

Sports

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suburban life inside



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Hungry Hawks snatch crown

George, Miller guide Harrison past heavily favored Stevenson

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Two years ago John Miller and Vince Enright were members of a Farmington Harrison junior varsity basketball team that won one game in 18 tries.

Last Friday night John Miller and Vince Enright, now senior co-captains of the varsity squad, led Harrison to its first Western Lakes Activities Association basketball championship.

Miller and Enright, along with sizeable contributions from imports Ken George and Mike Dempsey, helped the Hawks defeat the heavily favored home team, Livonia Stevenson, 58-43.

In so doing, the Hawks spoiled veteran Stevenson coach George VanWagoner's farewell. VanWagoner, after 19 years at Stevenson, will retire after this season.

But, the tears on the Stevenson side didn't spoil the Hawks' celebration. The jam-packed Harrison stands huddled above the court as Miller and Enright jubilantly hoisted the championship trophy for all to see.

"NOBODY GAVE us a chance," said Harrison coach Mike Teachman, who has now guided the Hawks to three championships (the last two in the old Western Six Conference) in five years. "At the beginning of the season I sent the parents a letter saying our goal was to play in the championship game. Some people thought I was a little screwy for saying that, but when you have quality kids, raised by quality parents, it's kind of thing can happen."

Not many would have bet on Harrison prior to the game, though. After all, Stevenson blitzed through the Western Lakes season with a 12-1 record and had won 17 of 19 games coming into Friday's championship game. Also, the Spartans had defeated Harrison in Farmington Hills just two weeks ago.

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No matter. The Hawks weren't the least bit intimidated. In fact, the Hawks were by far the hungrier team.

"Emotion," said Teachman. "That was the difference tonight. We really went after it."

Said VanWagoner: "I agree. Harrison did seem to play with more intensity. It was a good night for them. But you'd think on our own court we'd be better."

THERE WERE several reasons why Stevenson didn't play better.

• Harrison's pressing defense. The Hawks applied three-quarter court pressure throughout the game, and it gradually wore Stevenson down. Shots that fell early in the game, fell short in the second half for the Spartans. Credit the hustle of Ken George, Miller and Jeff Hoskow for making the pressure effective.

• Ken George. This little man is the glue that holds Harrison together and the spark that sets it off. He scored 20 points, including 8 straight free throws down the stretch to tie the win. He dished out 6 spectacular assists, grabbed several key rebounds

and controlled the tempo of the game.

• Miller. He provided Harrison with 16 points and some sticky defense, but his on-court leadership is more valuable than any statistic he could achieve.

• Dempsey. The 6-foot-7 center held his own against a strong Stevenson front court grabbing 12 rebounds. He also swatted away 4 shots and scored 9.

SO, FOR three quarters Stevenson was a very frustrated team. But, in the fourth quarter, Bob Sluka came out of the huddle with fire in his eyes. The gifted senior quickly made a pair of steals and poured in 6 points to cut a 12-point Harrison lead to 6, 44-38.

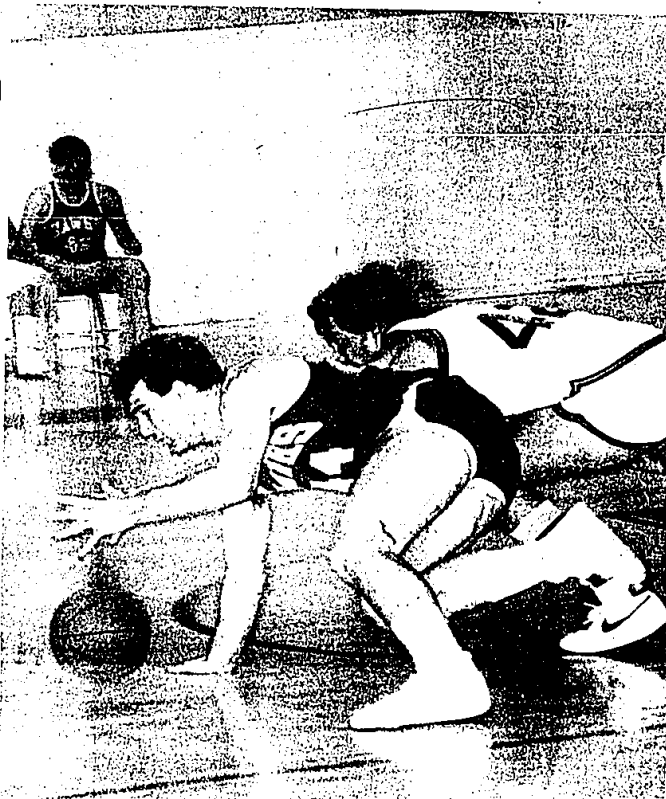
Teachman alertly called timeout and settled his team down. The timeout also served to ice Sluka. The big man missed a pair of free throws and a more poised Harrison team ran off the next 6 points and never looked back.

Sluka, before fouling out late in the fourth quarter, finished with 17 points and 16 rebounds. No other Spartan finished in double figures.

"It helps when you shoot the ball (well)," VanWagoner said. "We were 5 of 18 from the line. And you can say it was a choice of shots anytime. Maybe we were hurrying them a bit."

In the fourth quarter, Stevenson hit just 1 of 6 free throws and 5 of 21 shots from floor. On the night, Stevenson shot a frigid 19 of 72 from the floor (26 percent).

The Spartans will enter the district tournament with a 17-3 record. Harrison goes in with a championship and a 15-5 mark under its belt.



ARTEMANUELE/asia photographer

John Miller (dark jersey) outthrusts Stevenson's Bob Sluka for a loose ball in Friday night's WLA championship. The Hawks prevailed, 58-43.

Lowly Franklin stuns North; Farmington bows to Northville

It's been a rollercoaster ride all season for the North Farmington basketball team and the Raiders hit their lowest point Friday night losing to lowly Livonia Franklin 55-54.

Jeff McCaw took a pretty feed from Tom Phillips and sank the winning shot with nine seconds left. McCaw finished with 16 points. Phillips scored 17 and dished 11 assists.

North managed to get off one final shot before the buzzer but it missed the mark.

Franklin's Dave Olschanski held

North top gun Rick Anderson to just 7 points on the night.

Paul Walrman led North (6-4 in the Northwest Suburban League, 13-7 overall) with 16 points. Dean Temple chipped in 13 and Bob Chwalik 8.

Franklin closes the regular season with a 4-8 mark in the NSL, 5-15 overall.

NORTHVILLE 55, FARMINGTON 48: The Northville Mustangs dropped the Farmington Falcons for a loss Thursday night, ending the regular

season for both teams.

Northville held a slim 27-24 lead at halftime and expanded that advantage to 10 points at the end of three periods.

The Falcons (9-11) canned 6 of 7 from the free throw line while the Mustangs hit 11 of 18.

Bruce Kratt had 17 to lead the Falcons and Bill Robinson added 12.

John Storm led three players in double figures for Northville (9-11) with 17. Greg Wendal and Don Norton each had 13 points.

Veteran Spartan coach VanWagoner to retire

By Brad Emons
staff writer

It was supposed to be George VanWagoner's night, but it didn't turn out that way.

The last basketball game he ever coached in the Stevenson High School gym went Farmington Harrison's way. The Hawks defeated Stevenson a Western Lakes title Friday with a stunning 58-43 victory.

VanWagoner's retirement from high school coaching was made official prior to the championship game

by Stevenson public address announcer George Croll.

The crowd on both sides of the gym stood in unison, politely applauding the state's winningest active coach for almost two minutes.

VanWagoner, who decided two months ago that this would be his 33rd and final season of prep coaching, was taken by surprise by the announcement.

"I didn't know he (Croll) was going to do that," he said, but just thinking (during the applause) how I appreciated this team and I was doing a

little praying that they might win because they were deserving.

"I felt bad for them. I told them not to hang their heads."

STEVENSON'S CENTER Bob Sluka told the retiring coach afterward: "I'm sorry we couldn't win it for you, coach."

"That's the way he is," VanWagoner said. "He never gives up, and I'm sure the others felt the same way."

VanWagoner is by no means through with the 1984-85 season. He'll attempt to record his 493rd

coaching victory Wednesday night when the Spartans return to the court (at Livonia Churchill) to face city rival Franklin in the first round of the state tournament.

Stevenson, which finished the regular season at 17-3, is favored to win the Churchill district.

If Stevenson can conquer the Churchill field, it would be VanWagoner's 15th district title.

VanWagoner, who has had only four losing seasons in 33 years, is 492-205 overall. He also has four regional and 13 conference titles to his credit.

VANWAGONER began his storied coaching career at Gobles in 1952. In 1953-54, his team won the state Class D crown, finishing with a 25-2 record.

In 1955, VanWagoner moved to another school on the western side of the state, Allegan, where he compiled a 158-60 record in 11 years. In 1964, VanWagoner's team reached the Class B semifinals.

In 1968, VanWagoner came to Livonia and a brand new school in Stevenson.

One of his most memorable seasons occurred in 1970-71 when he took a 7-

11 team and led them to state Class A quarterfinals before losing to Campy Russell and Pontiac Central in a closely contested battle.

Despite disappointing losses, such as Friday's, VanWagoner has no regrets about leaving coaching.

"It was a combination of things, but I'm getting out of teaching (next year)," he said. "I talked about it a lot with my wife (Beth).

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St. Mary's survives Christian comeback

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Janthum Alleyne's prayer was answered when his 15-foot operation heave at the buzzer swished through the basket to lift Michigan Christian to a 48-all tie with Orchard Lake St. Mary's Saturday, forcing overtime.

But whatever momentum the Warriors gained from Alleyne's miracle shot they couldn't sustain. St. Mary's took command in the extra period to win the National Little College Athletic Association (NLCAA) North Central district title, 59-45 at Dombrowski Fieldhouse.

The Eagles, now 11-17, advance to the NLCAA 16-team tournament. They will play the South Pacific district champion at 2 p.m. March 12.

What Alleyne did from 35-feet he and his Michigan Christian teammates could not do consistently from 15 — put the ball in the hoop. The Warriors hit just 9 of 21 free throws and missed 5 of 8 tries in the final 7:47. St. Mary's was good on 17 of 22 from the line.

And yet he score, but Eric Hartnett fouled Greg Spraggins anyway with 3 seconds left. Spraggins hit 2 free throws to make it 46-46, and then Alleyne tied it after St. Mary's long inbound pass was intercepted.

ALLEYNE OPENED the OT by missing the first free throw in a 1-and-1 attempt. Gary Pedersen then put St. Mary's up for good with a basket with 3:07 left. After Alleyne hit 1 of 2 foul

shots — he made just 4 of 11 for the game — the Eagles scored 4 straight points. Michigan Christian never got closer than 3 the rest of the way.

St. Mary's was ahead by 10 with 13 minutes left in regulation, but Tim Morton, who led all scorers with 18 points, looped in 6 long jumpers over the Eagles' 1-3-1 zone defense.

"St. Mary's dictated that we were going to have to shoot from the outside," said Warrior coach Garth Pleasant, whose team finished the season at 23-3. "But I felt we could do that with Morton and Spraggins."

Spraggins, who scored 20 points in Friday's first-round win over Nazareth, was limited to 10 against St. Mary's but collected 13 assists. Alleyne netted 12 points and grabbed 7 rebounds.

Bobby Wade paced St. Mary's with 16 points and 5 assists. Steve Kopicki

dominated underneath, scoring 14 points and hauling down 11 rebounds.

ST. MARY'S 90, JORDAN 78: With 7:53 left in the game, St. Mary's was losing to a junior college team that had won just 5 of 37 games. That's when Eagle coach Tim Domke called time out.

"I could have called one earlier," explained Domke, "but I was hoping they would figure it out for themselves."

Apparently his Eagles couldn't, but Domke got them on course quickly. Following the time out, Lance Davis lofted a pass that Eric Hartnett slammed to put St. Mary's back on top, 68-67.

It started a 15-1 run for the Eagles that allowed them to escape with a win in an NLCAA North Central District opener against Jordan College Friday at Dombrowski Fieldhouse.

"We don't have that killer instinct," said Domke. "Good teams play good against everybody. Obviously, we're not a good team yet."

They were barely good enough against Jordan. Hartnett ignited the late rally, scoring 2 straight baskets and grabbing a pair of defensive rebounds.

Seven Eagles scored 8 or more points: Hartnett (1), Steve Kopicki (16), Mike Cozad (14), Davis (12), Gary Pedersen (12), Jay Fought (9) and Bobby Wade (8). LaBurt Harris netted 28 for Jordan, with Derrick Barner adding 23 and Tracey Tillis 17.

MICH. CHRISTIAN 68, NAZARETH 34: Michigan Christian rolled over Nazareth College in Friday's first NLCAA North Central district game at Dombrowski Fieldhouse.

The Warriors, runners-up in last year's NLCAA national tournament, disposed of Nazareth with a 16-2 burst in the final 8:12 of the first half. The streak allowed Michigan Christian to turn a 13-10 game into a 29-12 blowout by halftime.

"I was surprised we won so easily," admitted Warrior coach Garth Pleasant. "We did some things defensively that pushed them out a little further than they're used to."

"I felt we had to contest every shot and give them just 1 shot at the basket."

The Moles converted just 28 percent of the floor shots and were outrebounded 41-20.

Greg Spraggins paced Michigan Christian with 20 points. Tim Morton (14), Marvin Mathis (12) and Janthum Alleyne (10) also hit for double figures.