

Ironman Mike UD-Mercy's Daguanno aims for fences, record

El Sonir Mike Daguanno is positioned to become the career leader in home runs this year for the University of Detroit-Mercy.

By DAN O'MEARA
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"Tomorrow can't come soon enough for Mike Daguanno of Farmington Hills. "I've got cabin fever right now," he said, explaining how the University of Detroit-Mercy baseball team spends much of the winter practicing in "The Dungeon," which is really the basement of Catholic Hall.

Daguanno won't be content to just move outdoors when the Titans start their season Monday at Mercer University in Macon, Ga. If all goes well, it could be a big year for Daguanno and UDM.

The senior first baseman and former Redford Catholic Central all-stater is on the verge of a major milestone himself and is eager to lead the Titans back to prominence. Daguanno has hit for average nearly every year of his career, but now he hits with power, too.

Having never hit more than three dingers in any season at CC, Daguanno has become a home run hitter for UDM. In fact, he needs only four more to surpass Jamie Lopiccolo (1992-93) and become UDM's all-time leader. He led the Titans with 13 and 14 homers the last two years, respectively; his three-year total stands at 30.

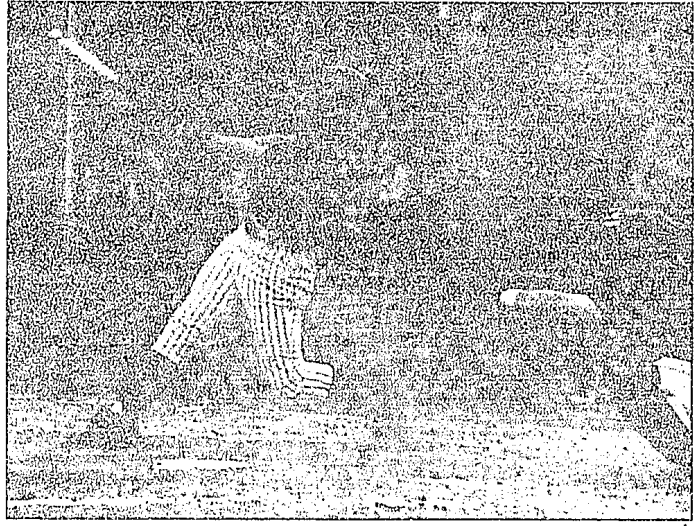
"I was never really a home run hitter coming into college, and I wasn't my freshman year," he said. "I guess I just exploded my sophomore year." Daguanno attributes his recently-unleashed power to a regular workout regimen that includes weight training and running. The 6-foot-1, 210-pound Daguanno weighs the same as he did in high school but has turned fat into muscle.

"We call him our Lou Gehrig, because he's built just like him — stocky, big arms, broad shoulders," UDM coach Bob Miller said.

"He's not fat anymore, pull. He's got a little skinny waist and he's worked hard. He's our ironman; well, that's our Lou Gehrig."

But Daguanno isn't just a muscled longball hitter. He led the Midwestern Collegiate Conference with a 400 average two years ago and hit a respectable .329 last year. He also led the Titans the last two seasons in RBI with 48 and 39, respectively.

"I don't know what happened my sophomore year," Daguanno said. "It



Power hitter: Senior first baseman Mike Daguanno of Farmington Hills hopes to lead the University of Detroit-Mercy baseball team to another Midwestern Collegiate Conference championship.

seemed the ball was a beach ball every time I went up to bat.

"It helped that Mike Pesci (Farmington Hills/Harrison High) was hitting behind me, and I got to see a lot more pitches."

Hitting from the left side, one of Daguanno's strengths is that he keeps opposing pitchers and fielders guessing, according to Miller.

"Some of his best shots are to left-center field, and that makes him a tougher out for the pitcher," he said. "He doesn't try to pull everything. He hits them where they're pitched and with power to all fields. That's what is so beautiful about him."

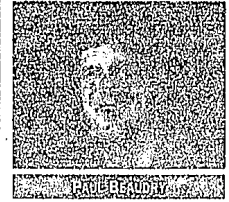
Daguanno, who has made the All-

MCC second team two straight years, was selected MCC Preseason Player of the Year by College Baseball Weekly going into his junior season, but the end-of-year honor went to someone else.

"It was the kiss of death; it always is," Daguanno said, adding former teammate Jason Gombos was the 1995 pick. "Jay had a decent year, but he wasn't Player of the Year. It's kinda like being on the cover of Sports Illustrated."

"I was completely honored that my name was in Baseball Weekly. It was kinda neat knowing it was voted on, by

Please see DAGUANNO, B4



It's tourney time in boys hoop, and the winners are:

Picking high school basketball winners come state tourney time is a science.

OK, it's not a science. OK, for the most part it's nothing but guess work.

OK, it's one part guess work, one part research and one part throw-the-team-names-against-the-wall-and-see-which-one-sticks.

Once upon a time, I used to be good at this. Then again, once upon a time, there were a lot of things I used to do well.

But like crabgrass, hay fever and the Rouge River flooding Hines Drive, I won't stop. That's because my favorite part of tourney play is when area teams do their best to prove me wrong. (A complete list of district pairings can be found on B2.)

CLASS A

At West Bloomfield

Teams: West Bloomfield, Farmington, Bloomfield Hills Lahser, Farmington Hills Harrison, North Farmington
Predicted Winner: If this was football, it would be easy. But since Bob "Down-Up" Sutter isn't coaching varsity hoops, it's a little more difficult. A lot more difficult. Three teams can win — West Bloomfield, Farmington and North Farmington. NF won the Western Lakes regular season, Farmington was the only team to beat the Raiders in the WLA and this WF is more entertaining than its TV network counterpart. The survivor is: North Farmington, which cruises past Lahser in the final after squeaking by West Bloomfield in the semis.

At Romulus

Teams: Romulus, Livonia Franklin, Belleville, Garden City, Wayne Memorial, Westland John Glenn.
Predicted Winner: Wayne? Chuck Henry's done one of his best coaching jobs yet. John Glenn? Could be a sleeper, but has been an underachiever. Garden City? In any other district, maybe, but here? Not without Justin Ockerman. Franklin? Ummin, no. So let's think about this. Time's up. Romulus over Belleville in the final, only because of the homecourt advantage.

At Redford Union

Teams: Union, Detroit Henry Ford, Catholic Central, Southfield, Livonia Stevenson, Detroit Redford.
Predicted Winner: CC could be a darkhorse, depending on which team shows up. If Union or Stevenson win this district, I'm serving shoot cake at school Tuesday with icing saying "Nothing is over until we say it is." The winner will come out of the bottom bracket. Monday's game between CC and Southfield should be a shootout. As a reward the winner gets Detroit Redford, which first squeaks past Southfield in the semis then sneaks past Henry Ford in the final.

At New

Teams: Novi, Livonia Church Hill, Northville, Canton, Salem.
Predicted Winner: There ain't no restrictor-plate racing here. This district is wide-open. Salem might be the favorite because it had a big hurt on Western Lakes for Valed Lake Western before losing in the WLA championship. But come tourney time, as Bob Brodie will tell you, the past don't mean nuthin', especially when all five teams are within three wins of each other. The dart board says . . . Canton over Salem.

CLASS B

At Orchard Lake St. Mary's

Teams: OLSM, Bloomfield Hills Andover, Redford Thurston, Crenbrook, Detroit Country Day.
Predicted Winner: The good news for Thurston is that if it beats Crenbrook on Wednesday, it's in the district finals. The bad news would be it faces the St. Mary's-Country Day winner. This is like choosing between which you'd want more: A broken arm or a broken leg. They both hurt, the question is how much. Forget the cake here, if Thurston wins the district over

Please see BRADSHY, B5

Whalers extend win streak to 14 games

By C.C. SHANK
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There are certain coincidences which the Plymouth Whalers A team notices: subtle, and timely, offense; rapid goalkeeping; and, not to be overlooked, a tendency to find a way to win.

It's something the Whalers have done well for a long, long time. In that, one must travel back to January to discover their last loss (it was by a 2-1 score, Jan. 29 to the Ottawa 67's).

On Friday, Plymouth traveled to London (Ontario) to take on the Knights and a crowd of 2,643. It was,

HOCKEY

as anticipated, a battle, but second-period goals by Tomas Kurka and Kris Versteeg were the difference as the Whalers prevailed, 3-2.

The victory was their 14th straight and boosted their record to 40-17-4; the Whalers' US points is second in the Ontario Hockey League only to Ottawa. London fell to 19-33-7.

The Knights, behind the strong goalkeeping of former Whaler Aaron Molnar, took the only lead on a power-play goal by Brett Gibson with 2:59 left in the opening period. The

Whalers knotted it before the period was over, however, on a power-play goal scored by Eric Godoly. Stephen Weiss and Kurka assisted.

Plymouth, which got some tough goalkeeping of its own from Bill Ruggiero, took command early in the second period. Kurka's goal, scored at the 2:20 mark, was unassisted; Vernarcky got the eventual game-winner at the 8:57 juncture, assisted by Steven Morris and Jamie Lalonde.

London narrowed the gap to 3-2 with 5:49 left in the second period when D.J. Maracle scored. But the Knights could not get the equalizer.

Ruggiero stopped 27 London shots in earning the win. Molnar had 28 stops for the Knights.

Please see WHALERS, B4

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Whalers rally to win, 4-3

In the world of sports — no matter what the sport — everyone has a theory.

One that coaches have ascribed to for years is: When playing on the road, get ahead early. Don't let the home team dictate and control the tempo.

Playing an OHL game at Erie Wednesday, the red-hot Plymouth Whalers knew there were factors

Shamrocks notch regional win over Flyers



Regional tourney: Farmington's Eric Zelnan delivers the puck while CC's Brian Williams tries to get a stick in the way.

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Farmington Unified coach Glenn Brouhan was impressed, to say the least, with the Redford Catholic Central hockey team he saw Thursday night. Everyone else at Redford Ice Arena had to be, too.

For the second time in as many games, the Shamrocks invoked the mercy rule by beating Brouhan's Flyers in a regional tourney semifinal, 12-2.

The victory boosted top-ranked CC's record to 23-2 heading into the championship game Saturday against Livonia Stevenson, which defeated Allen Park in the other semifinal Wednesday, 2-1.

"They showed why they're No. 1," said Brouhan of the Shamrocks. "They're so fast and so strong. One-on-one, they're just far superior than we were. We haven't run into a team like that all year."

"I have a hard time believing anybody has so many talented players and so much depth. I'd say they're the team to beat."

HOCKEY

CC carved out a 7-0 lead after one period, and the game ended after two due to the mercy rule, which comes into play when there's a 10-goal differential after two periods.

The Shamrocks spread the scoring among nine players, but Brian Williams was the team leader with three goals.

Mike Ratigan scored twice; Brett John, Jim Spiewak, Brandon Kaleniecki, Jared Ross, Sean Genrich, Joe Moreau and John Perkovich contributed one goal each.

The list of players with assists was even longer.

John, Ross, Derek Genrich, Andrew Eggert, Joe Hillebrand, Ryan Yost and Kaleniecki were credited with two apiece. Single assists went to John Bowers, Spiewak, Rick Duttery, Dave Moss, Moreau, Williams and Eric Reinhardt.

Please see FLYERS, B4