

# Fedio still burns over Rice trickery

By Marty Budner  
staff writer

It's been 13 days since Birmingham Brother Rice registered its controversial triple-overtime victory over Bloomfield Hills Lahser in the Class A district championship game at Southfield-Lathrup High School.

But the animosity continues between the two schools.

The controversy stems from a late-game maneuver by Brother Rice coach Nick Conti which Bloomfield Hills Lahser School District Athletic Director Norm Quinn called "unethical" and "unsportsmanlike."

Briefly, the situation was this: Lahser's Mike Davis was at the free-throw line for a one-and-one opportunity with four seconds left in the game. The score was tied at 50.

After the referee handed Davis the

ball, Rice's Matt Dingens and Lahser's Matt Lewry were detected moving illegally by game referees Fred Collins and Dan O'Neill.

Lahser representatives claim Lewry was "physically moved" by Dingens. Rice contends the planned play simply was intended to force a situation where the referees would have to make a "judgment call" one way or another.

The subsequent ruling was a double-lane violation for "simultaneous movement in the lane" which resulted in a jump ball. Davis attempted free throw did not count, and the game remained tied at 50 after four quarters of regulation play. Rice eventually won 67-66 after three overtimes.

While Rice played a quarterfinal state playoff game yesterday against Warren De La Salle, Lahser High School basketball coach Mike Fedio

and Quinn still are upset over the district championship game that ended Lahser's season.

IMMEDIATELY after the Rice game, Quinn wrote a two-page letter of protest which was hand-delivered to the Michigan High School Athletic Association. Now Fedio, who took over at Lahser three years ago after Conti left to take the head coaching job at Rice, would like to air his thoughts on the controversy.

Following is a letter Fedio wrote to the Eccentric:

"To Whom It May Concern:  
I've tried to maintain a level of professionalism about the incident with Brother Rice. It is about time I got some things off my chest. I owe it to my players, especially Matt Lewry.

Someone needs to make a few strong statements regarding the facts of this incident. Brother Rice is hoping this thing will quietly fade away. I am willing to sit down with anyone and review the tape. I challenge them, after seeing it and reviewing the facts, to tell me that Brother Rice did nothing wrong. I want them to prove to me that:

• Brother Rice did not plan to deceive a Lahser player by verbal enticement into breaking a rule.

• When verbal enticement did not work as planned, show me that the Rice player did not physically move our player causing the violation.

• Had the officials been in position to see the play, they would have called it the same way.

If our player had moved on the verbal enticement, that's one thing (still

unsportsmanlike), but to physically move him is another. I have yet to be contacted by a Brother Rice official to view the tape. Why is that?

A Rice assistant coach compares this incident to the hidden ball trick in baseball. It's more like pushing the player off the base when the umpire is not looking and then tagging him out. It also states that "when you're in that situation, you'll try anything." I guess the fear of losing that game caused Brother Rice not to respond under pressure the way they should have.

If they're saying this was a legal play, then this means if the officials were in position to witness the entire incident, they would make the same call — I doubt it. If they contend that there was nothing wrong in what they did, one must assume it is

permissible to break a rule or law and blame someone else.

It is a shame that three adults (one coach using a deceptive play, and two officials out of position to correctly call an infraction) took a high school game and tarnished the outcome. The officials did not see the infraction. However, the clock was stopped, the players were standing in place, so the officials must take some responsibility for not being more conscientious in such a crucial game as a district championship.

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— Marty Budner

## Warrior coach defends his players' role in controversy

Brother Rice's third-year coach Nick Conti believes the double-lane violation incident from the March 16 Class A district basketball championship game against Bloomfield Hills Lahser was strictly a judgment call that went the Warriors' way.

"We just tried to take advantage of a rule and it's not really certain that we're going to get a call," said Conti,

who led his team in a state Class A quarterfinal game last night at the University of Detroit's Calhoun Hall against Warren De La Salle.

"I've never looked at that play as anything more than a 'play.' We just tried to take advantage of a situation. There are many judgments that go unnoticed during the course of a basketball game.

"What we did was set up a situation and give the official an opportunity to make a judgment. Our intent was to allow them the opportunity to make a judgment. They would have called a number of things. We simply wanted to create that situation."

Conti had these four statements regarding the incident.

• "In my opinion, we didn't cheat. That wasn't our intention."

• "It never — at the time or since that time — was our intention to embarrass anybody. I took offense to (Bloomfield Hills Athletic Director) Norm Quinn's statement that we 'bragged' about the play to the press."

• "While, granted it was an unusual

play, it was a fair play in the framework of the rules."

• "Our intent was to give the officials an opportunity to make a judgment. It could go for you or against you. We gave them that opportunity."

Conti believes the controversy over the incident overshadowed the overall play of his team in the state tourna-

ment, as well as the accomplishments of both Lahser and Rice in that district championship game.

"We (Rice and Lahser) both played hard in that (district championship) game," said Conti. "I said it then and I still say it now, we were very fortunate to win that game."

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## Michigan Christian title dream falls 1 game short

By Jim Hughes  
staff writer

Garth Pleasant had visions of the 1983 NCAA championship basketball game when North Carolina State shocked the nation with a last-second,

two-point victory over favored University of Houston.

His dream was smaller in scale, but it was his team — Michigan Christian College in Rochester — that would pull the upset against Weber College in the National Little Colleges Athletic Association

championship. The Warriors came up short in the final chapter of their Cinderella story Friday as Weber (Florida) defeated Michigan Christian 70-61 in the 16-team tournament in Marion, Ohio. Christian played without starting and

star guard Hank Woodmore, who was sidelined with an ankle injury from the semifinal game.

"It's always been my goal, but I wasn't sure we'd ever get there (to the finals)," Pleasant said. "It was quite a thrill. The runnerup trophy is right in

front of me. I always try to keep my composure, but I have to admit, I'm very excited."

THE WARRIORS reached the finals after defeating Draughts College (Tennessee) 85-64; Blackburn College (Illinois) 65-60; and Sullivan Junior College

(Kentucky) 85-83. In the win over Sullivan, Woodmore sank a 22-foot jump shot with two seconds left in overtime.

Weber, a four-year Division II school, competed in the NCAA tournament because it met the enrollment requirement (500 or less male students).

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