

## Sports

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(F1C)

# Mercy presses on in tourney

## North Farmington wilts under Marlins' tenacity

By Chris McCosky  
staff writer

For the third straight year, Farmington Hills Mercy and North Farmington met for the district girls basketball championship.

For the third straight year the undermanned North team played as hard and as good as it could.

For the third straight year, Mercy won.

That's about all that was typical in Mercy's 48-23 win at North Tuesday night.

For starters, Mercy's talented senior forward Terri Ford was on the bench in street clothes. She sprained her ankle in practice, according to Mercy coach Larry Baker, and the cast isn't due to come off until later this week.

Baker said Tuesday that it was "doubtful" Ford would be ready to play in time for next Tuesday's regional tournament game against Plymouth Salem.

ON THE COURT, Mercy threw a barrage of player combinations at North, as well as a smothering mixture of passes and defenses.

With a hawking man-to-man full court press resulting in eight Raider turnovers, Mercy forged a 14-4 lead in the first quarter.

Mercy came out in a zone in the second half, maintained the full court press, and on offense, ran a slow-down delay game. This was with a lead that at one point reached 20-7 in the second quarter.

"We did not want to let North settle into a pattern," Baker said. "We felt it was to our advantage if we pressed. And I think you saw us do as many different things as we did because of early foul trouble. We weren't experimenting. We played it as close to the vest as possible and at the same time maintained pressure."

There's another theory that could explain why Mercy played the type of game it did. Baker knew that Salem coach Fred Thomann was in the stands with his team scouting. Why not confuse the scouting reports a bit by not allowing the plan of attack as often as possible?

Nonsense, says Baker.

"AT THIS POINT in the season, there's too much to state to worry about gamesmanship. We played the game to win it," he said.

Whatever the theory, the bottom line is clear: Mercy overwhelmed North.

We had to score points and we had to try to break the press, said North coach Greg Grodzicki, whose

team finished with a better-than-expected 14-9 record. "We just got too rattled. Mercy was very effective with their press."

"I really admire everything he's (Baker) done over there. I'm envious and our girls are envious. I wish they would go all the way."

All was not dreary for North, however.

An hour prior to the game, Grodzicki, with an assist from North boys basketball coach Tom Negoshian, implemented a new matchup zone defense.

"I realized that our normal zone just wouldn't be effective so we put in the new one," Grodzicki said. "That's tough on a team but I thought our kids played it well."

ESPECIALLY SO in the second quarter. Only two of Mercy's points were scored via its half-court offense. Four points were scored off offensive rebounds and another eight were direct scores from North turnovers.

That dreaded press. Mercy forced 26 turnovers on the night. In one stretch, North failed to inbound the ball from underneath its basket three straight times.

"You have to give the credit there to Margaret DelMatta, Michelle Fryatt and Yvette Malson. They applied the pressure we needed," Baker said.

Fryatt made eight steals on the night and Malson seven.

Fryatt also played well offensively, scoring 11 points. Terri Nalodka led the Marlins with 12. Malson added 10.

Sandy Spahn played a strong inside game for North, scoring nine points to lead the team.

The Marlins will take a 16-5 record into Tuesday's regional tournament.

N. FARMINGTON 54, FARMINGTON 36: Heather McPhillips scored 19 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to help send North into the district finals Monday night.

Nancy Cottrah added eight.

The Raiders built up a 16-2 lead after a quarter and coasted to victory.

The loss ends Farmington's season at 2-19.

Becky Philip scored 11 points for Farmington and Lisa Edwards added 10. Stacy Swandorski (17 rebounds) and Lisa Spence (12) had big nights on the boards.

MERCY 50, HARRISON 16: Mercy got 19 points for Terri Nalodka, 12 from Yvette Malson and 12 more from Michelle Fryatt in their semifinal game Monday.

Jennifer Hughes led winless Harrison with six points.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Michelle Fryatt played a key role in Mercy's 48-23 district championship victory against North Farmington Tuesday night. The senior guard scored 11 points and

made eight steals. The Marlins advance to the Class A regional tournament next Tuesday at and against Plymouth Salem.

## Mercy's next foe? Who else, it's Salem

By Brad Emons  
staff writer

Fred Thomann has his Plymouth Salem girls basketball team moving up the charts.

The Rocks were solid gold Monday night, rocking and rolling in the second half for an impressive 61-29 victory over Livonia Churchill for the Class A district championship at Plymouth Canton.

Salem, which won its third consecutive district title under Thomann, appears to be in complete harmony for the upcoming Canton regional, which begins Tuesday night. The Rocks' first-round opponent will be Farmington Hills Mercy, a team they beat earlier in the season, 42-38.

Thomann knows the reasons why his team is playing string music these days.

"We're playing with a lot of confidence," he said. "And we're doing a better job of getting our players to help their teammates."

"We're also playing seven or eight deep. We can make adjustments, go with certain lineups and not be hurt."

CHURCHILL came into the matchup at perfect pitch, having pulled off a 47-34 upset victory Saturday over Salem's chief rival, Canton.

The Chargers played cool and composed for nearly two quarters before going sour.

"They led 19-18 near the midway point of the first half, but went off key in the final five minutes as Salem grabbed a 26-31 halftime lead.

In the third quarter, Salem opened things up with a 17-4 scoring surge. The Rocks continued their script in the final quarter, pulling away with an 18-4 margin.

Most instrumental in Salem's second half showing was 5-foot-11 sophomore Dena Head, who finished with a game-high 25 points.

"Once Salem gets a five- or six-point lead, they're very tough," Churchill coach Roger Springsteen said. "They force you to play man-to-man defense, and Dena Head is tough to stop one-on-one. And she's such a dominant player."

ALTHOUGH HEAD orchestrated the victory, she got help from her teammates.

Point-guard Julie Tortora kept the offense in tune, while 5-11 senior center Laura Clifford came off the bench and made her presence known on the boards, scoring six points. Contributing on the defensive end was junior forward Kristen Kortyanski. Junior guard Jessica Handley, meanwhile, kept Churchill's zone defense honest, scoring 10 points.

But Head was the conductor, according to Springsteen.

"Her biggest asset is her jumping ability and quickness," the Churchill coach said. "And every time there was a loose ball in the paint (the foul lane), she'd get her hands on it."

"She's really done a number on us this year."

In a meeting between the two teams earlier this year, Head scored 25.

THE SPORTS WRITER gets a big kick out of watching teams like Livonia Stevens (swimming and soccer), Farmington Hills Mercy (basketball, swimming), Farmington (cross country), Livonia Ladywood (basketball) Troy Athens (soccer), Andover (swimming), Birmingham-Bloomfield area (tennis), Rochester (cross country) and Cranbrook (hockey) dominate their sport year after year.

At the same time, he gets a charge out of teams like Troy (football), Livonia Churchill (volleyball) and Schoolcraft College (golf) who rally themselves past bigger and better opponents.

Dull moments are few for the sports writer, and for this he is extremely grateful.

For every blowout he covers, there's a Canton-Salem game, a Mercy-Ladywood, a John Glenn-Harrison.

For every spoiled-rookie, not-nosed-biter, there's a diligent, hard-working young person who calls you sir and tells you he enjoyed your last article.

For every coach who forgets (time and time again) to call in his scores, there's a coach who delivers the results and statistics of his game in person — win, lose or draw.

FOR EVERY coach who rages at the newspaper, blames it for either a lack of coverage or for swelling the heads of the athletes, there's a coach who welcomes you into the gym (stadium, field, rink, court) with a handshake and a "we really appreciate you being here."

For every athletic director who admonishes you at the gate to show a minimum of six pieces of identification before allowing you into the event, only to kick you out of the press box to make room for a school's scouting team, there's a Ron Holland or a Paul Cummings or a Fred Goldberg who will bend over backward to make sure you are taken care of.

For every parent that squawks about imbalanced (unpopular, insensitive, ignorant) coverage, there's the one who calls to say how much their son-daughter enjoyed the article and how their grandma cried when she read it and how it is permanently lodged in the family scrapbook.

To all, the sports writer gives thanks. He is a lucky guy.

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Over the last few years, this dream of clean, efficient, inexpensive "no cost" solar heat has become a reality. An accepted reality in over 25,000 homes in Michigan alone. Back of all, even with years of solar system technology refinement, increased competition and government tax credits have brought the initial purchase price down to a more than affordable level. But an important part of this dream is about to end.

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