

Teen talks his way to success

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

GENEVA — Dan Fernandez has a talent which will allow him to go in many directions with his career choice.

And regardless of his eventual profession, it's highly unlikely that the DeSales High School senior will lose out on a job because of a poor interview.

Talking is what Dan, 17, does best. Over the past three years his speaking ability has not only made him a more assertive presence, it's also made him money.

Dan, a Clifton Springs resident, estimates that he's garnered approximately \$475 in cash and savings bonds since he began participating in American Legion-sponsored oratorical competitions. This past winter, he won the Ontario County championship for the second straight year and also finished third among seven students in a seven-county district event.

In capturing the county contest, Dan delivered speeches concerning the U.S. Constitution. Although DeSales was well-represented at the county competition with top-five performances from sophomore Mike Hezel and junior Melissa Middlebrook, Dan's winning words made him the only entrant to advance to the district level. All three students are supervised by Bob DiFulvio, DeSales' guidance-department director.

Dan was judged on such qualities as originality, volume, eye contact and hand gestures. Yet he believes the biggest asset that swings judges in his favor is his relaxed approach.

"They can see I'm being myself. Other people get up there and they're very dramatic, and the judges can see through that," Dan remarked.

Oratorical skills, he noted, apply to a wide range of people such as entertainers, politicians, teachers and clergy.

"People don't know how difficult it is for a teacher," Dan commented. "Teachers, every day — regardless of how they feel — have got to get up and speak to anywhere from 30 to 1,000 students. It's very difficult to keep a class's attention. Teachers have got to do something different every day to make it interesting."

The pressure becomes even greater when a teacher makes an embarrassing mistake and "everybody's watching. It's a lot like playing sports," Dan said.

"I always felt that the best public speakers were comedians," he added. "They're looking at the crowd and sensing what it feels."

Dan, who carries a 3.7 grade-point average, has applied to



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Geneva DeSales High School senior Dan Fernandez is a two-time champion in the American Legion-sponsored Ontario County oratorical competition.

the State University of New York at Binghamton, Hamilton College and Cornell University. He is leaning toward a career in political science.

"A lot of people seem to think politics is something that fits into my persona," he remarked.

However, Dan emphasized, he's not particularly interested in actually becoming a politician. "A lot of the time it's not truth, justice and the American way," he commented. "It's a dirty business."

Consistent McQuaid skiers scorch the slopes

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

It's been a real chore to keep ski slopes cool this year — and higher-than-average temperatures are only part of the reason.

McQuaid Jesuit has been burning up the trails on a regular basis. In their first four Wayne County League meets of 1995, the Knights won one competition and placed second in the other three.

Several McQ skiers have recorded top-10 finishes already this season, boosting the Knights' strong team showings.

"The past few years we've been kind of rebuilding, but the depth is very strong this year," Coach Greg Sarkis remarked.

Sarkis said that his club isn't skiing up to its potential if it hasn't placed "two or three guys in the top 10." That's quite a feat considering that six other schools compete in these league meets.

McQuaid — which belongs in the Wayne County League due to the lack of openings in the Monroe County League — is gearing up for two big end-of-the-season events. The league-championship meet, which McQuaid last won three years ago, is scheduled for Feb. 8 at Brantling. The following week, on Feb. 15, Section 5 competition will take place at Swain. Monroe County schools are also included in the sectional races.

Sarkis is excited about the Knights' potential at sectionals because Swain, located in Livingston County, is the same course where the Knights took first-place in a Jan. 18 league meet.

"If we weren't at least in the top five (at sectionals), I'd be very disappoint-



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

McQuaid Jesuit's Brandon Buchanan (left) and Jay Magee top the Knights' Alpine ski team. The Knights are shooting for a high finish at the Section 5 championship meet on Feb. 15 at Swain Ski Center.

ed," said Sarkis.

At the same time, he explained, ski meets are extremely hard to gauge because even one fall can swing the team point total drastically.

"It happens fast and there's no second chance," Sarkis noted.

A good approach for handling this considerable pressure, he said, is to go full-tilt on practice days.

"You've got to really build their confidence in practice and then they've just got to go for it (in meets). The last thing you want to do is be tentative. When we train, we approach the course as if you were racing," said Sarkis.

One of the Knights' top performers has been senior Jay Magee, who fueled his team's Jan. 18 victory by placing first individually. Another key skier is senior Brandon Buchanan, who topped the Knights with a third-place finish in a league meet on Jan. 27 at Bristol. McQ tied for second in team scoring that day.

Other leading varsity performers are senior Randy Teegardin and juniors Ronan Kennedy, Vik Narayan, Ken Perelli and Philip Wehrheim.

Rounding out the roster are senior Chris Murphy, juniors Scott Everett, Colby Synesael and Dan Ranaletta; and sophomore Scott Hawkins.

DeSales victory ensures happy anniversary

For former players attending the 50th-anniversary celebration of Geneva DeSales girls' basketball, the current Saints proved to be entertaining hosts.

DeSales rallied from a nine-point half-time deficit to overcome Harley Allendale-Columbia, 58-55, in a home game played Saturday, Jan. 28. Senior forward Stephanie Nearpass had a monster performance, leading the Saints with a career-high 31 points while adding 17 rebounds as her team evened its season record at 7-7.

Adding to the festivities was a ceremony for past girls' basketball athletes at DeSales, which began its program in 1945. These alumni were honored between the junior varsity and varsity contests. To make the day perfect for DeSales players and fans, the JVs also defeated H-A-C, by a 48-33 count.

More sports highlights

Although Catholic high schools in the diocese faced a limited schedule due to exam week, several basketball teams still came up with wins.

In girls' hoops, Jenny Werner (13 points), Meg Reynders (11) and Fran Iacovangelo (10) led Aquinas Institute (6-8) to a 46-39 win over Churchville-Chili in the Victor Tournament's consolation round on Jan. 28.

Our Lady of Mercy (13-1) and Bishop Kearney (11-2) kept going strong with one victory each. Mercy got 27 points from Gina Montesano and 22 from Kelly O'Neill in a 65-45 triumph at Brockport on Jan. 27; and BK won 73-70 at Wilson Magnet in double overtime on Jan. 27 behind career-best point productions from Shannon Rene (26 points) and Shannon Hogan (23).

The Bishop Kearney boys (14-1) defeated host Mynderse Academy, 67-58, on Jan. 27 behind 18 points from Adam Randall and 15 from Kevin Goode.

McQuaid Jesuit's boys (10-6) dominated visiting Aquinas Institute, 69-39, on Jan. 27 as Chris Fox scored 16 points and Ben Wandtke added 13. AQ (2-13) was led by 17 points from Pete Reynders and 12 from Jay Wegman.

In wrestling, McQuaid's Adam Lehmann (167 pounds) and Jason DiCesare (250) recorded second-place finishes as the Knights ended up sixth among 21 teams in the Watkins Glen Invitational held Jan. 27-28. Elmira Notre Dame also competed at Watkins Glen, finishing 14th. Kevin Wilson (145) was ND's high finisher, placing second.

Two Aquinas athletes had notable performances last week: Jeff Gontarek won the shot put during a Rochester Winter League indoor track meet on Jan. 29 at Hobart College; and Liz Rinaldi — who competes on the Little Irish boys' swim team — set a new girls' school record (5 minutes, 38.93 seconds) in the 500-yard freestyle during AQ's 59-42 loss at Hilton on Jan. 26.

— Mike Latona

Raffle tickets available

PITTSFORD — Our Lady of Mercy High School's sports booster club will conduct its annual Reverse Draw Raffle and Dinner on Friday, Feb. 3, at Oak Hill Country Club.

A total of \$6,200 in prizes, including a grand prize of \$4,000, will be awarded. Raffle tickets are \$100 each, with a limit of 180 tickets being sold. Additional dinner tickets are available at \$25 each.

For further details, call Don Neill at 716/334-8859 or Mercy High School at 288-7120.