

# Austin is awesome but few take notice

By Chris McCosky  
staff writer

FOR ABOUT 11 minutes she was almost invisible. West and John Glenn had over shifted its towering zone defense to force North Farmington away from her. Still, she managed to pull down six rebounds in those frustrating 11 minutes.

With 5:38 left in the half, the North girls basketball team trailed 13-6 and was in danger of losing control of the game and its share of the Northwest Suburban League title.

That's when she exploded. She shook free of Glenn's harassing zone and canned a 15-footer from the corner. She promptly stole the ball and outraced everybody to the hoop for the layup. Next time down she canned another jumper from the corner. Then she forced two consecutive Glenn turnovers which led to North baskets.

In less than three minutes, she had brought North back from a seven-point deficit to gain a tie in just Thursday's crucial victory over Glenn.

"She" is the girl they call "Awesome."

AMY AUSTIN is an incredibly shy, studious young woman away from the field of athletic competition. She speaks softly, choosing her words carefully, blushing almost constantly. She is a 3.5 student whose sights are firmly set on a career in medicine.

On the athletic field, be it the softball diamond, the volleyball court or, most especially, the basketball court, Amy Austin is, well...awesome. She is not shy or introverted when a basketball is in her hands. She is aggressive, competitive, a leader.

In the three seasons she has played varsity basketball at North Farmington, the Raiders have gone from an 8-

## people in sports

13 also-ran to the 17-4 NSL champions of a year ago. This season, the Raiders are 14-2, have retained at least a share of their NSL title, and are eyeing the state tournament with more fervor than usual.

Austin possesses a picture perfect jump shot, evidenced in numbers by her 58.6 percent shooting percentage (114-236) and her 17 points per game scoring average in 16 games this season.

SHE IS lightning quick both with and without the ball, evidenced by her team-leading 47 steals and countless forced turnovers. And, according to North head coach Greg Grodzicki, she has a 27-inch vertical jump which enables her to average about 10 rebounds per game.

Check out these stats: During one two-game week this season, Austin scored 41 points, grabbed 25 rebounds and made 13 steals. That's a career for any number of other players.

"Amy is the catalyst on our team," said Grodzicki. "She initiates things. When we need the key rebound or the key steal, she gets it for us."

"I've not seen anybody do what Amy does for 32 straight minutes. There's not been an episode where she hasn't put out for the entire game. And it's not just her scoring. It's her steals, her rebounds — how many people can take the ball off the glass and beat everybody down court for the layup? She does it so often."

Austin's position is the whole court. She jumps center and plays the high

and low posts on offense — that is, when she's not bringing the ball up the court. On defense, she mostly plays underneath to take advantage of her rebounding skills, but, occasionally she will be assigned to shadow the opponent's top scorer. Grodzicki has been singing the praises of his star for two years now, and very few people have listened.

That's the tragedy of Amy Austin.

WITH ALL HER talent, all her statistics, she has been virtually overlooked by college scouts. Post-season accolades have gone to players with less ability. Recognition from the statewide daily newspapers has been nil.

The lack of recognition for Austin has puzzled and hurt Grodzicki.

"It's really incredible. I guess it's our (lack of) exposure that has hurt her. I think we are looked on as playing in a weak league. The (Detroit) News or the (Detroit) Free Press won't come out unless you've got players over 6-foot. Or, unless you've had two or three years of being on top," he said.

Austin partly blames herself.

"I should have started to contact schools earlier in the year," she said.

She said the lack of recognition has been in the back of her mind, but she hadn't really given it much thought.

"NORTH HASN'T had much of a reputation," Austin said. "We are just starting to win. The juniors and the sophomores will get a lot more recognition next year."

Austin, then, has paved the way for

future recognition, but she won't be around to reap the benefits.

"That's about how I feel," she said. Austin may yet get her due. North Farmington will be competing in the same district tournament as defending state champ Our Lady of Mercy.

"If we can win a couple of games in the district and get a shot at Mercy," Austin said, "there will be a lot of colleges there to see Mercy. I think that we can give them a good game. I've talked to a lot of people and they say Mercy's not unbeatable."

THERE ARE ALSO many people in Austin's corner. Grodzicki, for one, is sending out letters and making videotapes of Austin's play available to colleges. So far, the University of Detroit and Michigan State University have been in touch.

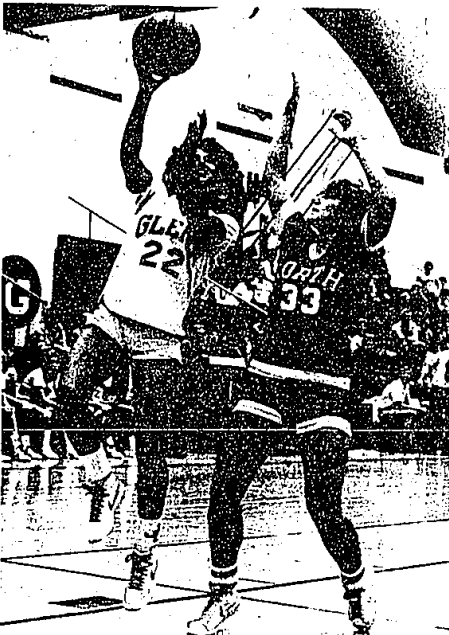
Greg Kolb, who heads up the Great Lakes Scouting Service in Michigan, has ranked Austin among the top 20 blue-chip prospects in the state. Kolb is also sending out notices to colleges on behalf of Austin.

"Amy's potential in college is endless," Grodzicki said. "She could play at any level. She is a bonafide blue-chip player and I've never said that about anyone else in my program. I just hope she gets a fair shot. She wants it so bad, and she deserves it."

Austin said she won't give up if she is not offered a scholarship after this season.

"My individual goal is to get a scholarship to college," she said. "If I don't get it, I'll walk on. I'll look for a school with a good educational program in medicine and a good basketball team. I'll walk on and try to earn a scholarship that way."

What a pleasant surprise she would be for the college she walked on to. And what an embarrassment it would be if all the college scouts who have overlooked Amy Austin.



North's Amy Austin has been a major force in the resurgence of the Raiders girls basketball program. Despite her numerous accomplishments, Austin has been overlooked by college scouts.

## Eaglet coach quits

By C.J. Rieck  
staff writer

There are three reasons why Al Dicken decided to resign his position as Orchard Lake St. Mary's football coach.

One is 5-years-old. Another is 3.

These are the ages of his two sons. Then there's his wife, Laurie. "Not being able to spend enough time with them is reason enough for the 31-year-old Dicken to give up something he has loved so much."

"It's just come to a point in my life where I've got to evaluate some things," said Dicken in surrendering the job he has held for six years. "St. Mary's has been very good to me. This is probably one of the most difficult things I've done."

The former small college All-American quarterback from Graceland College in Iowa made his decision "about mid-season" but didn't tell his players until last Saturday.

DICKEN HAS accomplished much at the Class C school. He experienced just one losing season: a 2-7 mark in 1979, a season Dicken called "a big turning point for us."

Off-season weight training programs and a changed attitude among the players after that resulted in records of 6-3 in 1980, 7-2 in 1981, 6-3 in 1982 and 7-2 this year. Overall, Dicken compiled a 34-20 record at OLSM and was chosen as Catholic C-D Coach of the Year three times.

But it isn't the "thrill of victory" that he will miss. The people he associated with through the job — the Rev. Stanley Milewski, the school's chancellor, principal Joe Piascecki, and athletic director

Tim Donke — as well as the players made the decision more difficult.

"These kids are good kids," he said. "I'm going to miss that more than anything."

BEFORE COMING TO OLSM, Dicken coached basketball for two years at West Bloomfield. He took the OLSM position because "my first love was in football. I don't know where I'll ever find a place that I'll like the kids as much as here. I'll miss that."

He won't leave without fond memories. Like the last-minute 15-14 victory over Ann Arbor Gabriel Richard in the 1981 Catholic C-D League playoffs. Or the three league titles OLSM captured under his leadership. Or last year's team, which tied for the title even though "we didn't have the best talent."

His retirement, he said, was not permanent. "I really enjoy coaching," he said. "But I want to take a year or so off and spend some time with my family."

At what type of position he would like to return to Dicken wouldn't say. West Bloomfield coach Don Livodotz may resign to devote full time to the school's athletic director's position. But Dicken said he has no intentions of pursuing the Laker job, should it become available.

NEITHER IS HE interested in a college position. But before leaving, Dicken promised, "It's in my blood, so I'll be back."

Tim Donke, the school's athletic director, said he "was really sorry to see Al go, but I understand it because he hasn't been able to give any time to his family. We're really going to miss him."

## Marlins clobber Gallagher

Continued from Page 1

Baker was also concerned about his junior point guard Annette Ruggiero. Ruggiero, one of the heroes in Mercy's thrilling overtime victory against Flint Northwestern Saturday, injured an ankle in practice. Baker hoped he wouldn't have to use her. But he did.

"We just felt we needed her savvy in there. She did a terrific job," Baker said.

With Ruggiero running the offense and Sarah Basford filling the net with jumpers, Mercy outscored Gallagher 18-4 in the third quarter. Basford scored eight of her game-high 18 points in that third quarter.

The fourth quarter was a sloppy affair with Mercy playing all its reserves and Gallagher frantically pressing to get back into the game.

"GALLAGHER HAS improved a lot. They really wanted this one," Baker said.

Mary Rosowski played a very strong

inside game for Mercy. She totally dominated Gallagher's big 6-foot-2 center Joan Rieger. Rieger fouled out in the fourth quarter with just four points. Rosowski scored 13. Terri Ford added 10 for Mercy.

Mercy, the champion of the Catholic League Central Division, is making its first appearance in the Catholic League finals since 1980. They haven't won the Catholic League since 1977.

"It's nice to be back in the finals," Baker said. "We'll be ready. I think both teams will come to play on Sunday. And I think you'll see both teams play better than they did today."

Ladywood defeated Mercy in their first encounter this season, 49-46. Mercy took round two, 34-49.



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