end of the current season.