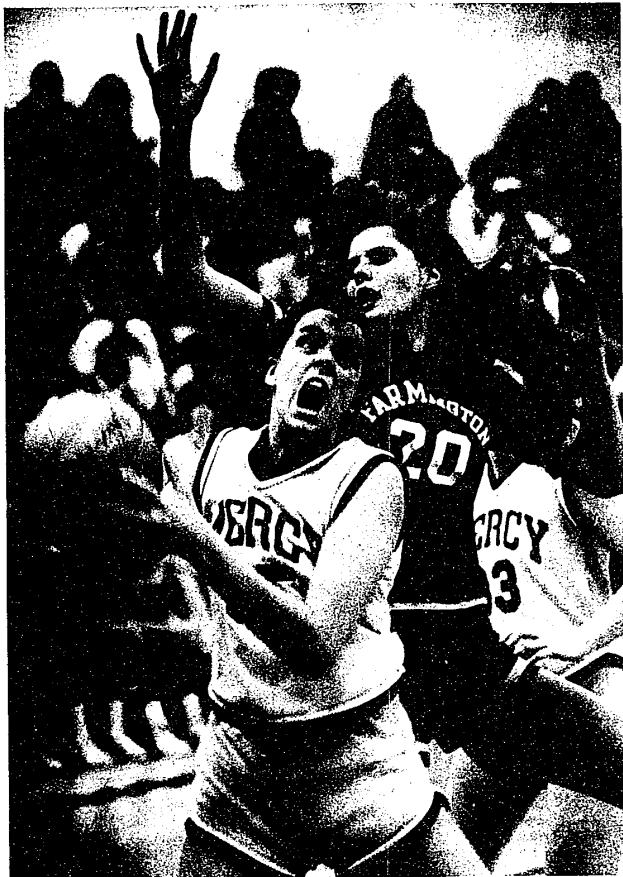


Clutch free throw saves Lady of Mercy



By TOM BAER

"Districts aren't for the birds," read a banner held by two Our Lady of Mercy cheerleaders before their team was to play the Farmington Falcons last Monday in the finals of the Class A girls' basketball district at Northville High.

The banner didn't lie — not this year, anyway. Mercy, using a clutch free throw by Suzanne Dietz, grounded the Falcons, 47-46, to stay alive in the state tournament.

But Farmington, a much better basketball team than its 9-10 regular-season record would indicate, came as close as it is possible to come to beating backyard-rival Mercy, a legitimate contender for the Class A championship.

The game — a real thriller from the opening tip to the final buzzer — wasn't settled until Dietz canned the first of two free throws awarded her after referee Harold Monke ruled that she was fouled in the act of shooting just as time ran out.

That free throw, the 20th point of the night for the 5-foot-11 senior forward, broke a 46-45 tie. She missed the meaningless second loss as excited fans spilled onto the floor.

"Well, we did it the hard way," said Mercy coach Larry Baker, whose team climbed to 22-1 and earned a place in the Class A regional at Birmingham Groves next week.

"This is our fifth game in eight days, and it's beginning to show. We're just a tad weary. But when we had to have it, we came through. What a great finish."

MERCY is known for its devastating press, and it used that tactic to good advantage against Farmington. Karen Rashid, a 5-6 senior, came off the bench to lead the press, stealing the ball six times and making a layup to pull the Marlins into a 44-41 tie with 2:42 left.

"She was just more aggressive than the other kid," Baker said. "She always went for the ball — and came up with it most of the time."

Mercy needed all the hustle it could muster. The Marlins held a 28-25 half-time lead, but Farmington rallied to dominate the third quarter, establishing a nine-point lead (39-30) at one point.

"It looked pretty grim," Baker said. "I called a time out and I said, 'Look, there's a lot of time left, but we have to do it now.' They had a nine-point lead and the momentum was going their way."

Farmington's fortunes appeared to take a tumble early in the game when starting forward Lisa Borchanian injured her right knee and was through for the night. However, Linda Borchanian, Lisa's twin sister, filled in and "played an excellent game" in the words of Falcon coach Bob Lekovich.

Meg Mallon scored 10 points for Mercy, and teammate Denise Basford pulled down 10 rebounds and dealt out 11 assists.

Stacy Green, Farmington's 6-3 junior center, dominated play under the basket with 14 rebounds and nine blocked shots to go with her team-high 11 points. Kelley Wallace and Sue Caruthers each had nine points for Farmington, which finished at 11-11.

Mercy will play the winner of the Groves district — probably Bloomfield Hills Lahser — at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 2.

IN THE CLASS B district at Farmington Harrison, Livonia Ladywood used 25 points from Leslie Nedwood to batter Harrison, 73-20, last Monday. Harrison, coached by Mike Hickey, finished with a 3-17 record.

Ronna Greenberg added 10 points to Ladywood's total. Sue Ferguson led Harrison with four points, and teammates Andrea Parry, Lydia Glyvidis and Danyle Churchill each had three.

Farmington Lutheran High Northwest opened Class D district play at Southfield Christian with a 33-14 win over Southfield Alex Manogian. Donna Roberts netted 14 points for Northwest, and Laura Geheb added 10.

In the district final last Saturday, Southfield Christian sidelined Northwest, 35-30. Northwest finished with a 3-16 mark.

District boxscores

MERCY 47 — FARMINGTON 46

OUR LADY OF MERCY (47) — Mary Ellen Cox 2, 1-4; Suzanne Dietz 1, 0-0; Kelly Fortescue 1, 0-0; Denise Basford 3, 0-0; Meg Mallon 5, 0-0; Karen Shook 0, 0-0; Carolyn Burt 1, 0-0; 2; Kathy Landry 0, 0-0; Karen Rashid 1, 0-1; 2; TOTALS 25, 13, 47.

FARMINGTON HIGH (46) — Chris Looser 3, 2-2; Kelley Wallace 3, 0-0; Sue Caruthers 1, 7-8; Lisa Borchanian 0, 0-0; Stacy Green 5, 1-2; 11; Linda Borchanian 4, 0-1; Sue Bergeron 0, 0-0; Carol Leonard 0, 1-2; 1; Mary Ann Robinson 0, 0-0; TOTALS 16, 14-20, 46.

TOTAL FOULS — Mercy 17, Farmington 13.

FOULED OUT: Cox (Mercy)

MERCY 10 18 7 12 — 47

FARMINGTON 6 17 14 7 — 46

LADYWOOD 73 — HARRISON 20

LIVONIA LADYWOOD (73) — Ann Lakota 3, 0-2; Meg White 3, 0-2; Ronna Greenberg 6, 0-1; 10; Gret Petrik 4, 0-0; Leslie Nedwood 10, 5-8; 25; Roseanne Oldred 3, 0-1; Colleen Schwann 2, 0-0; 4; Kim Dawson 0, 3-3; 1; Liz Zeller 1, 0-0; Cheryl Horvath 2, 1-2; 3; Chris Armada 1, 0-0; 2; TOTALS 32, 14, 73.

FARMINGTON HARRISON (20) — Sue Solomon 0, 0-0; Andrea Parry 1, 1-2; 3; Lydia Glyvidis 1, 1-4; 3; Lori Wukel 1, 0-0; Sue Ferguson 2, 0-0; Amy Elam 0, 2-3; Danyle Churchill 1, 1-2; 3; Lisa Sabbe 0, 1-2; Jenny Thompson 0, 0-0; Ellen Humphrey 0, 0-0; Pam Fortnaker 0, 0-0; Cheryl Sabbe 0, 1-2; 2; TOTALS 6, 8-15, 20.

TOTAL FOULS — Ladywood 18, Harrison 10.

FOULED OUT: None.

MERCY 20 12 25 16R A R — 73

HARRISON 2 8 2 6 — 20

MERCY 69 — WESTERN 38

OUR LADY OF MERCY (69) — Denise Basford 4, 0-0; Mary Ellen Cox 1, 1-1; Suzanne Dietz 0, 0-0; Kathy Landry 4, 4-6; 12; Kelly Fortescue 2, 0-0; Carolyn Burt 0, 0-0; Meg Mallon 3, 0-0; Karen Shook 2, 2-2; Karen Rashid 0, 0-0; Mary McGarrigle 0, 1-2; Karen Beresh 0, 0-0; Beth Wyda 1, 1-2; 3; Peggy Fitzgerald 0, 0-0; Mimi Brown 0, 0-0; Sara Basford 1, 0-0; 2; TOTALS 29, 12, 69.

WALLED LAKE WESTERN (38) — Tracy Grubb 3, 0-0; Jill Orcutt 0, 1-1; Joyce VanVelzen 2, 1-2; Chris Melina 2, 0-3; Cindy Hart 0, 2-1; Janet Wilson 2, 2-2; Fran Culm 0, 2-2; 7.

Mercy's Kelly Fortescue looks for a shot; Farmington's Chris Looser hopes for a block. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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