

Chiefs find another quality pitcher

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A lot has changed with Plymouth Canton's softball team. Four outfielders from last season's squad have graduated. So has pitcher Katie Conlon and shortstop Angie Neu. Replacing five starters, including your No. 1 pitcher — that sounds like trouble. But Canton coach Jim Arnold was hopeful, at least before the Chiefs' season opener Monday at Westland John Glenn. After a 9-1 victory, he was even more optimistic. He had every reason to be. Pitcher Renee Ross, a junior who played sparingly on the varsity last season, tossed a one-hitter, striking out 10 and walking two. Canton also totaled 14 hits in the game, with four players collecting more than one. That's something that rarely occurred last

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season. Indeed, that was the Chiefs' biggest problem in 2001. They put together a 16-14 campaign, but had problems hitting the ball. The hope is Monday's game was an indication things would be different. "We hope so," said Arnold. "We think with all the athletes we have, we should do better than last year." A win like Monday's has a way of shrinking these holes that previously seemed so formidable. It helps, too, having a player like Joelle Brown behind the plate. A starter at catcher since she was a freshman, Brown — a junior — is a team captain. Other players with varsity experience are first baseman Maggie O'Connell, a senior;

second baseman Megan Coultas, a senior and another team captain; third baseman Pam Hudson, a senior; utility player/shortstop Megan Coultas, a senior and the third team captain; and outfielders Leslie Garinneau and Laura Ulmer, both seniors. Some promising newcomers are Caitlin McNicholas, a junior who will see time at shortstop, and Colleen O'Brien, a junior who looks good in center field. "She's coming on real strong," said Arnold of O'Brien. "She's a hard worker, extremely dedicated." That type of description, in an of itself, is something Arnold hopes will spread throughout his team. "I was very pleased with the togetherness of this team and the hard work," he said. As far as weaknesses, after Monday's win he had little to offer. "There's nothing concerning us with weaknesses," Arnold said. "They work hard and the athletic ability is there."

Still, the experience level isn't as great. Arnold believes that can be handled, however. The versatility this team offers should help a great deal. "We've got a number of ballplayers who can play multiple positions," he said. "A lot of players can play anywhere." The Chiefs didn't have that capability previously. Having players able to fill in at different spots will give Arnold more options. Versatility isn't their only strength. Defense should be solid, Arnold thought, and he's hoping the hitting has improved. "We've worked real hard on our hitting," he insisted. Whether or not it will be enough to challenge Western Lakes Activities Association powers like Livonia Churchill, Walled Lake Central and North Farmington remains to be seen. But it would seem the Chiefs are off to a good start.

Spartans blister Churchill, 6-1; Wayne drops 2

Livonia Stevenson came out smoking Monday in its girls soccer match, jumping out to a 6-1 triumph over Livonia Churchill. Stevenson, behind two goals and one assist from Melissa Dobbey, improved to 2-1-1 followed Saturday's 1-0 loss to defending Division II state champion Madison Heights Bishop Foley. Churchill is 1-1 overall. "It was by far our best offensive effort of the year," Stevenson coach Chris Pinta. "Melissa was hard to handle in the midfield. She was able to distribute the ball to several players." "We moved better off the ball than we have." Danielle Lewis contributed one goal and two assists, while Bethany Dobbey and Dina Allie

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each had a goal and one assist. Ashley Aja, who spearheaded the Stevenson defense, scored the other goal from Lauren Thiel. "Aja has been very good, not many teams have been able to get by her," Pinta said. "So far this year I've been pleased with the defense for the most part." Kyle LaPorte scored Churchill's lone goal from Sarah Phillips in the opening half to cut the deficit to 3-1. Churchill coach Dave Hebestreit also singled out the play of defender Meghan Parnell. "She played a phenomenal game, she was all over the field," Hebestreit said. "We started strong. We played well for the first

five minutes or so, but after that they just took over." On Saturday, Stevenson lost to host Foley on a penalty shot with 25 minutes remaining in the match. Ironically, it was the only shot ventured on goal by the Spartans. "We had our chances just like it did tonight (vs. Churchill), but we didn't capitalize," Pinta said. "They (Foley) played only one or two people up. They had five people defending in the box and they had a tall keeper." Things don't get any easier this week for the Spartans, who travel Saturday to face the state's No. 1-ranked team in Division I, Troy Athens, which is also rated by one publication the top team in the country. The Red Hawks have four players who have signed with Big

Ten schools. "That is going to be a good test because they have two of the best forwards we'll see all year," Pinta said. "It's a huge test for us. It's going to be a good barometer." "LADYWOOD 3, NOTRE DAME PREP 1: Sunni Grezlik's goal from Sandy Swish midway through the second half Tuesday enabled host Livonia Ladywood (1-0-2) to earn a Catholic League tie with Pontiac Notre Dame Prep (0-1-1). Kim Murphy scored for the Fighting Irish when her corner kick bent into the net 10 minutes into the second half. "NORTHVILLE 10, FRANKLIN 0: The defending WLA champion Mustangs took 76 minutes to invoke the 10-goal mercy rule Monday against host Livonia Franklin (2-2, 0-1). "TRENTON 10, WAYNE 0: In a first meeting ever between the two schools, the Trojans (1-0, 1-2) rolled in a Mega Conference Red Division matchup at Wayne Memorial (1-3, 0-1). "Trenton was the most physical and verbally aggressive team we have played in our brief eighty-year existence," Wayne coach Larry Brenner said. "They were a very skilled team who used intimidation to their advantage." "W.L. CENTRAL 3, WAYNE 2: Ashley Britton scored a pair of goals Friday, but it wasn't enough as host Wayne Memorial (1-2) lost a non-leaguer to Walled Lake Central (3-0). Amy Vores and Alana Green drew assists for the Zebras. Wayne was tied at 1-1 at halftime.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Friday, April 19	Harrison at Stevenson, 4 p.m.
Franklin at Farmington, 4 p.m.	Northville at N. Farmington, 4 p.m.
Saturday, April 20	Farmington city tournament.
SOFTBALL	
Friday, April 19	F.H. Mercy at Birm. Marfan, 4 p.m.
N. Farmington at Northville, 4 p.m.	Farmington at Franklin, 4 p.m.
Stevenson at Harrison, 4 p.m.	
Saturday, April 20	F.H. Mercy Tournament, 10A.
GIRLS SOCCER	
Thursday, April 18	Divine Child at Mercy, 5:30 p.m.
Friday, April 19	Farmington at O.P. North, 4 p.m.
Saturday, April 20	A.A. Huron at N. Farmington, 12:30 p.m.
Denley at Harrison, 12:30 p.m.	Mercy at Birmingham Groves, 1 p.m.
BOYS TRACK & FIELD	
Thursday, April 18	Harrison at Franklin, 3:30 p.m.
Farmington at N. Farmington, 3:30 p.m.	
GIRLS TRACK & FIELD	
Tuesday, April 16	Mercy at Ladywood, 4 p.m.
Thursday, April 18	Franklin at Harrison, 3:30 p.m.
N. Farmington at Farmington, 3:30 p.m.	
Saturday, April 20	Harrison at Chelsea Refs, TBA.
GIRLS GOLF	
Thursday, April 18	Farmington at Dearborn Invite, TBA.
Friday, April 19	Farmington at Hartland, 9 a.m.
BOYS LACROSSE	
Friday, April 19	Romeo at Farmington, 5 p.m.
GIRLS LACROSSE	
Friday, April 19	South Lyon at Farmington, 5 p.m.
Saturday, April 20	Farmington at Len. Waverly, 8 a.m.

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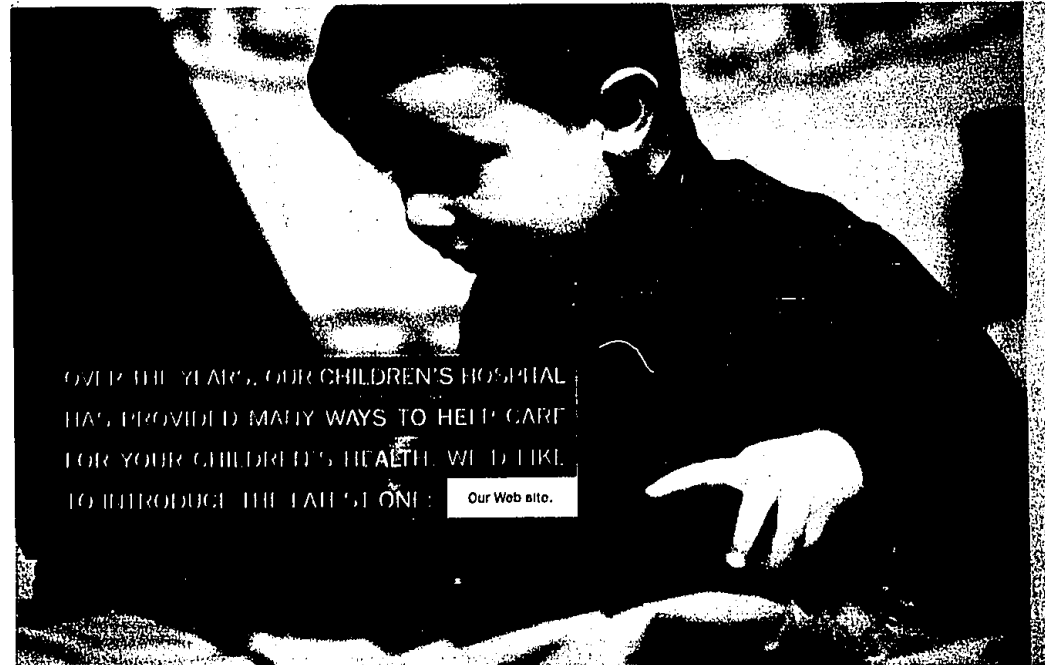
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