

PREP SKI PREVIEW

CC, Mercy skiers stay busy despite no snow

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Instead of 20K, all Tom Gable could think, looking at the lack of snow on the slopes, the coach at both Detroit Catholic Central and Farmington Hills Mercy, was to think of other ways to keep his skiers busy.

The start of the high school ski season may be delayed at least a week, thanks to the lack of snow on the slopes. The coach, the coach at both Detroit Catholic Central and Farmington Hills Mercy, has to think of other ways to keep his skiers busy.

"It was cold enough, snow could be manufactured by local slopes. But the threat of rain earlier this week kept the hills green and both teams idle.

"If I couldn't adapt, this would be the most miserable thing in the world," Gable said. "I just keep the boys in the weight room and the girls go on dry land, working on polymetrics or aerobics."

Once the season gets under way, Gable expects CC to challenge for a state meet berth and Mercy to show improvement in what could be a rebuilding phase.

The teams' first meet Tuesday was canceled and they're hoping to start today at Mt. Brighton or next Tuesday, also at Mt. Brighton.

Detroit Catholic Central

The Shamrocks finished second on the Mt. Brighton Division of the Southeastern Michigan Ski Association and fourth in the regional, just missing a state berth last year.

The Shamrocks' top skier the last two seasons, junior Matt Gable, returns at 100 percent.

He won the slalom at the league championship and was the giant slalom champion at the regional despite wearing a cast over a broken hand all of last year.

He hit a gate and was disqualified in the giant slalom at the state meet. That's the same reason he was disqualified in the slalom at the regional.

His father and coach expects Gable to attain a state berth in each event. The extra year of experience could make him a state title contender in either race, the elder Gable predicted.

"Why not today?" Not only is he one of the state's top high school skiers, he is ranked 24th for age 16 nationally. He is an automatic qualifier for the Mid-American Series, held in conjunction with the high school season throughout the midwest on weekends.

"I think he'll be right there knocking at the door," coach Gable said. "I think the Traverse City and Marquette guys who beat him last year graduated. He's squatting 410 pounds this year, compared to the middle 300s last year. He's a lot stronger and skiing very well."

"There's no way his cast didn't restrict his movement last year and there's no question he's skiing better without it. His goal is to sweep the GS and slalom at the regional and as every year goes by his confidence grows stronger."

The Shamrocks also return senior Scott Zaleski, a consistent top-five finisher in both the slalom and giant slalom in the division since.

The Shamrocks lost three to graduation: Geo Madina, Matt Dammer and Miguel Martinez.

"Talent wise, this team looks as strong or stronger than the one we had three years ago that qualified for the state meet and took second at regional," Gable said.

Among his finishes were two second-place finishes in the slalom and one in giant slalom.

He placed third in the SEMSL championships in the slalom and will be a regular on the United States Skiing Association tour this winter, too.

"No question Scott will ski top five in the state regionals," Tom Gable said. "He's been in the weight room, he's real focused. It's his senior year."

Junior Eric Sullivan, a top 10 placer in the varsity division as

year ago, may be the Shamrocks' third-highest scorer. Because they're both juniors, Matt Gable and Sullivan have a bond that makes them a good combination, Tom Gable said.

"They push each other," he said. "Sullivan's going to ski well."

Also expected to fill a spot in the lineup is senior Mark Gursky, a captain who was the top junior varsity racer last year. Gursky was the CC football team's punter.

"He's real strong and talented," Tom Gable said. "That's the key to skiing, leg strength, not so much upper body."

The remaining starting spots on the varsity may be contested by senior Aaron McCabe and juniors John Goebel, Joe Murray and Ryan Boudreau.

Goebel's older brother, Brian, was on the 1997 team.

"It's nice to have that many good skiers competing for two spots at the back end," Tom Gable said. "I think this team has experience and no question has the leadership between Zaleski and Matt. It makes my job a little easier when you have guys skiing a lot on the weekend."

Tom Gable doesn't think the weekend skiing by his top two skiers will went them out.

"That's why you condition," he said. "If you don't hit enough in the off-season, you will wear out."

Farmington Hills Mercy

The last remaining members of the Mercy team which won regional titles in 1998 and '97 have graduated: Renee Burek and Krysten Salla.

The pair led the Marlin to a second-place finish in the division, a third at the league meet and a fourth in the regional, where they were one point away from qualifying for the state meet.

Burek and Salla qualified for the state meet in the slalom with Salla taking 26th at the state.



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN MITCHELL

Veteran skier: Junior Laura Burek will have a greater role on the Farmington Hills Mercy ski team. Amy McDuffee and Nikki Anderson also are key returning skiers.

Gable is left with a young, but enthusiastic team.

"We're definitely in the middle of a rebuilding program here," Gable said. "It gives us a chance to surprise everybody."

The Marlin return a senior letter winner, Amy McDuffee, who has given up figure skating competitively to concentrate on skiing.

She consistently finished among the top 15 in the Mt. Brighton standings and Gable predicts she'll improve dramatically. Her figure skating took her from some of the ski meets, including the regional.

"She's extremely talented and Mercy's success is real pivotal on how she skis because we need a leader," Gable said.

The next top returnee is junior Nikki Anderson, who as a sophomore placed among the top 15 in the division five times.

"She's conditioning hard, skis strong, and an extra year of experience will help," Gable said.

Burek's younger sister, Laura, returns for her junior year after lettering on the varsity last year.

Like McDuffee, Burek has decided to concentrate on skiing, giving up competitive swimming.

"She's a good, strong skier," Gable said. "Proving she can ski as well as her sister is a great motivator for her."

Junior Marc Godlew returns after making six victory starts last year, earning a mid-season promotion from the junior varsity.

"She learned the ropes, gained experience," Gable said.

Juniors Dana Lyons and Melissa Desautel and senior Carolyn Stroud, JV members last year, will compete for the last couple varsity lineup berths, Gable said.

"All were strong JV racers," he said.

Gable said it's back to the basics for some of the Mercy skiers.

"You have to coach hard and try to teach the technical-type moves," Gable said. "If they all concentrate, they'll surprise you and come up with their own success story. Maybe we'll have the beginning of another champion team."

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