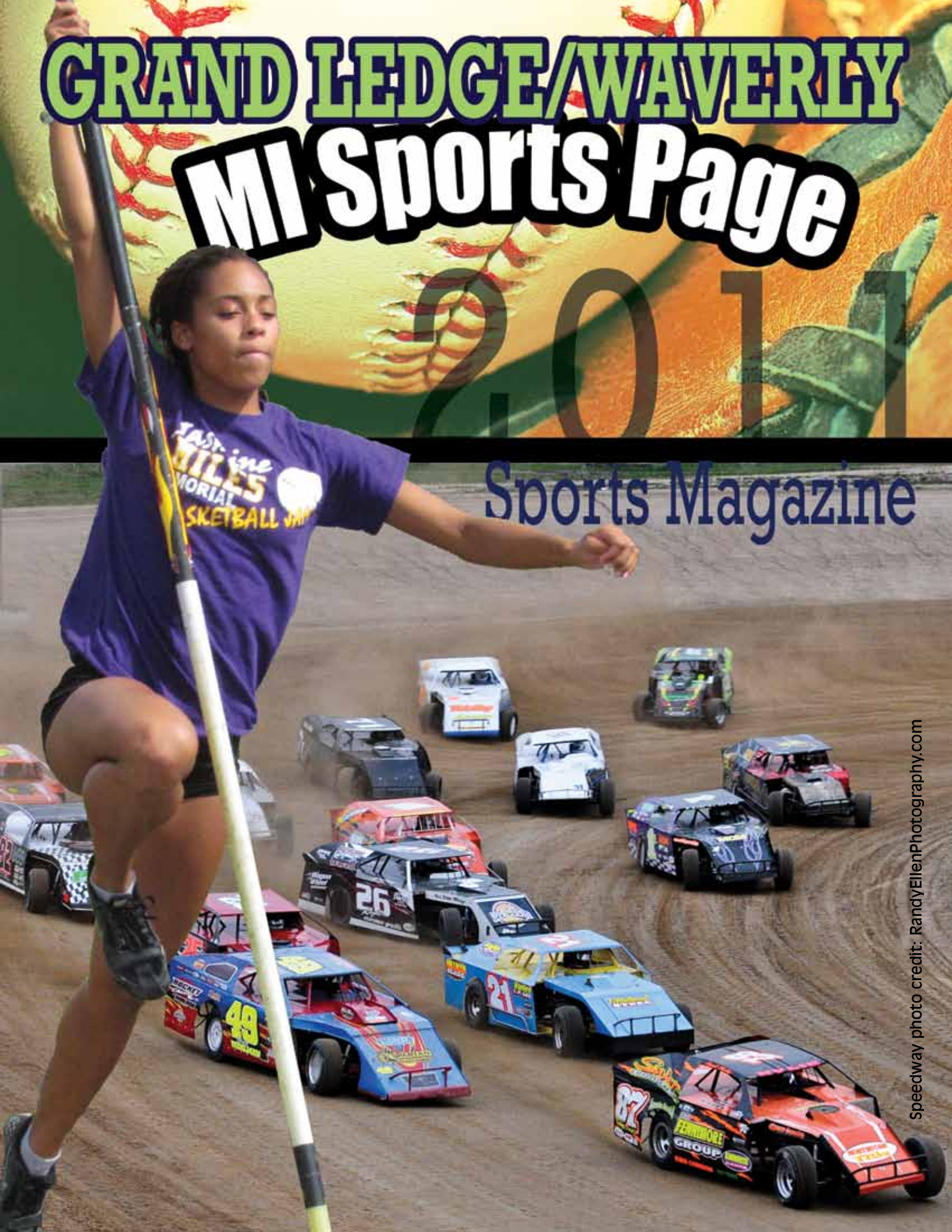


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# Grand Ledge Waverly

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# The weather may waiver, the seasons may change, but Flowers' steady, calming influence hasn't

As track athletes have come and gone, longtime Waverly girls track coach Bob Lurie has cultivated a pretty good sixth sense in the ability to identify the special athlete, the one who's a delight to coach.

Brianna Flowers was just that. As a freshman, the Warrior won her first pole vault meet. "She had the speed and was willing to give pole vault a try," Lurie said.

"She's obviously pretty talented. She's distinguished herself from the kids coming over from the middle school as a freshman," said Lurie. "Brianna not only has ability, she is also willing to work at it."

She graduated from Waverly with the school record in pole vault and an arm's length list of accomplishments which include all-conference, regional and state honors.

The list of events she has competed in is nearly as long. Flowers, over her four years, had a leg in all three



*Flowers owns the Waverly school record in the pole vault.*



sprint relays, the open 100, 200, 400 dashes, the high jump and the pole vault.

"My favorite event is the pole vault, but I think I'm probably best in the 4x100," Flowers explains. Her best time in the 4x100 is 49.7.

One of the Warriors memorable moments was in her favorite event.

"It was my sophomore year at the conference meet and I broke the school record in pole vault, but on the jump I also broke the post bar. I stepped on it," Flowers exclaimed.

Flowers' keys for a successful pole vault are strength, good technique, speed and holding the arm out and then breaking it in at the right time. "I think another day that I'm proud of and will remember is last year on a cold, rainy, gross day I ran a 12.8 in the 100 dash.

Her track success isn't all that surprising when one reviews her family history. Her father, Michael, was a state-ranked hurdler for Lansing  
"FLOWERS" cont. on page 6



*Brianna Flowers has a laugh prior to practicing her sprint relay exchanges.*

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Sexton. "I guess you could say I've fallen pretty close to the tree," Flowers says with bright smile as she sits in the bleachers on a dreary overcast day.

And while her list of accomplishments in track and field are distinguishable, it is volleyball (as a setter) where the Warrior has earned a scholarship from Lansing Community College.

"I started as an outside hitter my freshman year and then settled in as the setter when the starting setter graduated," Flowers explained. "As a setter you have to be consistent, a leader on the floor and know all the sets."

Flowers' athleticism enabled her to play any position on the Waverly volleyball floor. "Brianna is easy to coach and whatever I asked of her she did that times 10," Warrior volleyball coach Megan Helsen explained. "She's not a vocal leader. She leads by example. She was the most athletic kid in our program and one of the top three volleyball players in the Capitol Area Activities Conference. I will not be surprised if she transfers to another school to play volleyball after she's done



*Going into the 2011 track season Flowers and her 4x100 teammates had earned two conference and two regional championships. Their best showing at the state meet was a fourth-place finish. The Warriors also recorded a second and a third at the honor roll meet.*

at Lansing Community College."

As an athlete and a leader, Flowers said she is most upset when she sees a teammate give up, not try their hardest, don't do what they're suppose to do.

When Flowers isn't practicing or competing she enjoys hanging out with friends at the family cottage up north.

She also enjoys making bracelets in her free time, listening to hip hop, rhythm and blues and rap music, and Italian cuisine. When time allows Flowers watches Real World, Jersey Shore and Cake Boss.

During her four years, everyone has been witness to her talents on the track, but what everybody hasn't seen is the way Brianna has looked out for her teammates.

"I asked our freshman distance runner Kelli Broessel what's it is that she liked about Brianna," Lurie explained. "She said Brianna remains calm and doesn't allow her emotions to go up and down and always has time for her and her teammates."

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# Ability to build and develop relationships and respect of former player nets Sweet new opportunity



*Brighton boys' basketball coach Tony Sweet cuts down the net following his Bulldogs conference clinching league-championship win in Pinckney. The title came in Sweet's first year.*

**B**asketball is his passion....so much so Tony Sweet's high school basketball coach told the young point guard that someday he would coach.

Basketball is Al Horford's passion.... so much so that he told Sweet (his high school basketball coach) that someday he would play in the NBA.

Sweet has coached high school basketball for 18 seasons, three at Leslie, 14 at Grand Ledge and last year at Brighton.

Following his high school playing days at Grand Ledge, Horford took his talents to Gainesville where he played for Florida. The last three years his home has been with the NBA's Atlanta Hawks.

Shortly after being told the Comet basketball program was heading in a different direction, Sweet received a call from Greg Gray, a former player and now Brighton superintendent, asking him if he was interested in coaching the Bulldogs' varsity boys basketball team.

Part of the coaching resume is the ability to build and develop relationships. More so than being hired for the Brighton coaching position, Sweet is humbled by the fact Gray respected him enough as a coach to years later ask him to coach.

Under Sweet's direction, Grand Ledge won its first league basketball title in 22 years while winning over 60 percent of its games.

"I grew up in Grand Ledge, played basketball for Grand Ledge and feel as if I did the town of Grand Ledge proud during my tenure as coach," Sweet explained. "I was disappointed with the school board's decision, but I fought for my position but did not get reinstated. I refuse to focus on what was and things that are not going to change. I've always preached to my players when they get knocked down they need to get back up. This was an opportunity for me to practice what I preached."

Under the category of "hardly a shocker" Horford is the best player Sweet has ever coached and more.

"He's a great basketball player with a lot of God-given talent who told me he would some day play in the NBA," Sweet said. "More than that, Al was a great kid who was motivated, easy to coach and

wanted to win as much or more than his coach. That's a tough combination to find."

One of Sweet's most memorable wins while at Grand Ledge came in a league championship clinching win at Jackson in Horford's junior year.

Horford, his Comet teammates and Sweet suffered a difficult loss to Lansing Everett.

"Everett went on to win the state title that year. To this day, I believe had we won the game it could have Grand Ledge winning the state title," Sweet explained.

He came away with the same feeling in a regional final loss to Lansing Waverly. "It was a tough game with some tough calls that went against us," Sweet said. As a coach you want to go to reach the highest mountain. I wouldn't change a thing, though. I have learned from everything and have become a better person/coach because of my experiences."

Coaching in the Kensington Lake Athletic Association delivers a different dynamic than the Capitol Area Activities League (CAAL). In the CAAL, Sweet coached against teams with Division I players. He notes, that in the Lansing area on any given night there can be two-three Division 1 players on the court.

Sweet inherited a slower more methodical game when he arrived in Brighton. With the use of a more, push-it-up-the-floor style offense, the athletic Bulldog squad scored 60-plus points more regularly as opposed to the mid 40s.

As for aspiring coaches, Sweet offered this advice. The need to be open minded and expect anything. Perception is not always reality. One size does not always fit all and different kids relate to different things. The ability to build and develop relationships, a quality Sweet has benefitted from throughout his coaching tenure.

# Athletic Drive...

discipline benefits former Grand Ledge athlete, Marlan  
along educational and professional path

Jill Marlan's performance in education, athletics and now in the professional world has been nothing short of exceptional.

Her professors, coaches, parents and family don't have to tell you this since her successes speak for themselves.

As a junior and senior (1992-1993) at Grand Ledge High School she was named to the all district and all state volleyball and basketball teams and to the all district softball team.

Marlan's high school athletic career culminated with being awarded the Comet's top female athlete her senior year.

The team experience is very structured and the competitive environment aided her in her post high school academic pursuit.

"I received a two-year scholarship in basketball from Lansing Community College," Marlan said. She followed that up with a two-year, full ride basketball scholarship from Wayne State where she earned her undergraduate degree. At both educational institutions Marlan was the recipient of Academic All American honors.

While enrolled at Wayne State, the Grand Ledge Graduate completed WSU's three-year physical therapy program. In grad school, Marlan elected to do an additional manual clinical based rotation with John Krauss at Oakland University, considered by most to be one of the top manual physical therapists in the world.

After completing her work at Wayne State, Marlan went through Michigan State's Osteopathic Continuing Education program before starting an intensive three-year collegiate and resident based program at Oakland University with Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapists John Krauss OMPT, Olaf Evjenth, OMPT, and Doug Creighton OMPT.



*Wayne State's Jill Marlan is recognized as MVP of the GLIAC tourney.*

The student, then turned teacher, assisted in a lab setting before becoming the lead teacher of Oakland University's spinal and extremity evaluation and manipulation courses.

Marlan, PT, MSPT, OMPT, achieved a residency based orthopedic program at Oakland University. Quite an accomplishment considering less than one percent of all graduate therapists achieve that status.





*Jill Marlan, owner Peak Performance, offers one-on-one manipulative treatment, functional massages, post surgical spinal and extremity treatment and preventative sports programs and training.*

In addition, Marlan was appointed by the Governor to the Michigan State Board of Physical Therapy. She currently serves as its chairperson.

In June, Marlan will fulfill a life-long dream when she opens up her own clinic, Peak Performance Physical Therapy, PLC, at 4911 W. St. Joe Highway Suite 101 in Lansing.

"I will have exceptional evidence based manual treatment as well as top notch programs at my facility. I will employ skilled therapists and provide residency based advanced training," Marlan explained. "Athletic based preventative throwing, jumping and back programs will also be a part of our clinic".

Athletics remain an important part of Marlan's life. "The hand, eye coordination needed in athletics are important qualities needed with high velocity manipulation," Marlan explains.

Marlan was a three-sport athlete at Grand Ledge, excelling in basketball, volleyball and softball. "Being a part of a team provided me with a

great experience along with the travel, friendships and the structure it provided," she said. "As a high school and college athlete there is a very strong will to succeed, to be better, and to try harder."

The drive Marlan exerted as an athlete has benefitted her as a professional.

"Much of that is genetics. I have a family history of successful athletes," Marlan said. Her grandfather is in the hall of fame at Northern Michigan University for football and track, and developed a state champion wrestling team at the School for the Blind. Her father wrestled at Western Michigan University. She is also grateful for the role model (Deb Traxinger) who served as her high school basketball coach.

The Comets' shooting, two guard, when asked to reflect on memorable basketball moments, recalls a win over Charlotte her junior year, dropping 30 on East Lansing in a winning effort and MVP of a 6 team tournament at Wayne State.

*"ATHLETIC" cont. on page 10*



**Jill Marlan, PT, MSPT, OMPT**

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Marlan notes that the movement away from multiple sport athletes to more specialized one sport athletes raises concerns.

"Especially with the younger kids. There is the risk of over-use injuries. This is caused by repetitive exercise to the point of failure of joints, muscles and tissues.," Marlan explained. "Young kids playing one sport year round leads to many more injuries because they are not getting circuit type training."

The Grand Ledge grad would like to coach someday especially as her children Carson and Leighton start to participate in sports. "I want to inspire kids and athletes to strive to be better. I believe being a great role model is very important," Marlan said. Just like Traxinger was for her.

Her educational, athletic and professional success hasn't come without hard work and much support from coaches, her parents (Gary and Phyllis Hetherington), and her family (her husband Russ and two children (Carson 3 and Leighton 1).

"They have all been so supportive of me and have helped to inspire me to be better," Marlan concluded.



*A young Jill Marlan releases a jump shot from the foul line in a game against Oakland University.*



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# I-96 Speedway waving fans in with big races and events



There are more speedways/race tracks in Michigan than one can shake a checkered flag at.

The booming interest in racing extends well beyond the televised NASCAR events. Actually, in Michigan it extends from the coast of Lake Michigan to the coast of Lake Erie and from the Michigan/Indiana line to the Upper Peninsula border.

“There are a lot of speedways in Michigan in general,” said I-96 Speedway owner Mike Mouch.

It’s top of the line facilities, a full slate of entertaining races and events and the three-six, car-wide racing, however, is what brings fans to their feet and to the I-96 Speedway from April through September.

“The motor heads want to see good competition, and crashes,” said Mouch. “I want to watch and enjoy the same experiences as the fans that come here.”

Over 35,000 spectators come to the I-96 Speedway each year. They come from all over (Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin and Michigan). While its name has changed over its 40 years, its charge certainly hasn’t.



*Mike and Sarah Mouch have owned and operated I-96 Speedway for seven years.*

“SPEEDWAY” cont. on page 12





Speedway photos credit: RandyEllenPhotography.com

*“SPEEDWAY” cont. from page 11*

To be honest, Mouch wants and is delivering more.

“The main reason I’m now here is not just racing. I now feel the need to meet and reach out to people and provide more,” Mouch explains.

The extras Mouch speaks about include a kids club, entertainment and special events (Grand National Flat Track Harley Motorcycle race, River City Bike Week, the Late Model Summer National, World of Outlaw Sprint Cars and the Biker and Grill Fest). “We want to be a speedway and an event center,” he explains.

Mouch has incorporated a motor cross track to run alongside the car track on the 70-acre speedway site. “The goal is to constantly bring in a lot of different people each week,” he explains.

Mouch first raced go carts at the age of seven and took his first sprint car around the track at 17. He owned his first speedway at 27.

“I came home and told Sarah (wife) that I had bought a race track. She told me to set it up in

the basement - thinking it was a remote control track,” Mouch recalls.

His race track business venture has now turned into a family affair. Sarah, his daughter Jaden helps with the kids club while his son Evan (five years old) will start racing go carts this year.

The fact his son is racing at all in itself is significant. Evan, which means “Young Warrior”, was born with his intestines outside his stomach (pancreatic rest) also known as heterotropic, or aberrant pancreatic tissue. It is the presence of pancreatic tissue outside of the pancreatic gland. It did not have any anatomic or vascular connection to pancreatic gland.

He was in the hospital for six months after his birth. He went in on Friday the 13th and came home on April Fools Day only to have to return for another couple of months.

“Evan was a Children Miracle Network Baby of the Year,” Mouch explained.





Getting to Saturday night so Evan and the big boys can race requires extensive planning and work in the off season. From scheduling and booking races to securing sponsors to working with vendors.

As for the the 3/8 and 1/2 mile tracks, there is the discing with straw before winter sets in

followed by the grooming in the spring. Maintenance of the facilities, buildings and grounds is continuous throughout the year.

"We're constantly working to keep things running. With the Michigan weather that is a constant challenge," Mouch said. It's a full-time job the Mouch family enjoys and is glad to have.



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# Tennis offers Waverly girls four years to learn and compete and a lifetime to play

At a time when one-sport high school athletes are more and more the rule, with value put on winning at a premium, a no cut, everyone welcome, enjoy the experience approach is a refreshing, traditional throwback to days of yesteryear.

**W**hile this approach may not be for all programs, coaches or players, it is one that has worked for Waverly High School girls tennis.

“We promote competition within and want to win (as evidenced by the Warriors third place league finish in 2011),” said Waverly tennis coach Mark Feinauer. “We want to teach them a good sport and that tennis is a sport they can play for a lifetime.”

Waverly tennis coaching icon Jerry Gerrow is credited with starting the no



*Kara Politi first held a tennis racket as a freshman and sees herself still holding one in her 60s.*



cut policy. "He believed in teaching the good sport of tennis to all who came out," Feinauer said.

When Gerrow left the program, assistant coach Bill Prahler helped with the transition. At the time Feinauer coached the boys' junior varsity tennis team. Feinauer has been assisted by Jerry Smith for the past three seasons.

"Girls know when they come out for tennis they will learn the sport, and they can miss a practice for dance or National Honor Society and still play," Smith said. "They can miss a practice and won't have to give up dance lessons."

If numbers are any indication, Waverly girls have found value in what the tennis program has to offer. In Feinauer's 11 seasons, an average of 45 girls have filled out for the junior varsity and varsity rosters each year.

Like most of the Waverly girl tennis players, senior Ciera Strudwick came out as a freshman with no tennis experience. "I needed something



*Ciera Strudwick started playing tennis as a freshman, through hard work finished her senior year starting at fourth doubles for Waverly.*

*"TENNIS" cont. on page 16*



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else. Something I could be good at and something I could play recreationally," explains Strudwick who started at fourth doubles in her final season.

Kara Politi, also a senior, had never held a tennis racket prior to her freshman year.

"I'm a big-time golfer and there are some similarities in the two swings," she said. The fact there were no cuts also helped influence Politi's decision. "I'm no Roger Federer, but I have improved 100 percent since my freshman year. No matter my age, I know I can play tennis the rest of my life."

Feinauer has been rewarded over the years with a few players who enter the program with a fair amount of tennis experience.

A recent example of this is Giana Guerra, who had city recreational playing experience in San Diego before her family moved to Michigan. "She wasn't our prototypical player. It was obvious right away Giana was a level above her peers," Feinauer said.

Guerra was the first Warrior girls' tennis player to qualify for the state tournament. She did so in 2008. The Waverly player just missed as a junior when she lost in the regional semi finals. However, she battled back her senior year to qualify by finishing runner-up in the regional finals.

"That loss in my junior year was hard for me, but through the help of my Dad I have been able to not dwell on losses and move on," Guerra said. "That loss helped to motivate me my senior year."

Qualifying for the high school state tennis tournament in Kalamazoo Guerra calls her best high school tennis experience.

While that was her best experience her most mem-



*In Feinauer's 11 seasons, an average of 45 girls have come out for the junior varsity and varsity rosters each year*

orable moment came in a match against Charlotte.

"Our new athletic director came to the match and I hit a ball so hard that I broke the racket," Guerra explains. "Every time I see him now he remembers me as the girl who broke her racket."

The former Waverly tennis star is one example how a relaxed program approach can also provide opportunity for a player to excel and improve one's skill.

Guerra's skill landed her at Olivet College where she has played first doubles as a freshman and sophomore. As a junior she played sec-

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ond doubles and has been penciled in at second singles for her senior year.

While Julie Dillon's three daughters did not enjoy the same success on the court they have enjoyed the rewards and approach of the tennis program. The youngest, Danielle, will be a senior in 2012.

"It's been a fabulous experience for all three. They have all loved it," Dillon said. "There hasn't been any conflict with an opportunity for them to excel. They have all been able to play and get where they want to be."

Her oldest daughter, Samantha, played second singles and her middle child, Jessica played at first doubles. While all players are provided with the opportunity to excel, Dillon appreciates the fact that every player on the team plays whether it's in a game or exhibition match.

"Coach Feinauer has done a great job with the program and always has the girls' best interest at heart," Dillon concludes.



*Kara Politi like many Waverly girls views tennis as a lifetime sport.*

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# Upsweep exchange

keeps Warrior sprint relay teams  
on natural upswing with its approach



Its approach to the sprint relays is not traditional, however, the results are coveted by many.

The French are credited with breaking tradition when it comes to baton exchange. Their success has convinced some if not many to crossover.

The traditional way is the downsweep exchange. This is where the receiving hand is placed with the palm facing up, exposing a wide angle between the thumb and the rest of the fingers. The incoming athlete passes the baton in a downward movement into the receiving hand.

The advantage to this method is that it will require no manipulation of the baton to safely make the next baton exchange.

The disadvantage is that it is not a natural position of the outgoing athlete's hand to receive the baton.

The unconventional method, or for this story, the Waverly way is the upsweep exchange. This occurs when the receiving hand is placed with the palm down and a wide angle between the



thumb and the rest of the fingers. The incoming athlete passes the baton in an upward movement into the receiving hand.

The advantage of this method is that it is a normal position for the receiving hand.

The disadvantage is that it will require some manipulation of the baton in the hand to make the next exchange safely.

"It is a more natural flow, however, for the running motion," according to Waverly boys track coach Dave Pike. "Bringing the baton up from underneath the receiving hand (the palm) just naturally closes. We have never had a runner drop a baton manipulating the baton from one hand to the other."

Pike also notes that gathering enough information in advance and practice allows for a runner to come into the exchange zone and exit the exchange zone at full speed. "That's what is needed to perform at the highest level. A sprint relay team has to perform everything perfectly to be an elite group," Pike says. "Our runner excels 20-28 meters before receiving the baton. There is no slowing down at the exchange."

The Waverly coach says he has his athletes push at full speed in the zone. "You have to if you want to take it to the next level and be the best," Pike explained.

Waverly's relentless practice in the pursuit of being the best doesn't allow for second guessing its exchange approach. "Other schools have tried it but not with the same time and effort we put in," Pike explains. "Therefore, some of them return to the traditional exchange."

Pike's Warriors set a state record in the 4x200 in 2002, stopping the clock in 1:28.6. That wasn't even the fastest time they ran in that event that year. "We ran a 1:28 flat three days prior to that at the honor roll meet," Pike said.

Waverly has medaled at the state meet in each of the last 10 years in the 4x100. "Our program has reached the level where we expect to medal," Pike said.

The Waverly coach says his teams are aided by their regular season competition (Lansing Sexton, East Lansing, Williamston and DeWitt). "Often times those schools are as good or better than what we see at the state meet," he explains.



*Waverly High School's Martin Bennett (freshman) receives the baton, on the upsweep, from 4x100 teammate Alante Sims (sophomore) as the two Warriors demonstrated the non traditional method.*

Pike also believes to be successful at the state meet a crew must have a fast time and they must be in a good system.

Another tradition Pike has turned on its head is the placement of runners. Often times the fastest sprinter is selected to run the last leg of a relay.

The Warriors approach is a complete 180 degrees. With the first leg the longest, that's where Pike runs his fastest sprinter.

"I want to get out in front of the exchanges. That allows our guys to relax. When they relax they run their fastest," Pike explained.

Who's left to run the last leg? The Waverly coach looks to his most competitive guy. "I want it to be a hawk. Someone who wants to hawk someone. Someone who wants to get after it," Pike said. Sounds like a Warrior!

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