



No miracles: Mercy falls in finals



By Chris McCosky
staff writer

The throng of Mercy followers stood behind their teams' bench screaming and yelling from the opening tip off until the final buzzer.

They had seen their team come from behind so many times. They were waiting for another miracle.

The miracle never came.

Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy will not repeat as Class A state champions. Flint Northwestern defeated the Marlinas 44-41 Friday night in the semifinals of the state girls basketball tournament at WMU's Reed Fieldhouse.

The game was a nail-biter from the start, with the Wildcats taking an early lead and the Marlinas furiously trying to come back.

Several times, the Marlinas surpassed the Wildcats, but they couldn't put them away — the reason: poor shooting.

"I FELT the difference in the game to-night was our poor shooting," said Mercy coach Larry Baker.

The numbers will bear him out. Mercy made just 18 of 48 shots from the floor, a paltry 37 percent.

"I'm not going to apologize for my team. They played hard. This was a great game between two great teams. They just shot better tonight," Baker said.

Northwestern (26-1) jumped ahead of Mercy 14-11 after a quarter.

In the second quarter, like in the second quarter of the first game between these two teams (which Mercy won in overtime), Northwestern threatened to run away from Mercy. At one point, Mercy went scoreless in eight possessions, and the Wildcats lead 22-13.

MERCY'S AMY DEMATTIA, who scored eight first-half points to keep the Marlinas in contention, hit a big three-point play with 3:25 left in the half to pull Mercy to within five.

Bev White and Sue Scott, Mercy's super subs, gave the Marlinas a much-needed spark at the end of the half. When the third quarter began, Mercy trailed by only three.

Mary Rosowski, Mercy's junior center, scored two baskets at the start of the second half, both on nice passes from White, and Mercy trailed by one, 25-24.

The next time down, Sarah Basford, the only senior on the floor for either team, hit a pair of free throws to put Mercy ahead.

Northwestern immediately regained control of the game, scoring a pair of unanswered baskets to go up 29-26.

Mercy came roaring back. Annette Ruggero made three of four free throws. Basford and White added baskets. By the end of the quarter, Mercy led 33-31.

AT THIS STAGE, the Mercy boosters were sensing championship. Even though



JERRY ZOLYNSKI

Mary Rosowski, Mercy's junior center who finished the state championship game with eight points and nine rebounds, is consoled by her father after the Marlin's 44-41 loss to Flint Northwestern in the finals Friday.

this was the semifinal game, most believed the winner of this game would win the Class A crown. (The winner would play Harper Woods Regina, a team Mercy had twice defeated.)

But something happened at the end of the third quarter that, at the time, seemed insignificant. The Wildcats' freshman Stephanie Tipton entered the game and sank a jumper from the right side of the Marlin defense.

At the beginning of the fourth quarter, Tipton fired another shot up from the same spot. It hit the rim, bounced high in the air and fell through the net.

THEN SHE HIT another, then another. After a fourth switch, and a 39-34 Northwestern lead, Baker called a timeout.

"We knew her. We knew she could shoot. That wasn't the turning point, I don't think," Baker said. "Our breakdown was on offense."

Basford hit three straight buckets for Mercy and with 4:20 left, Mercy trailed 41-39.

After a Wildcat free throw and a Rosowski basket, the score was 42-41. Just over two minutes left.

In the first meeting, Mercy had made up

an eight-point deficit in the final minute of play by taking advantage of Northwestern's missed foul shots.

DOWN THE STRETCH Friday night, the Wildcats missed four straight foul shots. This time, Mercy couldn't take advantage of them.

Twice in the last two minutes, the Marlinas turned the ball over. Twice Basford jump shots rolled around the rim, but they never fell. No miracles this time.

Shanta Burks, who had missed two of the four free throws, sank a layup in the closing seconds to ice the win for Northwestern.

Basford led Mercy with 14 points, 10 in the second half. DeMattia and Rosowski each scored eight. Rosowski also had nine rebounds.

Tonya Edwards led the Wildcats with 12 points. Tipton and Taraisa Wills each had 10.

Mercy finishes the season with a 24-3 record. The Marlinas also were not without championships. They won the Catholic League title and the Operation Friendship title.

"It's been a great season," said Baker. Indeed.

Sarah Basford, bringing the ball down court against Flint Northwestern's Tonya Edwards, led Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy scorers with 14 points. She also

hit three straight baskets late in the game to bring the Marlinas to within two before falling in the Class A state finals 44-41.

JERRY ZOLYNSKI

North fails in NSL opener

"It wasn't pretty — either way." So said Bob Dropp, Garden City basketball coach. No one ever nominated Dropp's Cougars for a beauty contest, but on the hardwood they looked pretty good Friday in dropping North Farmington, 59-54 in the Northwest Suburban League (NSL) opener for both schools at Garden City.

"There were a lot of calls made so that the game never got into a flow for either team," Dropp said. Still, things went well enough for the Cougars, who improved their record to 2-1 overall. North fell to 1-2 on the season.

Garden City beat the Raiders under the boards, and that proved to be the difference. The Cougars held a commanding 32-17 rebounding edge.

The first quarter ended in a tie (13-13) but the second belonged to Garden City, which jumped to a seven-point halftime advantage after a 15-8 scoring streak.

The Cougars kept pulling away in the second half, with the lead bouncing between six and 12 points. After three quarters it was 45-34 and North never got closer than five the rest of the way. Three players reached double figures

for the Cougars: Scott McCloskey (16), Steve Klein (15) and Dave Hayden (10). Rick Anderson topped North with 13 points. Steve Bambach chipped in with 10.

NORTHVILLE 52, FARMINGTON 45: The Falcons were in the hunt for a season-opening victory until the last quarter, when Northville sank six free throws down the stretch to clinch the win at Farmington.

"I was not displeased with the way we played," said Farmington coach Rich Roy. "They were a much bigger

team than we were."

Despite the size disadvantage, the Falcons were up by a point after three quarters (37-36). Greg Feenstra's 16 points led the Farmington offense, with Tim Carruthers notching 12. Steve Schrader pumped in 19 to top Northville.

SALEM 61, HARRISON 32: Farmington Harrison was never in the game against powerful Plymouth Salem, as the Hawks lost their third straight Friday at Salem.

Four Rocks reached double figures in scoring: Rick Benberet (18), Mike White (12) and Erich Hartnett and Jeff Arnold (11 each). Salem is now 2-0 on the season.



Staff photos
by Bill Bresler (right)
and Dan Dean (left)

