

The coach with the winning edge

He's been called a fierce competitor by opposing coaches who hold him in no grudge. Those that do claim he recruits his talent and the four-letter words they use to describe him would make a Big Time wrestler blush.

But no one would deny that Bob Shoemaker is a winner.

"What do you call that?" Shoemaker screamed through the glass partitions separating him from his adversary, in this case the referees that had just officiated his team's game.

"It's easy for you — you can go home and have your beer," he yelled red-faced at the two men as they took off their striped shirts and changed into civilian clothing.

"But what do I tell my kids?" His rage was nearing a peak and he needed nothing to fuel it. But one of his assistants supplied it anyway, reminding Shoemaker that the officials had arrived 10 minutes late.

"Yeah — 10 minutes late!" he continued in lambasting the two men who tried to ignore the dozen or so people who were staring at them.

Shoemaker's team, Orchard Lake St. Mary's, had just lost in overtime to Center Line St. Clement, 57-51, in a Class C district final. And if there is one thing that galls Shoemaker, it's losing.

IT'S SOMETHING he has never had to get used to. In seven years, his teams have compiled a 165-21 record, or a 91.0 win percentage.

Catholic high schools are often labeled as "recruiters," since their talent comes from all over the metro Detroit area. Tim André, for example, would have attended Farmington Notre School, but he opted for Birmingham Brother Rice. He now plays for Notre Dame University.

There are several other examples and more will surface in the future with claims of recruiting. But whatever or however he's done it, Shoemaker has been successful.

It hasn't just been at scenic St. Mary's, the prep boarding school located on the shores of Orchard Lake. Shoemaker is in his third season at OLSM.

In 1976-77 he coached Detroit St. Andrew to the Catholic C-D League championship. He switched to OLSM the following year and took the Eagles to a Catholic C-D League title and all the way to a Class D state championship. The team enjoyed a perfect 27-0 record that year.

Last year the team lost three times but were again league champs. In comparison to his last few seasons, this year was a disappointment to Shoemaker — the team won 17 straight games but lost in the league finals to Wyandotte Mt. Carmel, then were beaten in the district finals.

PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS partly accounted for Shoemaker's anger with the referees. And isn't it true that when a team loses, the coach blames the referees?

It is in most cases. But Shoemaker never had before (he didn't lose much before, either). And some of the statistics on the game tended to bear out his point.

St. Clement shot 24 free throws to seven for OLSM (the Eagles had five more field goals in the game). OLSM was the smaller team, relying more on finesse. St. Clement was bigger and more physical.

And OLSM led most of the game, leading one to think St. Clement might be the team to collect the fouls in an effort to get back in the game.

It didn't turn out that way — OLSM lost, for the fourth time in 22 games. They played without their starting center and forward. Only one of their players had previous tournament experience. And there wasn't a senior on the team.

"Why?" "I demand a lot out of them, on and off the court," Shoemaker explained. "They're expected to be leaders. I guess some of them can't take it, they end up quitting the team or going to other schools."

He seems unafraid of any challenge. When area coaches gathered earlier this week to select the Observer & Eccentric All-Area basketball team, Shoemaker asked if any of the schools had an open date on next year's schedule to play OLSM.

SOME MIGHT HAVE thought he wasn't serious. Class A powerhouses like Birmingham Brother Rice and Bloomfield Hills Lahser would certainly bury a Class C school like OLSM.

But Shoemaker got no takers. So he instead busied himself between votes by passing out pamphlets on "Basketball Unlimited," a summer camp for young players which Tim Donke, the OLSM college coach, Nick Conti, the Lahser coach and Shoemaker will run.

"Pass these out to any kids that might be interested," Shoemaker said as he distributed them to the coaches. "This will give me a chance to recruit some of your players this summer," he quipped.



C.J.'s Side

3 Raiders are All-NSL

Three members of North Farmington's North Farmington League (NSL) championship basketball squad have been chosen to the All-Conference team by the league's coaches.

Rex Baker, Brian Bowditch and Rich Nutter were all named to the first team. Joining them were Jerry Burk of Redford Union and Jon McCarthy and Jeff Weber of Livonia Franklin.

Baker, a 6-1, 170-pound senior forward, led the Raiders in field goal percentage (55 percent), assists (4.4 per game) and rebounds (8.4). He averaged 13.5 points a game.

Bowditch is a 6-6, 180-pound senior center who led North in scoring with a 13.9 point average. He connected on 50 percent of his floor shots, collected 8.3 rebounds a contest, made 74 percent of his free throws and had two blocked shots a game.

Nutter was the third Raider player to average in double figures in the scoring column with 11 points per game. He hit on 45 percent of his floor opportunities and 75 percent of his free throws.

He is a 6-foot, 195 pound senior guard. Matt Rued, a 6-1, 155-pound forward, made the NSL second team for North.

The Inter-Lakes League also announced the selection of its All-Conference team, with Tom Phelps of Walled Lake Central and Jerry Liphart of Farmington picked to the first squad.

Other members of the ILL first team were Livonia Stevenson's Dave Hall, Milford Lakeland's Gary Gleason and Waterford's John Coe.

Phelps, a 6-3 senior forward, averaged 17.8 points per game in league competition (16.7 in all games) and nearly eight rebounds. He connected on 46 percent of his floor shots.

Liphart, a 6-2 junior forward, averaged 18.5 points per game in league competition. He connected on 49 percent of his field goal attempts and 81 percent of his free throws.

Central's Erin Hill, a 6-2 junior forward, was picked to the second team and the Vikings' Rick Wheeler and Charlie Ginstler received honorable mention.

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