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Thursday, March 22, 2001

FARMINGTON — FARMINGTON HILLS SPORTS SCENE

Area all-star gridgers

Five area football players will represent Observerland in the 21st Annual East-West Michigan High School All-Star game later this year.

Competing for the East team will be Matt LoPiccolo of Redford Catholic Central, Chris Roberson, Farmington Hills Harrison; Dan Smitherman, Westland John Glenn; Dan Wilson, Livonia Stevenson; and Scott Wion, Livonia Clarenceville.

LoPiccolo is a 6-foot-1, 245-pound defensive lineman. Roberson (6-foot, 175) is a defensive back; Smitherman (6-10, 175) and Wilson (6-10, 165) are running backs, and Wion (6-4, 243) is a tight end and linebacker.

Eccentric-area players on the East team are quarterback Matt Baker of Brother Rice, tackle Matt George, Lake Orion; tight end Tony Henry, Walled Lake Western; wide receiver Jason Kittle, Walled Lake Central; punter Adam Kugler, Waterford G. Lady of the Lakes; defensive back Grant Mason, Orchard Lake St. Mary's; and kicker Dave Rayner, Oxford.

The all-star game, sponsored by the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association, will be played Saturday, July 28, at Spartan Stadium in East Lansing.

MHSFCA grid banquet

The Michigan High School Football Coaches Association's Hall of Fame banquet will be Saturday, April 7, at the indoor track facility on the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. The event begins with a cocktail hour at 6:30 p.m.

The guest speaker will be Lloyd Carr, U-M head football coach. Twenty-four high school football coaches throughout the state will be inducted.

The event is open to the public. Tickets are \$20 per person and can be ordered by sending a check, payable to "Hall of Fame Banquet," and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the Muhlenkamp, 2100 Lakeview, St. Joseph, MI 49085.

YMCA swim sign-up

The Farmington Family YMCA is registering swimmers for its "Spring Tune-Up," a competitive swim program that runs Monday, April 2, through Friday, May 25.

The team is open to anyone between the ages of 6 and 18. Participants do not need to be YMCA members. Depending on ability, participants will swim either at the YMCA or local high schools.

For more information, call Cathy Warnick at (248) 553-0276 between 8:30 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Fox soccer rankings

Two Observerland teams, Plymouth Canton and Livonia Stevenson, are ranked among the top 20 girls soccer teams in the nation in the Fox Fab 50 Poll compiled by Sheldon Shealer and Barry Redmond of Student Sports, Inc.

Canton is rated No. 6 nationally and No. 3 in the Midwest. Stevenson is No. 17 and No. 6, respectively. Troy Athens is No. 9 nationally and No. 4 in the Midwest. Peachtree (Ga.) McIntosh is rated No. 1 overall.

Michigan Cup redux

The Championship golf experience for the non-championship golfer will be offered again this season by Tournaments USA in the Michigan Cup series.

The Michigan Cup uses the Ryder Cup and President's Cup format in a series of events throughout southern Michigan from May through September.

"Eighty percent of people who love to play golf do not break 90 on the scorecard; yet, they go out and play as much as they can," said Tournaments USA co-founder Jeff Bradley.

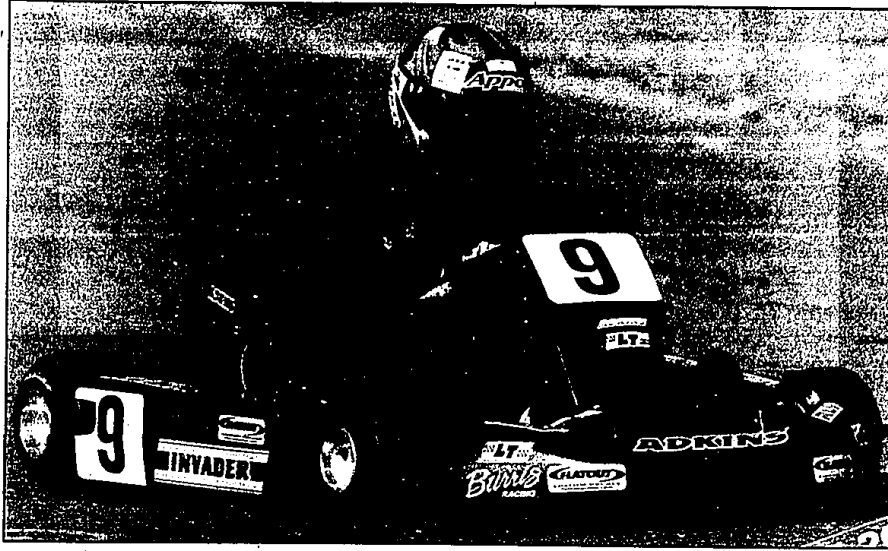
"The only people who really get a chance to play competitive golf are the low-handicap and scratch golfers," he said. "All the other tournaments seem to cater to this more talented style of player."

The series debuted last summer and was well received.

Tournaments USA will donate \$2,000 from the series' proceeds to the Salvation Army.

For more information, call (734) 522-8872 or visit the web site at www.tournamentsusa.com.

(Sports fax number: 734-531-7279.)



Fast track: At age 15, Troy Brown of Farmington Hills is a seven-year veteran of go-cart racing. Brown travels to other parts of the country to participate in national racing events, and he also manages to keep up with his studies. Brown is an honor student at Harrison High School.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPEED GARAGES IN BUNSEL, WI

Hills youth on fast track in go-cart

BY DAN O'MEARA
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Troy Brown is a young man in the fast lane. When he's behind the wheel of a go-cart, that is.

The 15-year-old Farmington Hills youth is much more than a teenager who frequents the local track for something to do.



Troy Brown

For Brown, who competes on a national circuit, go-cart racing is not just a favorite pastime but serious sport.

"It's something different and there's a lot of good people who are involved in it," Brown said. "You make a lot of friends, and everyone is real nice, even though you're competing with them."

"It's kinda cool to go fast, and it's real similar to professional racing."

Brown had his first race of the season earlier this month, finishing fifth among 44 cars in the Junior Formula Y (Yamaha) Class at Charlotte, N.C.

He kept getting better as the race day progressed, too. Brown qualified 16th, was ninth in his preliminary heat and moved up four more places in the 20-lap main event.

Brown missed the first race in Florida because of the extreme distance, but racers are allowed to drop one race. He's currently around 25th in the point standings heading into the next event in Wisconsin.

"In qualifying, it's just time trials, so I'm not racing with anybody," Brown said. "When I get out there with everybody, I'm able to keep up and pass."

The go-carts have 20-horsepower engines, allowing Brown to reach a speed of 75 miles per hour on the Charlotte track, which was a road course seven 10ths of a mile long.

Brown also races on 2 1/2-mile road courses at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Track and Grattan Raceway near Grand Rapids and accelerates to 140 mph there.

Brown, who has been racing go-carts for seven years, finished second nationally in the Junior Sportman Class for 8- to 12-year-olds in 1998.

He moved up to his current class the following season and moved to the back of the pack in that age group. But now he's one of the more experienced drivers in the Junior Formula Class.

Despite having won a lot of divisional races (one step below national), Brown's most memorable achievement was a second-place finish in the '98 Grand Nationals in Camden, Ohio.

"I led for all but the last two laps," Brown said, comparing the event to the Super Bowl of go-cart racing. "It was the biggest race of the year."

"I had been practicing there a long time to get ready for it, and it was real gratifying to do well."

That Brown has such an interest in motorsports is not surprising since he has followed in the footsteps of his father, Jeff Brown, who has been involved in racing since he was a youngster in 1951.

A former national champion on the go-cart circuit, Jeff also raced Indy cars and motorcycles, competing against the likes of Michael Andretti and Al Unser

MOTORSPORTS

Jr. on the Indy Lights circuit in the early '90s. His best finish was seventh place at MIS.

Troy would welcome the opportunity to pursue racing at higher levels just as his father did, too.

"I'd sure like to try it," he said, "but I'll probably end up going to college before I do anything."

A sophomore at Harrison High School, Troy also excels in the classroom and is an honor student with a 3.8 grade-point average.

"He's thin and tall; he's not a football player, and he didn't like soccer," Jeff Brown said. "He's a good kid. He sticks to the books; he does a lot of computer work."

Despite the time spent traveling to other parts of the country and racing, Troy manages to keep up with his school work.

"School has never been that hard for me, so I don't really worry about it a

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Farmington Hills Fire nets state hockey title

BY DAN O'MEARA
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The Farmington Hills Fire was ready for the Grand Rapids Grizzlies when it came time for the rematch.

And its timing couldn't have been better, as the team reached its peak for the most important game of the season March 4.

The Fire chased away the Grizzlies with a 3-1 victory in the championship game of the pee wee travel A state tournament.

Kyle Potocki, Billy Westerman and Joseph Stefan scored the goals as Farmington Hills avenged a 5-4 loss to Grand Rapids earlier in the round-robin tournament.

"In the final game, we got up 3-0 in the first period," Fire co-coach Greg Stefan said. "We really took it to them, and I think they got a little frustrated."

"They kept battling, but we saved our best game for the end of the year. We really stifled the Grizzlies. In the third period, they couldn't even get their goalie pulled."

The Fire still had a lot left despite a 4-3 overtime victory in its previous game earlier that day with the

PEE WEES

Port Huron McDonald Flags.

Farmington Hills had pulled its goalie in the final minute, and Steve McCollom scored the tying goal with 30 seconds remaining to keep the game going.

The Fire won it five minutes into overtime when defenseman Jason O'Guinn fired a shot from inside the blue line that beat the opposing goalie over his shoulder for the winning goal.

"When you win a game like that, you really start to believe in yourselves and think 'It's our turn,'" Stefan said. "The kids were really confident going into the championship game."

"They were excited but they seemed calm and confident. That showed when we got out to a 3-0 lead in the first period."

"We were only used to 10- and 12-minute periods. In the tournament, we played three 16-minute stops."

"It took a whole team effort. We used all three lines and five defense-

Please see FIRE, D2



PHOTO COURTESY OF INNOVATIVE DIGITAL IMAGING

State champs: The members of the Farmington Hills Fire travel pee wee A hockey team are (front row, left to right) Kyle Potocki, Ross Tashjian, Jason O'Guinn, Steve McCollom, Joe Moore, (second row) Steve Dawson, Billy Westerman, Tom Ciaverilla, (third row) Matt Pietila, Joseph Stefan, Troy Storm, Vince Byrne, (fourth row) Daniel LaMonica, Santino Mateo, Derek Hill, (back row) co-coach Greg Stefan, William Stefan, co-coach Ron Dawson and assistant coaches Tom Potocki and Mike Ciaverilla.

Whalers turn attention to OHL post-season play

The streak, sadly, has ended for the Plymouth Whalers.

But as bad news goes, that's relatively minor. Because the jockeying for positioning for the "real" season — the Ontario Hockey League playoffs — is just about over. Playoff action begins Saturday, with the Whalers hosting the Sarnia Sting at 7:30 p.m. at CompuWare Arena.

The Whalers' streak that came to a close was their grip on the Hamilton Spectator Trophy, presented

JUNIOR HOCKEY

annually to the OHL's regular-season champion. The Whalers had that distinction the past two seasons, and they came very close to making it three in a row.

But the Erie Otters held off Plymouth's challenge and clinched the regular-season championship with back-to-back shutouts, 4-0 over Toronto Friday and

5-0 over Kitchener Saturday.

That gave the Otters a six-point lead over second-place Plymouth, with one game for each team remaining. Ironically, the Whalers finish their regular season Friday at Sarnia. Then both teams turn around and head to Plymouth for Saturday's playoff game.

In their two games last weekend, the Whalers won

Please see WHALERS, D5