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Photo by Tracy Dreslinski

Farmington High's No. 2 singles Victoria Amponsah returns the ball during the April 25 Birmingham Invite. The Falcons are one of three local squads ranked by the Michigan High School Tennis Coaches Association.

Serving up aces

Farmington, Farmington Hills tennis squads among state's best

By Sue Teggart
C & G Sports Writer

Of the 40 girls tennis teams in the Michigan High School Tennis Coaches Association's April 5 rankings, three call Farmington and Farmington Hills home.

Ken Stocker coaches Farmington Mercy, Division 2's fifth-ranked team, and he said what makes the area a breeding ground for tennis talent is simple — experience.

"Kids start at a young age and play (United States Tennis Association) tennis," Stocker said.

Stocker — whose Marlins recently defeated ninth-ranked North Farmington 5-3 March 28 in a quad match — added that he believes tennis is popular for young women because of the competitive nature and individuality of the sport.

"You can play year-round because of indoor facilities, and it's something that, if you work hard, you can be very successful at it," he said.

Farmington High girls tennis coach Gary Nicholls said his 10th-ranked Division 2 squad also has several players who compete year-round in USTA tournaments.

"Our community is lucky to have so many indoor facilities," Nicholls said.

"Michigan is not a good place to play in the winter, but ... we're just blessed with having a lot of good facilities.

"For the girls that are interested in not only maintaining their game but improving their game, there are tons of opportunities for them to do that in this area."

Nicholls added that he was surprised that his Farmington squad was ranked and said the recognition was a result of a successful 2008, when the Falcons tied for eighth at the D-2 state finals with Mercy.

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“Last year was wonderful for our program,” Nicholls said. “However, that’s the highest Farmington High has ever been ranked. This year, we are ready for wherever we end up.”

Regardless of how Mercy finishes, Stocker said his Marlins are focused on improvement and don’t compare themselves to other teams.

“Our philosophy is that we do the best we can and play as hard as we can,” Stocker said. “It’s about having a good time. We just have to make sure the kids are prepared.”

One thing is certain, Farmington will not have to look far to test itself against some of the best talent in state.

“We’re going to get a chance to go against some of the best doubles teams ... and singles players around,” Nicholls said. “To have a chance to go test ourselves like that will be great.”

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