

# Mercy defeats Canton to win regional crown

BY MONICA PUGNO  
STAFF WRITER

Sophomore Megan Fediuk pitched a two-hitter and struck out nine batters Saturday to lead Farmington Hills Mercy's softball team to a 4-0 victory over Plymouth Canton in a Division I regional championship game at Royal Oak Memorial Park.

"(Fediuk) pitched the best game of her career," said Mercy coach Jack Falvo, who was drenched after his players poured Gatorade on him.

"She did a magnificent job. She kept balls low and in the strike zone and kept Canton off their game. She's a tough, tough competitor."

Canton's Laura Stewart earned the loss despite fanning 10 batters. After retiring the Marlins in order in the first inning, Stewart ran into trouble in the second but pitched her way out of it.

Mercy's Carrie Brankiewicz led off the inning with a triple,

## SOFTBALL

but she was tagged out at home plate as Alex Duda's failed attempt at a sacrifice bunt.

Stewart walked the next two batters to load the bases with two outs. She fanned Marissa Lawrence to end Mercy's threat.

"(Stewart) is a ball of an athlete," Canton coach Jim Arnold said. "She's come a long way from a year ago. Last year, believe it or not, she was our No. 3 pitcher. She worked hard to be our No. 1 pitcher this year."

Stewart's luck changed in the third. Dana Falvo led off with a bunt single, and Erin Carson hit a flyball to center field that was dropped. The two players performed a delayed double steal to put runners on second and third with one out.

"The double steal was critical in the game," Jack Falvo said. "It put two runners in scoring position with one out."

"We knew coming in it was going to be a close game. We told the girls to be prepared for a 0-0 or 1-0 game. We wanted to be aggressive. We wanted to score in the beginning, so we could play our game."

Brankiewicz tripled to right field to drive in two runs; Duda singled to right field to score Brankiewicz and Nuverre. Naomi doubled to center field to drive in Duda, giving the Marlins a 4-0 cushion.

Fediuk and catcher Carson kept Canton off the scoreboard. Carson picked off two Chiefs at first base and threw out another runner trying to steal second.

"We're very disappointed," Arnold said. "We didn't hit the ball well. We let one bad inning get to us."

"But we played with an extreme amount of class. This is the best athletic team since I've been in Canton (10 years)."

The Chiefs finished the season 23-12. Mercy advanced to the



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLEY

Safe by inches: Mercy senior Erin Carson slides under an intended tag by Canton's Angie Neu in the regional championship game Saturday. The Marlins won, 4-0.

state quarterfinals Tuesday.

"At this level, we're only going to face quality teams," Falvo said. "I think the team that comes to play is going to win

(Tuesday)."

Mercy reached the regional final by easily defeating Detroit Mumford in five innings, 17-0. Senior Erin Howard struck out

eight and allowed one hit. Canton's road to the final was tougher. The Chiefs beat Warren Mott, 4-0. Stewart fanned 12 and allowed three hits.

## Marlins from page C1

Melissa Selvidge tripled in the fifth inning, and Naomi overthrew Brankiewicz at third. But left fielder Lawrence was providing backup, and Selvidge, apparently thinking she could score on the play, rounded the bag.

Lawrence caught the ball on the fly and made a diving effort to tag Selvidge for the out. Jessica Zawala's ensuing single would have made the score 2-1.

"She's always there in practice," Brankiewicz said of Lawrence. "When Nuverre overthrew it, I wasn't worried, because Theresa is always there."

"The other team almost thought we planned it that way. I have confidence in my teammates, and Theresa was where she needed to be."

In the Fraser sixth, Amber Brunn started with a leadoff single, but she was picked off first base by Carson and first baseman Shina, who blocked the bag

just right.

"Erin has around 20 pickoffs at first. It's incredible," coach Falvo said. "Everyone gets upset (when Shina blocks the bag) but as long as she's making a play on the ball she can do it."

Erin's Nicole Misch followed with a base hit and later scored on Lindsey Frederick's single, which would have tied the score if not for the pickoff play.

"We were still in the game (down 2-0)," Fraser coach Bill Fifer said. "The girl overran third; the next girl gets a hit, and that would have been a run."

"You can't beat a good team making mental mistakes. You can't do those things and win."

Carson added an insurance run in the bottom of the sixth.

She hit a leadoff single and took second on a passed ball. In the process of the stealing third, the Fraser catcher threw the ball into left field, allowing Carson to



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRADLEY

A Kodak moment: Mercy players rushed the field in celebration of their victory over No. 6-ranked Fraser.

take home plate, too.

Fediuk gave up a one-out single in the seventh but retired the next two batters. Ironically, Nilson was the last out, hitting a line drive to Naomi.

"I take one batter at a time, and it seems to be working for me," Fediuk said. "You can never

think the other team can't catch up. You have to keep fighting and never give up."

STATE FINAL: Should Farmington Hills Mercy win Friday, it will play Saturday in the state championship game at 4 p.m. in Battle Creek against the winner of the No. 1-ranked Waterford Kettering (42-2) and Monroe (32-6) semifinal game.

## Mustangs down Trojans

### SOFTBALL

Macomb Lutheran North earned its first-ever trip to the state quarterfinals in softball by winning the Division III regional Saturday at Lake Fenton with wins over Livonia Clarenceville (12-2) and Byron (3-2).

Clarenceville ended the season with an 11-11 record, while North, 23-12 overall, moved on to Tuesday's quarterfinal at Davison against 32-2 Unionville-Sebewing.

"Errors killed us and we just didn't hit the ball like we needed," Clarenceville coach Kristen Hynek said.

North, which had beaten Metro Conference rival Clarenceville 3-2 and 8-0 during the regular season, scored four times in the sixth inning to halt the game under the 10-run mercy rule.

Ginina Russo, Allison Reppza, Shannon Russo and freshman Katie Anger each had two hits for the Mustangs.

Winning pitcher Emily Davidson had eight strikeouts and walked four.

Clarenceville starter Amy Schiffman, a junior, took the loss.

Senior Rachael Koerke, moved to third base, led the Trojans with two hits, one RBI and one run scored.

Clarenceville junior left fielder Jenny Swider made first-team All-Metro, while Koerke and Schiffman made the second-team. Junior third baseman Melanie Rudd and senior second baseman Meghan Schiffman took third-team honors.

All-district picks included Koerke, Amy and Meghan Schiffman, sophomore first baseman Nicole Martin and three outfielders — juniors Jessica and Jenny Kennedy, along with Swider.

### MERCY SOFTBALL NOTES

**ONWARD AND UPWARD:** Despite having everybody back from last year's team, coach Jack Falvo had some doubts about his Farmington Hills Mercy softball team earlier in the season.

Falvo is a believer now. The Marlins are headed to the Division I state semifinals after beating Fraser Tuesday, 5-1.

"We're starting a freshman shortstop (Corley Tracey), and our pitcher is a sophomore (Megan Fediuk). That's a lot of youth," Falvo said.

"I didn't think we'd be going, because there are so many good teams out there."

His daughter, senior catcher leader Dana Falvo, didn't need to be convinced, however. She never had any doubts.

"She said, 'Dad, we're going. That was a little bravado there,'" coach Falvo said. "I told the girls 'We have a lot of work to do. Champions are

made in March, not in June."

A berth in the Final Four of the state tournament has been Falvo's goal since he took charge of the program five years (six seasons) ago.

"It's a dream," he said. "It's something, as a coach, I dreamed about when I first got this job. The girls stepped up in themselves and they did it."

The Marlins (33-10) are playing their best softball at the right time, too. They've been on a roll since losing to Windsor VillaNova in the Catholic League championship game May 22.

"Once they lost in the Catholic League, the girls re-dedicated the whole season to getting to Battle Creek," Falvo said, "and they did what they had to do today."

"Again, a lot has to do with the parental support the team received. These parents are absolutely tremendous."

**PITCHING CHALLENGE:** The Marlins faced one of the state's best pitchers Tuesday in Fraser senior Kelly Nilson and were equal to the challenge.

"We had Hillsdale (College) and U-M pitchers come in and pitch to us, and we've been preparing for this," Mercy senior Erin Carson said. "Going up against two great pitchers, we knew we could hit (Nilson)."

"I don't mean any disrespect for Kelly; she's a great pitcher," Falvo said. "But we've been preparing for great pitchers since Day One."

"Our batting machine is on 60 (miles per hour), and we had two college pitchers come in and pitch to us for two weeks."

Mercy's Fediuk matched Nilson's effort Tuesday to keep the Marlins in the game.

"Megan is a strong, hard-nosed competitor, and she focused on where she had to throw her pitches," Falvo said.

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