

Olympic hopeful remains positive

By BRAD EMMONS
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Sheila Taormina may be Down Under but not down and out just yet.

Despite an uncharacteristic and sub-par performance which left her a bit bruised and battered in Sunday's first Olympic triathlon trials in Sydney, Australia, Taormina plans to forge ahead in her quest for one of the two remaining spots on the U.S. team.

That final test will come Saturday, May 27, in Irving, Texas.

"It's not too pretty, but I'm smiling," said the former Olympic gold medal swimmer (women's 800-meter freestyle relay at the 1996 Atlanta Games). "I have no regrets about how things went. It just wasn't meant to be. I did everything I could have with the time I had to prepare."

The Livonia Stevenson grad and former All-America at the University of Georgia has made a meteoric rise in her new sport in just 18 months of training. She was one of nine Americans invited to compete at the trials on the Olympic course, which consists of a 1,500-meter swim, 24.8-mile bike and 6.2-mile run.

Usually, the first out of the water in most of the International Triathlon Union races also has participated in, Taormina experienced her first ominous sign of things to come when she found herself 40 seconds behind American Barb Lindquist (17:53) and 26 seconds back of Australian Nicole Hackett (18:08).

"I just had a horrible swim and had no feel for the swim," she said. "The bike pack was in, however, worked great together."

"We caught Barb and Nickie on the second of six bike laps."

On a tight course with a series of sharp turns, Taormina and her fellow competitors were thrown another curve.

"The rain started pouring down during for very short conditions," she said. "Our lead pack was putting time on the chase pack every lap, so it was a pleasure to be part of that."

Olympic rules allow drafting on the bike, causing tight packs of riders for very short periods of time.

Disaster struck on the fourth lap just under the famed Sydney Opera House.

"There was a crash in our pack and I went down," Taormina said. "The good news — I slid along the pavement and my bike was kind enough to slide right next to me. I got up quickly with Magali Messmer (of Switzerland), and we decided to pedal hard to try to catch the pack again. We did. I was feeling like I had been hit perfectly from that point on."

It didn't go according to plan as Taormina began to experience leg cramps while putting on her running shoes in the transition area.

"I didn't know, however, that my body was in pretty bad shape and things started seeping up on me," Taormina said. "The run was the ugly part. The impact from the crash caused some type of cramping and seizing."

Taormina ran almost 10 minutes slower than her best 10K time (37 minutes). Michelle Jones of Australia, considered the best in the world, won the race in 2 hours, 2 minutes and 30 seconds. Taormina was the top U.S. finisher and earned the first-ever Olympic triathlon berth by placing seventh in 2:04:46 — just ahead of Bartholomew, who was in eighth overall in 2:04:59. Taormina's time — 2:14:24.

Marlins capture invitational crown

SOFTBALL

Farmington Hills Mercy rallied from a 2-0 deficit to win its own softball invitational Saturday with a 3-2 win over Farmington.

After scoring twice in the fourth inning to tie, the Marlins won it with Lauren Monterrey's RBI single in the fifth.

Molly O'Malley, who was pinch running for Alex Duda, stole second, was sacrificed to third by Theresa Lawrence and scored on Monterrey's hit.

In the fourth inning, Mercy's Erin Carson put down a bunt with Dana Falvo on first base, following a leadoff single.

Two errors on the play — an overthrow at first base got past the right fielder — allowed both girls to score.

"We were very happy to win the tournament, and it's a great start to our season," Mercy coach Jack Falvo said. "The Mercy parents did an exceptional job of organizing and running it."

In the first game Saturday, Mercy blanked Berkley, 5-0. Megan Feduk struck out eight and walked none while surrendering four hits.

Farmington pitcher Moliana Mytty scattered six hits, struck out nine and walked one. She also went 3-for-3 at the plate.

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Erin Carson went 3-for-4.

couple outstanding plays that helped them win the ballgame. "You could tell it was the end of the tournament. Both teams were a little tired, and we didn't make the plays we had been all day."

The Falcons opened with a 6-2 win over Orionville-Brandon. Tricia Kreuse had two hits and two RBI. DePotter had an RBI single and Meghan O'Rear an RBI sacrifice.

Mytty, who pitched all four games, had 32 strikeouts on the day.

Danielle Lewis went 3-for-3 with two doubles and two RBI in a 1:11 rout of Waterford Matt. Julie Rotenheiser's two hits included a double, and she also had two RBI.

To reach the championship game, the Falcons scored three runs with two outs in the fifth inning to beat Troy, 3-2. Lewis and Rotenheiser hit safely; Kreuse drove in a run with a single, and Livingston followed with a two-run single.

Mytty retired the Colts in the sixth and final inning with two strikeouts and a 1-to-3 groundout.

"We were really happy with our defensive performance the first three games, and it was a matter of getting tired at the end," Osborne said. "The girls played well. I was proud of their effort all day. They played with a lot of enthusiasm and heart."

FARMINGTON HARRISON The Hawks lost their first two games, 5-0 to Novi and 4-3 to Adams. Harrison scored twice in the top of the seventh to the Adams, 3-3, but the Highlanders won it with a run in the bottom of the seventh.

Kristin Schrock kept the distance on the mound against Novi, as did Lindsey Emmett in the Adams game.

Mytty tossed a four-hitter, striking out nine and walking three. Losing pitcher Kristy Manzalez allowed nine hits.

The Vikings erased a 3-0 deficit and tied the game with two runs in the top of the fifth. The Falcons answered with six runs in the bottom of the inning, highlighted by O'Rear's slam.

"It was all over from there, and it carried over through today," Osborne said. "I'm very happy with where we're at this early in the season."

"We hit the ball hard again (Monday). If we keep doing that, Farmington will be a good shape," because the defense is finally coming around.

HARRISON 7, W.L. WESTERN 3: The Hawks scored three runs in each of the first two innings and gave winning pitcher Lindsey Emmett a 6-1 lead to work with Monday.

Emmett scattered six hits, fanned five and walked two for Harrison, which leads the WLLA Western Division and is 4-3 overall.

Katrina Vitanis went 3-for-4 and scored two runs. Kelly Taylor and Jennie Welling were 2-for-3 with three and one RBI, respectively.

Harrison rallied with two outs in the third inning. Sarah Tobie beat out a bunt for a hit; Vitanis hit a liner to center field, and Kim Spaulding had an infield single to load the bases for Taylor, who hit a hard shot off the pitcher that scored two runs.

The Hawks had 11 hits off sophomore hurler Laura Bell, who didn't walk anyone and struck out three.

Western's Lori Burgess went 3-for-4 with a double and a triple. The Warriors are 5-2 in the division and 4-0 overall.

N. FARMINGTON 10, GLENN 0: Both Danielle Lewis and Christina Colombo combined for a no-hitter Monday as North Farmington blanked host Westland John Glenn in six innings.

The Raiders improved their record in the Lakes Division to 2-1 and evened their season record at 4-4.

Danielle Lewis pitched the first four innings and Colombo the last two. Danielle Lewis struck out nine and walked

two; Colombo had two and zero, respectively.

Samantha McComb and Colombo went 2-for-3; each had a double. Colombo also scored four runs and had one RBI. McComb batted in three runs and scored twice.

Danielle Lewis chipped in one hit and two RBI. Christie Hendrickson got her first varsity hit — a double. Katie Wolk also had a double and scored a run.

The Raiders drove Glenn starter Ruth Kietlyka from the mound in the second inning after which they led 6-0.

Kietlyka walked seven. North had seven hits off her and reliever Stephanie Feduchuk. The Rockets committed six errors and the Raiders three.

MERCY 12-4, MARIAN 7-0: Playing their ninth and 10th games in five days, the Marlins improved their season record to 13-1 by taking a doubleheader Tuesday from the host Mustangs.

Mercy, which went unbeaten during that brief stretch, is 4-0 in the Catholic League's Central Division.

"We're as happy as we can be, to be in this position at the turn, by spring break," Mercy coach Jack Falvo said. "We've done a super job, playing all these games."

"I can't compliment the senior leadership on this team enough. In the first game, Marian kept coming back, and I kept going to the team, saying 'We have to answer this.' And they did."

The Marlins outlit the Mustangs in the first game, 10-13, and were led by Lauren Monterrey, who was 4-for-5.

Nuverre Naami was 3-for-4 with three RBI.

Dana Falvo, Erin Carson, Theresa Lawrence, Marissa Lawrence and Carrie Brankiewicz were 2-for-4.

Carson also had three RBI; Monterrey, both Lawrence girls and Brankiewicz had one each. Naami, Falvo and Theresa Lawrence scored two runs apiece.

Erin Howard was the winning pitcher. She struck out nine and once again didn't walk anybody.

Megan Feduk had the same numbers in the second game while holding Marian to four hits. Jen Simpson was the losing pitcher in both games.

Brankiewicz was 3-for-4 with a double, a home run and two RBI in the nightcap. Krystal Shing and Naami had two hits and one RBI apiece; Dana Falvo scored two runs.

The Marlins also swept a doubleheader Monday from host Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, 7-3 and 4-1.

Howard was the winning pitcher in the first game and, in her first turn at bat, helped her cause by going 2-for-2.

Brankiewicz was 3-for-4 and scored twice; Alex Duda and Marissa Lawrence had two hits and two RBI apiece.

Sophomore Rachel DeCorvo pitched the second game and earned her first varsity win. Duda hit a two-run double, and Jackie Shing was 2-for-3, scored a run and had an RBI.

Softball from page C1

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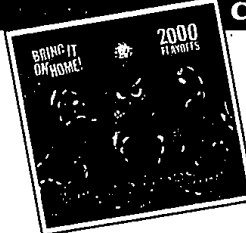
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