

Canton earns 2nd straight title

By C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

All those early morning workouts in the heat of summer paid dividends for Ted Docks on a cold night in the dead of winter.

Docks beat up when his team needed him most, draining three straight three-pointers in a one-minute span to obliterate a 13-point deficit and spark his team to a 65-58 upset victory over Westland John Glenn in the Western Lakes Activities Association Tournament final Friday at Plymouth Salem.

Docks, who rose early last summer to practice shooting three-pointers from NBA range, scored 12 of his game-high 25 points in the pivotal fourth quarter. No other Chief reached double figures.

Next highest were Ron Hunter and Rob Johnson with eight apiece. Albert Johnson topped the Rockets with 20 points. Guy Rucker had 11 points, 11 rebounds and five blocks, and Terrell Tigner scored nine.

Canton ends its regular season with a 16-4 regular-season record; the WLA-A tournament title was its second straight. Glenn is 16-3. For more than three quarters, it seemed Docks and his Plymouth Canton teammates struggled to

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find a way to knock off Glenn, the WLA-A's regular-season champions and winners of 11-straight games.

Then in the final quarter, the Chiefs discovered they had the formula with them all along. Their coach, Dan Young, kept telling his team to "quit worrying and just play."

The message sunk in. The defense kept after the Rockets, who committed six turnovers in the final six minutes of the game — half of them unforced errors. By the quarter's midpoint, Canton had trimmed a 52-39 deficit (with 6 1/2 minutes left) to 52-47.

But then the Chiefs seemed to stall again, as their other comeback efforts had earlier in the game. That's when Docks took control.

"Someone had to step up," said the 5-foot-10 senior guard who's already committed to play at Morehead State (in Morehead, Ky.). "I'm the leader on this team. So I did it."

No arguing that. In an offensive flurry that lasted a minute, Docks nailed back-to-back-to-back

triples — the third three-pointer tying the game at 56.

For all intents and purposes, the Rockets were through. With the pressure on, they failed to score for a 2-41 span. Their only points in the last 2:44 came on a meaningless layup by Savon Hubbard with three seconds to play.

Canton's relentless defense took its toll, certainly. "I told them to just make these guys work," said Young. "Make it hard on them."

"They were just not going to lose."

The effort against the 6-11 Rucker proved that. Brian Somalicki (6-5), Matt Ammons (6-4), Brandon Hartke (6-4) and even Hunter (6-3) took turns checking him in Canton's man-to-man defense. They did their job: Rucker managed just three baskets — none in the second half.

"Guy had a bad night," conceded Glenn coach Mike Schuette. "We didn't do a good job getting the ball to him and he didn't do a great job coming out to get the ball."

Until Canton's last-quarter rally, Schuette's 2-1-2 zone defense seemed a perfect choice. The Chiefs could not get anything going offensively; it moved quick-

ly on the perimeter and had Rucker clogging the middle, altering nearly every shot in the paint. Glenn closed the first quarter with a 10-11 lead, then started the second period with a 13-2 run, making it 28-13 with four minutes left. John Albrecht's triple in the final seconds gave the Rockets a 37-25 halftime advantage.

Their lead was still 12 until a 3/4-minute scoreless stretch midway through the third quarter allowed Canton to narrow the gap to six. Still, Glenn had a 47-39 cushion going into the final period; two free throws by Hubbard followed by a Tigner triple pushed it to 13 with 6:38 remaining in the game.

That's when the Canton comeback started. Johnson scored a pair of baskets, with Hartke getting a third. And then Docks found his range over the Glenn defense; he ended up hitting 4-of-8 three-pointers in the game.

"I'm not going to second-guess anything I did," Schuette said of the defense. "That's like saying we let them win, and we didn't. They just hit their shots."

Also, the Chiefs played far better when it counted most — in the stretch run.

Hawks take 3-game win streak into district

So maybe it hasn't been the best of years for the Farmington Hills Harrison basketball team, but the Hawks are champions in one regard.

Harrison won the round-robin playoffs between teams that failed to qualify for the Western Lakes Activities Association championship tournament.

The Hawks completed a three-game sweep Thursday with a 60-48 victory over host Livonia Franklin, averaging a 45-44 loss in the regular season.

Junior forward Alfonso Porter and senior forward Jeremy White scored 16 points apiece to lead Harrison (6-14).

The Hawks are idle until Wednesday when they play West Bloomfield in the district tournament at Bloomfield Hills LaSalle.

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13) with 14 points. Sophomore center Matt Bauman contributed 11, and senior guard Chad Gliza had nine points and five steals.

The Patriots, who trailed 30-17 at intermission and 44-25 after three quarters, pulled within seven in the final period but couldn't get any closer.

MUMFORD 61, REDFORD 57: Darian McClure's two free throws with 17 seconds left enabled Detroit Mumford (12-6) to gain a non-league triumph Wednesday at Redford Catholic Central (9-9).

McClure finished with a game-high 23 points. Charles Hickman added 18. Senior Mike Ridley scored 19 to pace CC. His three-pointer with 25 seconds left pulled the Shamrocks to within two, 50-57.

Mike McDonald contributed 18. The game also marked the return of

junior point-guard Justin Hoener, who saw action in the fourth quarter. Hoener is recovering from a broken leg suffered on Dec. 23.

DOUGLASS 78, CLARENCEVILLE 69: Detroit Frederick Douglass, behind Demon Williams' 21 points Thursday, downed host Livonia Clarenceville (7-12) in a non-leaguer.

Senior guard Steve Parks scored nine in his team-high 21 points in the fourth quarter for Clarenceville, which trailed 37-41 after three periods.

Senior center Mark Berry added 10 points and 15 rebounds. He scored eight in the final quarter as the Trojans outscored Douglass 23-21.

Senior guard Bill Lyons and junior guard Joe Hendership chipped in with 12 and 10, respectively.

WESTERN 59, CHURCHILL 50: Paul Whiting poured in 21 points and grabbed 11 rebounds Thursday to propel host Walled Lake Western (5-15) past Livonia Churchill (8-12) in a battle for fifth place in the Western Lakes Activities Association playoffs.

The Warriors held off Churchill by hitting 11 of 19 free throws in the final quarter.

Ron Hatfield and Matt Hughes scored 12 and 11, respectively, for the Chargers.

NORTHVILLE 76, STEVENSON 72 (OT): The Mustangs sewed up seventh place in the WLA-A playoffs Thursday by outscoring Livonia Stevenson 8-4 in overtime.

Both teams finish the regular season 12-8 overall. Anthony DeBenedit led Northville and all scorers with 23 points.

Three other Mustangs scored in double figures — Mark Sand (12), Ben Snotak (12) and Ariel Kersey (11). Junior center Jim Balow paced Stevenson with 14, while Len DeLoet and Giovanni, the Spartans' leading scorer, fouled out early in the fourth quarter.

Stevenson trailed 45-27 at intermission, but rallied in the second half and sent it into OT when Ed Saumalainen, a recent call-up from the JV squad, drilled a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

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STATE TOURNAMENT BOYS BASKETBALL DISTRICT TOURNAMENT DRAWINGS	
CLASS A	
IN RESPONSE CATHOLIC CENTRAL	
Monday, March 6: (A) Southfield vs. (B) Detroit Redford, 8 p.m.; (C) Detroit Henry Ford vs. (D) Redford Catholic Central, 8 p.m.	Friday, March 10: (A) Plymouth Union vs. Livonia Stevenson, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, March 7: (A) Westland John Glenn vs. CD senior, 7 p.m.	Friday, March 10: Livonia Churchill vs. A.B. senior, 7 p.m.; Plymouth Salem vs. CD senior, 8:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 15: Championship final, 7:30 p.m. (winner advances to the Southland regional semifinals vs. Detroit Mumford district champion)	Friday, March 15: Championship final, 7:30 p.m. (winner advances to the Jackson regional semifinals vs. Monroe district champion)
CLASS B	
IN RESPONSE CATHOLIC CENTRAL	
Monday, March 6: (A) Livonia Franklin vs. (B) Plymouth Salem, 7 p.m.; (C) Westland John Glenn vs. CD senior, 8:30 p.m.	Friday, March 10: Livonia Churchill vs. A.B. senior, 7 p.m.; Plymouth Salem vs. CD senior, 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday, March 7: (A) Livonia Franklin vs. CD senior, 7 p.m.	Friday, March 15: Championship final, 7:30 p.m. (winner advances to the Jackson regional semifinals vs. Monroe district champion)
Wednesday, March 15: Championship final, 7:30 p.m. (winner advances to the Jackson regional semifinals vs. Monroe district champion)	
CLASS C	
IN RESPONSE CATHOLIC CENTRAL	
Monday, March 6: (A) Livonia Franklin vs. (B) Plymouth Salem, 7 p.m.; (C) Westland John Glenn vs. CD senior, 8:30 p.m.	Friday, March 10: Livonia Churchill vs. A.B. senior, 7 p.m.; Plymouth Salem vs. CD senior, 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday, March 7: (A) Livonia Franklin vs. CD senior, 7 p.m.	Friday, March 15: Championship final, 7:30 p.m. (winner advances to the Jackson regional semifinals vs. Monroe district champion)
Wednesday, March 15: Championship final, 7:30 p.m. (winner advances to the Jackson regional semifinals vs. Monroe district champion)	
CLASS D	
IN RESPONSE CATHOLIC CENTRAL	
Monday, March 6: (A) Livonia Franklin vs. (B) Plymouth Salem, 7 p.m.; (C) Westland John Glenn vs. CD senior, 8:30 p.m.	Friday, March 10: Livonia Churchill vs. A.B. senior, 7 p.m.; Plymouth Salem vs. CD senior, 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday, March 7: (A) Livonia Franklin vs. CD senior, 7 p.m.	Friday, March 15: Championship final, 7:30 p.m. (winner advances to the Jackson regional semifinals vs. Monroe district champion)
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Madonna fires coach

Two years was long enough, apparently, to convince Madonna University athletic director Ray Summers that the direction men's basketball coach Bill Sharpe was taking the team was the wrong one.

On Thursday — two days after the Fighting Crusaders concluded their season with a loss to Brescia College in the opening round of the NAIA Great Lakes Region Independent Tournament — Summers gave Sharpe the option of resigning or being fired.

Sharpe chose the latter. He bows out with an 8-55 overall record — a poor showing by any standard. However, both Sharpe and Summers felt the team progressed during the last half of the season, going 5-12 since Jan. 1.

"We're looking in a new direction," said Summers. "We're looking for someone with head coaching experience."

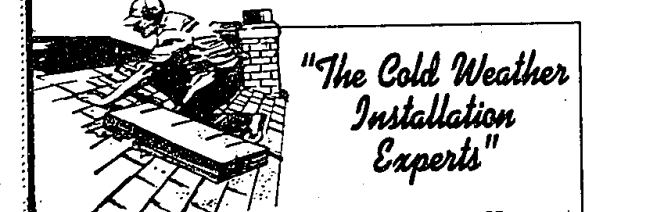
Apparently, Summers is convinced someone else will better inspire Sharpe's team, which has one junior and no seniors on the roster.

Sharpe didn't agree, insisting he didn't get the time promised to develop the team. He was also convinced the team's progress had little to do with his dismissal, that, instead, conflicts with other staff members caused it.

He is just as sure his team will succeed. "I believe that even if Bobo the Clown comes in to coach next year, this team will win," he said.

Summers plans to conclude his search for a new coach by the end of April.

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Crusaders will try to duplicate '94 success

By C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

It would be difficult for Jerry Abraham to complain after last season's extended coach's "honeymoon."

Thrust into a situation he wasn't sure he wanted a year ago, Abraham, Madonna University's volleyball coach and Taylor Center's softball coach, agreed to coach Madonna's softball team when Dave Racer abruptly resigned.

What a memorable performance it was, if only involved. But as the sports creed reads: *That was last year.*

And this year, the challenge will be far greater. Abraham is back, but few others from last season's team are. The team needs to be almost entirely rebuilt.

A few players with substantial experience return, but the bottom line is that only one starter is back at the position she played last season.

"The nucleus of a good, solid team is here," said Abraham. "But we're a very young team — there's no other way to put it."

How young? Start with 10 freshmen and add three sophomores and four juniors. With nary a senior on the squad.

Gone are six starters who were first or second team all-district last season: Jill Burt (third base), Mandi Armstrong (second base), Holly Jondro (left field) and Dawn Terral (pitcher) were all first team picks; Ronni Ronco (catcher) and Mo Paulin (first base) were second team choices.

The only starter returning to her same position is junior shortstop Michelle Birmehler (from

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Redford Thurston). Birmehler was instrumental in Madonna's success last season, hitting .393 with 10 doubles, two triples, three home runs, 24 runs batted in and 11 stolen bases.

After that, the questions begin. Sophomore Jenny Casch (.378, 12 doubles, 36 RBI) moves from right field to third base. Sophomore Jeanie Baxter (.397, six doubles, five triples, one homer, 21 RBI), from Redford St. Agatha, goes from part-time designated hitter to right field.

Sophomore Rebecca Bloch (Livonia Franklin) and junior designated hitter Jennifer Pinter (.381, eight doubles, five triples, two homers, a team-best 43 RBI) will split time at catcher.

That fills some of the holes. Lynda Welchel, a junior, returns to fill the biggest: She replaces 31-game winner Terral on the mound. There's no doubting Welchel is capable; she was 8-1 last season with a 1.10 earned run average. And she batted .501 as a part-time center fielder.

One of her wins came in the NAIA Tournament. She teased 3 1/3 innings of scoreless relief as Madonna beat Columbia 8-6.

Still, Abraham is going to have to depend upon freshmen to do it. "We have a nice freshman class coming in," he said. "But this is a young team playing a great schedule. We're going to be relying on our juniors for leadership."

Among the freshmen who may make an immediate impact is Erin Coombes, tentatively slated to start in center field. "She's got an outstanding arm and great speed," said Abraham. "She could be our leadoff hitter."

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