

Sports

The Farmington
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STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LARSON

Returning players: Farmington's Lorianne DeDomenico (left) and Harrison's Lauren Liebowitz compete for possession of the ball last season. Both are key returning players for their respective teams.

Hawks positive entering new season

BY RICHARD SHOCK
STAFF WRITER

Experience is a great teacher, especially when your girls soccer team is a member of one of the state's premier soccer leagues.

Farmington Harrison coach Glenn Breuhan figures his Hawks will be better this season by virtue of the youth of last year's squad.

The team compiled a 3-9-3 record in the Western Lakes Activities Associa-

SOCER

tion, one of the state's premier soccer leagues.

The Hawks had just four seniors last season, but one, Jodi Schulz, was injured and missed much of the year. "The two we lost were really good players," said Breuhan, who brings his 13th year of coaching at Harrison.

The key contributors who gradu-

ated were midfielder Janine James and stopper Tiffany Nelson. James not only played midfield but also defender and marking back.

"This year we have a more experienced team, especially the 10th graders," Breuhan said. "Last year we had a real good crop of freshmen and, with that experience, I think we're going to be a much improved team."

Regina Bander, a second-team, all-area sweeper, "will be the backbone of

our defense," Breuhan said. "She also plays striker; she's that good."

Junior Emily Jackson will play center-midfielder. "She's the quarterback of our team," Breuhan said. "She's a very skilled player."

Also returning for the Hawks is striker Danielle Strickland, the team's leading scorer a year ago. She's one of the freshmen to whom Breuhan gave prominent roles last season.

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Whalers whip Windsor in OHL playoff contests

Nothing wanted.

The Plymouth Whalers have begun their trek toward an Ontario Hockey League championship with a pair of route over first-round opponent Windsor in games that exhibited Plymouth's superior offensive and defensive abilities.

The latest was a 6-0 shutout Tuesday at Windsor Arena. The Whalers led 2-0 after one period and 5-0 after two, with five different players accounting for their goals. Indeed, Plymouth had nearly as many goals as Windsor had shots in that span (eight).

Robert Holzinger got his second-straight win, but had to make just 13 saves. In the Whalers' two wins, Holzinger has allowed one goal and made a total of 31 saves.

Defenseman Nikos Tzelios finished with two goals and an assist to pace the Whalers. David Legwand, Shaun Fisher and Adam Colagincomo added a goal and an assist/apeice, and Troy Smith scored a goal. Damian Surma and Jason Ward each contributed two assists.

HOCKEY

The Whalers opened their OHL play-off series against the Spitfires with an 9-1 trouncing Sunday at Compuware Arena. Windsor was playing its third game in three days, with a playoff victory over Kitchener Saturday clinching a play-off berth for the Spits.

But they could not recover quickly enough for the rested and ready Whalers, a team that had lost a week earlier at home to Windsor by a 6-1 count. There would be no repeat; Plymouth scored three times before the Spits could retaliate, and that proved to be only a minor blip in the Whalers scoring surge.

Harold Draken was the key for Plymouth, scoring three goals and assisting on three others. He spread them out, too — he had a goal and an assist in every period.

Adam Colagincomo contributed two goals and two assists for the Whalers.

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STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LARSON

Area star: North Farmington senior Matt Zald is a repeat member of the All-Observer boys swim team. See Page C5.

Hockey violence: Issue that needs to be addressed

For hockey fans in Plymouth and Canton, this week could be — should be — the beginning of something beautiful. Something long-awaited, impatiently anticipated.

But there's something sour in the mix. And face it, folks: If you don't get rid of it, if you continue to accept and ignore, the whole game could collapse.

The positives

• The hometown team, the Plymouth Whalers, accomplish something none of its predecessors has done. The Whalers complete the regular season with not just the best record in the Ontario Hockey League, but with the top ranking in the entire Canadian Junior Hockey League (which includes the Western Hockey League and the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, as well as the OHL).

Home-ice advantage is guaranteed throughout the playoffs, which got under way last Sunday.

• On Tuesday, the Plymouth-Canton school board considered whether or not to make hockey a varsity sport at Canton and Salem high schools. It took two years to put together a proper proposal, although it was tabled by the board, the general feeling is, with school superintendent Charles Little's endorsement, the proposal will pass and hockey will become a varsity sport.

The negatives

While hockey continues to grow in support throughout the area — Northville/Novi, Farmington, Walled Lake and Redford school systems have all initiated prep programs in the last few years; in Plymouth, two new skating arenas have opened in the same time span, and Canton is considering another — there is something wrong, some cancer that is spreading with it.

And even the most adamant of hockey supporters, those who joyfully pack their youngsters into vans for Saturday morning pee-wee games, are finding it increasingly difficult to dismiss the role it plays in their sport.

Violence

Depending on your viewpoint, the timing was merely unfortunate. Or perhaps.

The story that appeared last week in Sports Illustrated, written by Jeff MacGregor, detailed perhaps the worst incident in the Whalers' franchise annals. In the last game of the 1998 season, Jesse Boulerice — with a baseball-bat swing of his stick — knocked Guelph opponent Andrew Long unconscious. Long suffered a broken nose, several facial fractures, a concussion, two black eyes and a gash that stretched across his upper lip.

Here the Whalers are, a year later, closing in on a high-point in their history — and they are forced to deal with one of the worst.

Certainly some see it as unfair, a franchise still being held accountable for the actions of one of its former players. Many of those fans continually insist that this is just an isolated incident, that it has been blown so far out of proportion that objective focus is impossible.

But in final analysis, those opinions must be secondary to the main problem.

If all stems from fighting, and the hockey hierarchy's endorsement of it, is fighting a necessary ingredient in the sport?

Most fans say yes. They love to see players drop their gloves and haul the jersey of an opponent over his head, all the time pummeling him until one, or both, drop to the ice.

How many times have you heard this condoning explanation: It's all part of the game.

Nonsense. Fighting is an integral part in the fans' definition of hockey. It's something they enjoy. It has nothing to do with the game itself. Hockey can be played without fights.

Do you think the Boulerice stick-

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