

# Rice holds off pesky Dondero, reaches final

By DENNIS O'CONNOR

It wasn't as easy as the experts expected. Birmingham Brother Rice reached the regional basketball final, but not before stunning countless comeback efforts from spunky Royal Oak Dondero.

The Warriors' 53-39 victory over the Cinderella Oaks last night at Southfield-Lathrup advances the Birmingham squad to the regional finals against Southfield. Rice will take a 19-5 record into the 7:30 p.m. Friday night championship against the Blue Jays, also 19-5 and co-

champions of the Southeastern Michigan Association.

Rice, winners of the Birmingham Seaholm District, stayed ahead of Dondero most of the game, but had to stop numerous comeback attempts by the Oaks, who weren't even expected to get out of district competition.

The Warriors featured a balanced scoring attack led by Judd Hart's 14 points. Brian Brennan added 12 points, Rob Manilla added nine and 6-foot-7 center Paul Jokisch tipped in with seven. John Newton, James Lama and Fred Crawford held Dondero with 10, nine and eight points, respectively.

KERWIN SMITH'S 16-foot jumper at the buzzer gave the Warriors a 12-10 first-quarter lead, a lead they never relinquished. Rice held the ball for the final 4½ minutes of play, leading 42-33, helping to preserve the victory.

The Warriors led 28-19 at the half, taking advantage of Dondero's cold shooting and numerous turnovers. The Oaks hit only one of seven shots in the second quarter and committed seven turnovers. Dondero hit seven of eight free-throws, however, to stay within striking range.

The Warriors opened a five-point lead early in the second quarter, but the Oaks came within two points three

times, and had three chances to tie the game midway in the quarter.

Rice finally took control of the game with less than four minutes left in the half, breaking open the 19-17 game with a seven-point spurt that put the Catholic League runner-up ahead 26-17.

Rice opened what seemed to be a comfortable 35-20 lead midway in the third quarter, scoring seven of the first eight second-half points. But Dondero, which finished 15-9 overall, fought back to within six points, 36-30, and held the momentum as the quarter ended.

## North swimmers win 8th straight league title



North's Kirk Knock grabbed a fifth in the 100-yard butterfly in the NSL meet and was first in the 100-yard backstroke. (Staff photo by Bill Bresler)

By C.J. RISAK

North Farmington splashed to its eighth straight Northwest Suburban League championship by beating Redford Thurston last weekend at Redford Union.

North finished with 249 team points to 221 for Thurston. Livonia Franklin was third, Westland John Glenn fourth, Garden City East fifth and Redford Union sixth.

John Glenn led all squads with three first-place finishes. Each of the other teams had two wins except for Redford Union, which failed to win an event.

"It was one of the best conference meets from the standpoint of being close," North coach Pat Duthie said. "Last year we won by 109 points."

But the league championship still belonged to North. In the eight individual swimming events, five new league records were set.

The Raiders' Jim Gasser had the narrowest victory of the meet. Gasser touched out Redford Union's Jon Morgan by two-hundredths of a second, setting a new league record in 1:03.166. Morgan was clocked in 1:03.186.

Two swimmers were double winners in individual events during the meet. Glenn's Greg Dawkins was first in both the 10 and 200-yard freestyles, both in league records (49.1 and 1:47.8, respectively).

THURSTON'S DAVE Miller took the 200-yard individual medley in meet record time (2:04.7) and grabbed the top spot in the 500-yard free (5:01.0).

North's other winner was Kirk Knock in the 100-yard backstroke (58.8), a time which bettered his previous best by over three seconds.

Other winners included Tim Weber of Franklin in the 50-yard free (22.8), Don Perry of East in the 100-yard butterfly (54.5) in meet record time and Bob Freshorn of Glenn in diving (370.60). East won the 200-yard medley relay (1:46.5) and Franklin was first in

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the 400-yard free relay (3:27.6).

Two events that North didn't win were what Duthie called the key events in the meet. In diving, the Raiders' Scott Whetter finished second (360.80), with the Raiders' Bob Hood fifth, Leigh Haugen seventh and John McCann

10th.

"From then on, we never trailed," Duthie said.

In the 500-yard free, North's Brian Manderfield was third (5:11.0) Gerry

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## Rudel splashes to 2 firsts but Hawks finish last in WSL

By C.J. RISAK

breaststroke (1:01.374).

Plymouth Canton swam to six first-place finishes, including both relays, in dominating the Western Six League championship meet last weekend at Farmington Harrison's pool.

Canton finished with 386 team points, well ahead of second place Northville (277). Livonia Churchill was fourth (210) and Harrison was fourth (177). Waterford Mott and Walke Lake Western did not have swim teams and did not compete.

Three swimmers dominated the individual events, each winning twice. John Rudel of Harrison won both the 200-yard freestyle (1:45.862) and 500-yard freestyle (4:49.937).

The other two double winners in individual events were from Canton. Paul Petersen was first in the 100-yard butterfly (53.107) and 100-yard

Ron Hurley captured the 200-yard individual medley (2:05.872) and 100-yard free (50.231).

Northville finished first in two individual events, as Dave McDonald won the 50-yard free (22.944) and Paul Cooper helped the Mustangs dominate the diving with a first-place finish (341.35 points). Northville took first, second, fourth and sixth in the event.

Churchill's only first came in the 100-yard backstroke, as Mike Stetz edged Harrison's Al Babcock by less than three-tenths of a second in the closest finish of the meet. Stetz was clocked at 58.955, Babcock in 59.251.

PETERSON AND Hurley teamed with Jeff Seippel and Mike Sherwood to enable Canton to win the 200-yard

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## North gymnasts ousted

By MARTY BUDNER

Troy High School's young gymnastics team used its superior depth to win the Region 3 gymnastics championship over the weekend at Troy Athens High School.

The Colts placed three individuals among the top 10 in all-around competition to win the 25-team district with 98 points. Royal Oak Dondero, which handed Troy its only dual-meet loss of the season, was second with 97.20 points.

Defending regional team champ North Farmington was third (96.25), followed by Bloomfield Hills Andover, Bloomfield Hills Labser and the host team Athens.

Other competing schools included Walled Lake Central (eighth), Birmingham Seaholm (ninth), Farmington Harrison (10th), Rochester (11th), Southfield-Lathrup (12th) and Rochester Adams (13th). Birmingham Groves, Southfield and Farmington also participated.

The top two teams from each region

across Michigan qualify for the state championship, which will be contested this weekend at East Kentwood High School in Grand Rapids. All-around competition begins 4 p.m. tomorrow, and overall team competition will conclude Saturday afternoon.

Other state qualifiers included the top eight individual performers in each of the four events (vault, uneven parallel bars, balance beam and floor exercises), and the top six all-around placers.

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## Lack of support is reason

## Coach leaving OCC?

By C.J. RISAK

Commitment — that's the key to the future of basketball at Oakland Community College, according to coach Tom McPhillips.

But OCC's program, which just seemed to be getting off the ground after the construction of a sports complex was completed last fall, is in danger of losing what may be its best asset — its coach.

McPhillips, who started at OCC 10 years ago and has been the college's only basketball coach for the last eight, is "98 percent certain" he won't be back next year.

The reason is simple. "I'm not interested in building a program and then watching it go backwards," McPhillips said.

The commitment that is lacking is not from the players or students or coaches — it's from OCC administrators who have failed to adequately back the basketball program, he says. Much of it has to do with the little things that make a program successful — transportation to games, food money while on the road.

But there are other things as well, such as scholarships. OCC, according to McPhillips, gives "less scholarship help than any [school] in the league."

OCC's league is the Eastern Conference of the Michigan Community College Athletic Association. For many coaches, McPhillips reasons for leaving could be translated into excuses for losing.

THEY AREN'T. McPhillips, in his eight seasons as OCC's basketball coach, has won five conference championships.

When McPhillips talks about winning and losing, however, he doesn't talk about games. He talks about what a community college basketball program does for the athlete.

"We play man-to-man defense because that's what they'll play at a major college," he explained. "We could have won a lot more games this year by playing zone. But our grads go on to a major college and can contribute."

Several of his graduates have made the successful transition from community college to major university. Alan Mann was from Detroit's east side and had more problems off the court than McPhillips cared to remember.

Last week, Mann captained the Murray State team that made it to the NCAA tournament.

Walker D. Russell also played for McPhillips. Russell, whose brother, Campy, plays pro ball for the Cleveland Cavaliers, was headed for Michigan State but couldn't make the grades. Enter OCC.

RUSSELL STARRED for the Raiders last season and had his choice of major universities this year. Unable to make up his mind, he was ready to re-enroll at OCC on Aug. 20 when he suddenly decided to attend the University of Houston.

The last-minute decision wreaked havoc on McPhillips' recruiting program. Several prospects went elsewhere because they thought they would be playing behind Russell.

Russell's decision to go to Houston didn't work out, either. He dropped out after Christmas break, partly because he was being played at small forward instead of guard, his more natural position, and defense wasn't being stressed. His decision to attend another university cost Russell a year, under NCAA statutes. Unable to play until next January, he talked with McPhillips most of the Christmas break before deciding on Western Michigan. Western's top guards graduate this year, leaving an opening for Russell.

Those are two examples McPhillips cites in stressing the importance of the two-year program at a community college. It can be used as a stepping stone for players to get to a major university.

Often lack of grades isn't the reason a player doesn't sign with a big school; his skills may need polishing, something he won't get sitting on the bench at a four-year school.

"There's a world of difference between a freshman and a sophomore," McPhillips said. "They can learn a lot more here in game experience."

McPHILLIPS' EXPERIENCE includes a four-year stint at Alpena Community College (1966-69), where he took over for Jim Dutcher, now coaching at the University of Minnesota.

Before that, he coached at Cheboygan High School and at Hillman High School, a Class D school McPhillips remembers "hadn't won a football game



McPhillips: The "real joy of watching a kid turn his life around" is what he'll miss about coaching if he decides not to return to OCC. (Staff photo by Randy Bors)

in two years and never had a winning basketball team.

"In my first year there, they won their league in both sports, including the district championship in basketball." He was coach for both teams, and one of his secrets was arranging practices around worktime his players spent on their farms.

Now, it seems that McPhillips' coaching career may be over.

"Like everything else, you got to look at what it [athletics] does for the university. If you're going to have athletics, you're going to have to do it right."

Sue Balcon, OCC's first-year sports information director, predicts the basketball program will crumble if McPhillips leaves. But the director won't blame the coach for the decision.

Balcon also was outspoken in his criticism of the administrators' lack of support.

"The guy in charge of this campus has never even seen a basketball game in this brand new complex," Balcon said.

Balcon is hoping that McPhillips will change his mind, that perhaps he will miss the game too much.

And what part of the game would he miss the most?

"The real joy you get in watching a kid turn his life around," is the coach's answer.

Just ask Alan Mann or Walker Russell.

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