

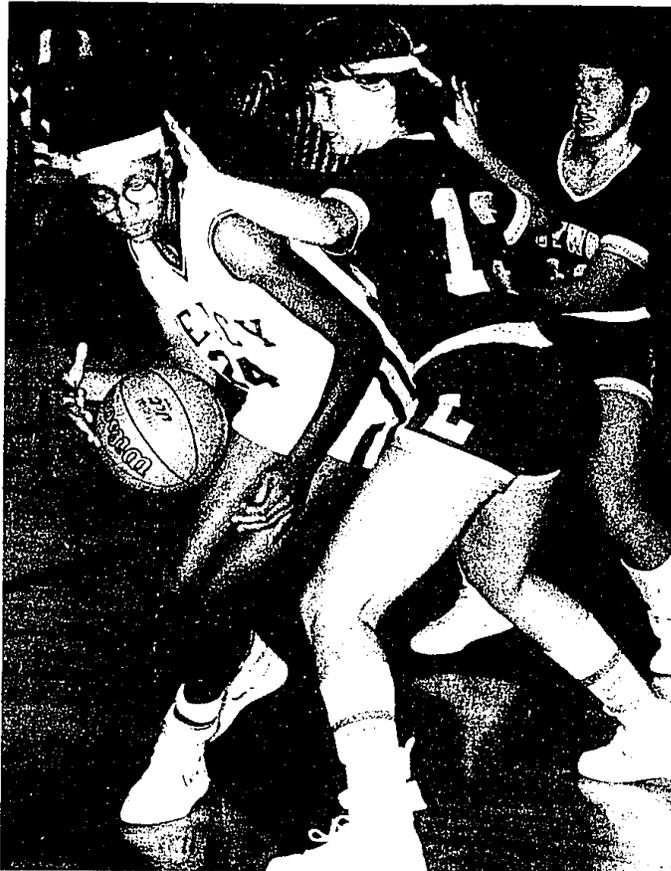


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(F18)

Mercy '5' bests Blazers' '2'



By Chris McCosky
staff writer

In front of more than 2,200 screaming fans huddled into the Schoolcraft College gymnasium, Farmington hills Our Lady of Mercy forward Amy DeMattia and her teammate Mary Rosowski embraced at center court.

There were three minutes left in the game and DeMattia had just fouled out. Moments earlier she had converted a clutch three-point play to give her team a 10-point lead over arch rival Livonia Ladywood.

"You don't have to worry about a thing," Rosowski said to her. "We've got this one. There'll be no overtime tonight."

They hugged again and DeMattia went to the bench assured.

And indeed, despite a furious last-ditch effort by the defending Class B state champion Ladywood Blazers, there was no overtime Friday night.

Mercy, for the second time this season, defeated Ladywood, 56-50.

"I THINK it was pretty obvious to even the most casual observers here tonight that our five offensive players beat their two," said Mercy coach Larry Baker.

And really, that summed up what transpired. Mercy got significant offensive production from five players. Ladywood got it from two.

Annette Ruggiero scored 15 points and dished out 5 assists. Rosowski had 14 points, nine rebounds and six blocked shots — three of which resulted in three fastbreak baskets for Mercy. Terri Ford scored 13 points. Sue Scott came off the bench to contribute seven key points in the second half. DeMattia scored five points and did a blanket-like defensive job on Ladywood center Sue Laliberte.

For Ladywood, all-stars Emily Wagner and Char Gowan did virtually all the damage. Wagner scored 17 points. Gowan scored 15 and pulled down 11 rebounds.

Of the three other Ladywood starters, Laliberte was limited to just three free throws. Tracey Ladouceur scored six points. And Trish White fouled out without scoring a point.

"I thought our running game was a key," said Baker. "Even though we made successive turnovers in the first quarter, I was pleased that we made it into a full-court game. I felt we'd still have our legs in the fourth quarter."

Both teams like to play an up-tempo game, but on this night, Mercy played hard to Ladywood's tortoise.

THE TEMPO was established the first series of the game. Rosowski

blocked a Ladywood shot inside, fired an outlet pass the ball to Ruggiero who found Ford for an easy layup — boom, boom, boom.

Ladywood, with the dead-eye shooting of Wagner and the gritty inside play of Gowan (the two combined for 13 of Ladywood's 17 first-half points), managed to stay even with Mercy for a half.

Baker went to his bench, his Rolaid Brigade, and summoned Scott into the game to start the second half. The speedy senior triggered a 14-6 Martin spurt with five points, a pretty assist and two steals. Instant relief.

A lesser team, down 37-28 going into the final quarter in such an emotionally draining contest, would have raised the white flag. But, Ladywood is in no way a lesser team.

The Blazers came out with fire in their eyes in the fourth quarter.

"The teams kind of did a little role reversal in the fourth quarter," said Baker. "Ladywood was the team pressing. They were the ones playing hell-bent-for-leather defense."

AND MERCY was put in the position of trying to play a patient, time-consuming offense.

Mercy, behind the intense play of Ruggiero and Rosowski — not to mention DeMattia's three-point play —

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C.J. Risak

The game won't get much better than this

THERE ARE THREE things a Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy-Livonia Ladywood basketball game can guarantee:

- One close game;
- Two talented teams;
- An awful lot of noise.

"Course, it takes a lot of people to generate a lot of noise. And this crowd did more than its share per person of cheering, booing and general walling.

The cause was a good one, of course. If Ladywood won, they would be tied with Mercy for the Catholic League lead. Mercy would all but clinch the championship with a victory.

MERCY GOT its wish. The Marlins' talent was a bit deeper, and that was enough for a 56-50 win.

"It's a girls' basketball, remember. Girls playing in front of as big a high school basketball crowd for a regular-season game as I have ever witnessed, boys included. Some 2,200 men, women and children, all crammed into Schoolcraft College's gym.

They stood in the aisles and piled into the bleachers, while the overflow spilled onto the floor right up to court-side.

WITH THAT kind of a mob, what could you expect? Even if they are two of the finest teams in the state, such an emotional confrontation is bound to make those poor young girls jittery, right?

Sure — that's why Mercy hit 11 of 13 floor shots in the second half. That's why Ladywood, trailing by 10 midway through the final quarter, fought back to within four.

One player sure to be overloved with pressure was Ladywood's Emily Wagner. It sure got to her, too: She hit but the first three shots of the game. Wagner ran the show with precision.

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Junior Terri Ford drives on Ladywood's Emily Wagner during Mercy's 56-50 win Friday night. Ford scored 13 points for Mercy.

ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Enright guides Hawks

It may well be the very best football team John Herrington has coached and it went out in a blaze Friday night.

The Farmington Harrison Hawks, the state's and area's No. 1 team, whipped Monroe 49-6 to cap a perfect 9-0 season.

The Hawks' deadly combination of quarterback Vince Enright and Brian Smolinski rewrote the Hawks' passing records Friday.

Enright completed 19 of 21 passes for 292 yards and two touchdowns. The 292 yards set a single-season passing mark. The 19 completions is a single-game record. And he has, unofficially, 1,545 career passing yards — also a record.

Smolinski, a junior, caught nine passes (a record) for 179 yards and two TDs. His 46 catches this year is a single-season record.

THEN THERE was John Miller. All this senior All-American did was rush for 156 yards and score four touchdowns. He scored on runs of 3, 4, 3, and 3 yards.

Smolinski's touchdown passes were of 8 and 29 yards.

Mark Mecklenborg capped the scoring with a 31-yard run.

Yet as triumphant a performance as it was, the Hawks left the field in tears. Early in the final quarter, word came that Seaholm had defeated Groven. A playoff berth looked impossible.

"It was very emotional," said Herrington. "Especially when I pulled the starters out of the game in the fourth quarter. It was their last game, you know. The kids really played great football."

They certainly did.



North's Kurt Gawley hauls in a 24-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Eric Engel in the second quarter Saturday. It was the only offense North would muster against the stingy Farmington defense.

RANDY BORETT/staff photographer

Farmington defense ruins North's streak

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

North Farmington's bid for its first undefeated football season since 1978 ran into a stone wall Saturday — the stone wall being the Farmington defensive line.

The Falcons shut down the Raiders' normally potent ground game and went on to a startling 14-7 victory.

"The kids just played a whale of a second half," said Farmington coach Don Kulick. "We forced them to do things they didn't want to do."

For Kulick, it was a bitter-sweet afternoon. After the game, he embraced North quarterback Eric Engel.

"I hated to have to do this to you," Kulick said.

Kulick coached Engel and numerous other Raiders three years ago.

BUT KULICK couldn't have been more pleased with his team. After a horrendous season last year, the Falcons have won a division championship and finished with a 6-3 record.

"The kids just did a great job all season," Kulick said.

On the other side of the field, there were tears. The disappointment over not making the state playoffs turned into shock and disbelief after losing the undefeated season.

"I don't know," said coach Jim O'Leary, fending off the tears. "Maybe the kids were just too good. We just didn't seem to have any intensity after our first scoring drive."

The Raiders first scoring drive proved to be their last.

NORTH HAD excellent field position throughout the first half. Early in the second quarter, the Raiders drove to the Falcon 18. But John Tureaud recovered a North fumble.

The Raiders got the ball back at the 46 and marched it in. Engel, who completed 12 of 21 passes on the day for 118 yards, hit Kurt Gawley on a 24-yard pass play for the score.

On the ensuing kickoff, Farmington fumbled. Chris Reed fell on it for North and it looked as if the Raiders would score again.

The Falcon defense, led by Tureaud, Craig Petersmark, Jim Laird, Bob Kaminski and Ab Hazen, was equal to the task.

"We did not do a very good job blocking," O'Leary said. "Our offensive line has done a great job all year, but they played bad today."

THE FALCON defense took over in the second half. North mustered just 26 yards rushing in the second half. In fact, the Raiders gained just 64 yards rushing on the day.

Kaminski picked off an Engel pass at the beginning of the second half, but Farmington could capitalize.

Then came the break of the day for Farmington. On a fourth-and-four from their own 37, the Raiders attempted a fake punt. Bruce Kelsey, who came up with several key stops from his cornerback position, wasn't fooled by the

Raider fake. He stopped the ball carrier, Pat Gallina, at the Raider 27.

Five plays later, Falcon quarterback Chris Green found Kaminski in the end zone for a 10-yard TD and the game was tied.

On the Raiders' third offensive possession of the second half, they fumbled. And Kaminski was there to pounce on it at the Raider 24.

ON THIRD and 9, Green hit Hazen at the 2. Two plays later, Green ran it in. It proved to be the winning score.

North was able to generate just five more first downs the rest of the way. The Raiders did mount one last drive. With completions to Buddy Pope and Scott Knoll, Engel marched his team to the Falcon 38 with just 2:20 left to play.

But on third and 10, Engel was sacked by Tureaud and Hazen. Kaminski batted away Engel's fourth-down pass.

"It's been a long time since we had won like this," Kulick said.

Indeed, it's been a long time since Farmington has had a football season like 1984.

And although the season ended in tears for the Raiders, their 8-1 season was exceptional.

"I'm still proud of the kids," O'Leary said. "We won the Northwest Suburban League championship and no one can take that away from us. These kids played hard. They did a heck of a lot better than anyone thought they would."