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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Farmington Our Lady of Mercy basketball players (from left) Carolyn Burt, Lisa Yezbick and Mimi Bosco savor the moment. Mercy had just upset

Flint Northern to win the state Class A championship.

Is it the water?

Hills has another champ

Farmington Hills is, for much of its 33.4 square miles, a city of split-level ranch houses on unpaved streets in subdivisions carved out of rolling meadows.

It's also the home of a couple of very successful high school sports teams. You could call Farmington Hills the City of Prep Champions — and you'd be right.

No sooner had Farmington Harrison captured the Michigan Class A football championship (the Hawks beat Dearborn Fordson, 17-14, in two overtimes in the Pontiac Silverdome back on Nov. 27, in case anyone's forgotten) than Our Lady of Mercy took to the tournament trail in its specialty — girls' basketball.

And Mercy, an all-girls parochial school located about a mile and a half southeast of Harrison, ended that tournament run last Saturday by ignoring one of Michigan high school sports' Impregnable Truths: No one beats the mighty Vikings of Flint Northern.

Against long odds, Mercy came back from being 19 points down after three quarters to overthrow heavily favored Flint, 61-58, in the state Class A girls' basketball championship game at the University of Detroit's Calihan Hall.

Now, to understand the full import of this accomplishment, it must be made clear that Northern is not an easily-beaten team. Had the talented Vikings protected their huge lead for just eight more minutes, they would have earned a fifth straight Class A title for the school.

"What do they feed those kids in Farmington Hills?" asked an observer two days after the game. "It must be something in the water," answered another with a laugh.

THE LEADER of this aggregation of female upstarts is Larry Baker, a tall, 30ish English teacher who never even



Tom Baer

saw a girls' basketball game until he became Mercy's coach eight seasons ago.

Baker has enjoyed more than his share of success at Mercy. His victories include 154 of the 173 games he's coached, a state championship in 1977, (the year before Northern started its run), runner-up titles in '75 and '76 and six regional crowns.

But he admits there was nothing in his coaching background to prepare him for what happened on Calihan's hardwood last Saturday.

"As far as that fourth quarter goes, I still don't have an explanation for what happened," said Baker from his Plymouth home Sunday night. "Five kids just played their hearts out."

"Nobody knew what to say (after the game). I was walking around in circles. I didn't know what to say to (Northern coach) Dottie (Kukula). . . I could only go over and shake hands."

What happened was that Mercy, relying on the sparkling play of junior Sarah Basford and sophomore Amy DeMatia, outscored Northern, 28-8, in the fourth quarter.

Offensively, the 5-foot-11 DeMatia was having an unexpectedly easy time going inside on Northern for points, and the 5-9 Basford continued her accurate outside shooting.

Defensively, Mercy's full-court press, which hadn't bothered Flint in the first three quarters, finally took hold in the fourth quarter. The befuddled Vikings were pressed into turnover after turnover.

"It had a snowball effect," Baker said. "Once we created a couple of turnovers, Northern got rattled and made more and more."

"There was one sequence where we stole the ball three consecutive times and didn't even score. But the action'd reached a fevered pitch by that time and our defense was totally dominating."

AT ONE POINT during the rally, Baker jumped off his chair and, shouting and waving his arms frantically, egged on the large and noisy Mercy rooting section across the court.

"I've never done that before in my career as a coach," Baker said, "but that crowd has been like a sixth player for us in this tournament. Our kids seemed to be inspired knowing that so many people from the school community were behind them."

"I sensed that enormous swing in momentum in the fourth quarter, and I thought our crowd helped cause it."

Baker called Northern's players "pretty classy" in accepting defeat.

"I talked to some of their players after the game," he said. "They handled it pretty well — no crying fits."

After the game, Baker and a large group of Mercy fans repaired to Larco's, a popular watering hole a few blocks west of the U-D campus.

"We ate and we drank and we made merry," he said. "Then things moved over to the DeMatia's house — appropriately enough — in Northville. We got the video tape over there, and we watched the game a few more times."

"That was really interesting. It gave me a few new insights. For one thing, it showed me that we weren't playing as poorly as I thought we were in the first

Please turn to Page 8

Couple content with careers

This marriage needs no coaching

By Marty Budner
staff writer

JOHN MALONEY admits there is a high divorce rate in the teaching-coaching profession.

Does that mean chances of a divorce in his own family are doubled because his wife is in the same profession?

Not a chance, he says. The Maloneys have been married for nine years and are quite content.

"There is really a high divorce rate in the coaching profession — especially at the higher level," said Maloney, who lives in Beverly Hills with his wife Kris. "Really, it is not uncommon. And, it is something that we both are always concerned about."

"I think what's really helped in our case is that my wife's dad was always on the road (as a pharmacist in Escanaba). She got used to being alone sometimes when she was living at home. She grew up like that and I think that makes it easier on us."

"We're always busy during the seasons,

but we keep August to ourselves," he said. "It is our time, and that is the month for us to do what we want to do."

John is a teacher in the Bloomfield Hills school district who doubles as an assistant basketball coach for the Oakland University men's team. He was previously the head varsity basketball coach at Bloomfield Hills and Over High School.

KRIS IS A teacher and volleyball coach at St. Bede's Catholic School in Southfield. She previously taught and coached the junior varsity basketball team at East Catholic High School in Detroit.

"I stay in a distant corner when I go and watch her matches," said John. "I show up and that lets my wife know that I'm concerned. I do offer suggestions to them if they want it."

Conversely, Kris attended and kept score for her husband while he was coaching at Andover High School. She finds it hard to attend all the college games because of the greater distance involved in traveling.

"We have a very understanding relationship," said Kris, who, at 31, is three days younger than her husband.

"If we didn't have sports it would be a lot different because sports has always been part of our lives. We both do what we want to do. I don't feel it takes up a lot of our time, but, when we do need time together, we take it."

John graduated from Brother Rice High School in 1969. He attended St. Thomas College (St. Paul, Minnesota) where he graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in Social Studies.

Maloney started his coaching career as the freshman boys' basketball coach at Brother Rice in 1973. He left Rice in June of 1977 to go to Andover.

HE STAYED THERE until this fall when he was asked to be an assistant coach at Oakland under head coach Lee Frederick.

Please turn to Page 3



ANN GRIMES/staff photographer

Kris Maloney instructs (from left) Martha Janik, Molly Bosco, Anne Marie Emmons and Emily Synk in volleyball at St. Bede's Elementary School in Southfield.

Municipal bond tax swaps.

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