

Sports

Chris McCosky, Brad Emone editors/591-2312

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Rockets gun down North

By C.J. Riasak
staff writer

Tom Negoshian had the book on Westland John Glenn's basketball team. He figured he knew what to expect.

"Everybody told me they can't shoot and aren't very quick," the North Farmington coach said after Friday's game with the Rockets. Then he shrugged. "What do you think?"

Seems a coach can't believe everybody he hears, particularly when it comes to Rocket basketball. Friday night in Glenn's gym, the home team had the speed of Rockets and the unerring accuracy of ICBM missiles in a 63-54 win over the Raiders.

"We're a young team," said Glenn coach Gordy Davis. "The confidence hasn't been there. We shoot in spurts; we're not one quarter and cold the next."

"It's experience. If you miss a couple shots, you can't quit shooting."

The Rockets rarely stopped shooting against North, and they didn't miss too often. They hit 26 of 46 floor shots (56.5 percent) to 20 of 67 for North (30 percent).

AND YET GLENN, which improved its overall record to 2-3 and its Western Lakes Activities Association (WLAA) mark to 2-1, failed to put the Raiders away when the opportunity presented itself. That has been a problem for the Rockets, who have led going into the fourth quarter in all five of their games.

"We showed a little more poise in the fourth quarter tonight," said Davis. They did, but the win still didn't come easy.

Glenn constructed a six-point lead (19-13) after one quarter, but Hyde substituted for Jekyll in the Rockets' second quarter. They took just nine shots (hitting four) and committed 11 turnovers, allowing North, behind spectacular

shooting by Paul Wahrman, to tie it at 31.

Unfortunately for the Raiders, Wahrman was the team's only offense. He pumped in 27 points, including 10 in the second quarter and eight in the third. Rick Anderson had an off night, managing just 11.

Glenn pulled away with a 10-0 streak in the third quarter, propelling the Rockets from a tie to a 47-37 lead. Late in the quarter, and at the start of the fourth, Davis went to a stall to try and draw North out of its zone defense.

IT DIDN'T WORK. A three-point play by Chuck Howard cut Glenn's lead in half (51-46) with 5:20 left, but the poor-shooting Raiders got no closer.

Glenn benefitted from a superb all-around game by Andy Grazzulis, who scored 18 points and nabbed 13 rebounds. He also anchored the defense and helped bring the ball up against North's pressure. Steve Hawley chipped in with 17 points, Tim Wieseley notched 13 and Greg Bates canned 10.

The loss was North's second straight, dropping the Raiders to 3-2 overall and 1-2 in the WLAA. Both teams will be idle until the new year.

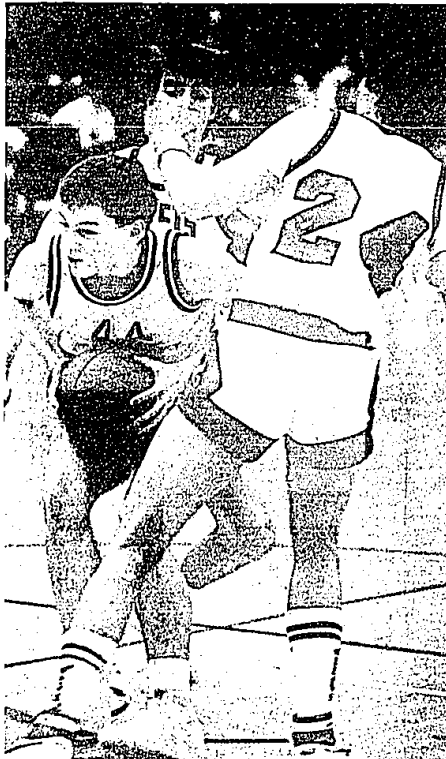
W.L. CENTRAL 63, FARMINGTON 61, OT: A dramatic comeback went for naught for the Falcons Friday.

Down 10 in the second half, the Falcons battled to tie the game in the late stages and even had a shot to win the game in regulation, but a free throw attempt missed its mark.

Kyle Muts earned the Falcons an overtime period with a clutch block of Walled Lake Central's last shot attempt.

But the Vikings outscored Farmington 8-6 in the overtime to win their third game in four tries this season.

Farmington (3-2, 1-2 in the Western Lakes) got 18 points from both Tony Racka and Muts. Bruce Kratt added 17. Darran Edmons scored 24 for Central and Mike Kohler pumped in 21.



DAN DEAN/Staff photographer

Paul Wahrman (No. 44) fights his way through a pair of John Glenn players in North's loss Friday. Wahrman scored 27 points to lead the Raiders.

Hawks stop N'ville 62-47

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

There is really no magic to Farmington Harrison's 5-0 start on the basketball floor this season.

The Hawks play hard and physical — that's a school tradition. They scrap, play a menacing zone defense and take the points any way they can get them.

But there's a theme that runs through everything the team does — an intense motivating theme that seems to have been ingrained into each player: "We refuse to lose."

All components of the Hawk machine were on display Thursday night in a 62-47 victory against Western Lakes Western Division foe Northville — which had come into the Harrison gym riding a three-game win streak and were unbeaten in the league.

To win this game by 15 points is a tribute to the way these seniors practiced all of last year. Harrison coach Mike Teachman said. The Hawks, the defending Western Lakes champions, lost four of their five starters from a year ago and haven't skipped a beat.

"THESE KIDS have learned their lessons well," Teachman said. "They realize that winning takes role players and extra effort, and they are willing to do whatever it takes to win."

The components:

• Scott Bissell. The junior guard with a feather-soft touch on his jump shot got the Hawks off and running with 11 first-quarter points. He finished with 20 on the night.

• The defense. The combination of pressure and zones kept Northville away from the basket most of the game. The Hawks forced 17 turnovers and limited the Mustangs to 19 field goals in 60 shots.

• Will Lund and Rod Sarceovich. At 6-3 and 6-2 respectively, the two gritty seniors took care of the glass for Harrison. Lund pulled down 17 rebounds and

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Sarceovich 12. Sarceovich also scored 10 points.

But the main cog was senior guard Ken George. He scored 19, including seven free throws in the final two minutes to ice the win. He handled the Northville press well, he dashed out seven assists, many of which left the raucous Harrison crowd oohing and ahing, and he made five steals.

GEORGE DISPLAYED his mettle in the third quarter. Harrison had begun the second half with a 27-18 lead, but Northville scored the first seven points of the third quarter to pull within two points.

For the next four series, George controlled the game.

He broke Northville's press and made a splendid pass to Sarceovich inside for a basket (Sarceovich missed the subsequent free throw).

Northville's possession: George steals the ball, comes down to the other end and scores.

Northville's next possession: George steals, Lund scores. Northville's spirit is deflated. Harrison outscores the Mustangs 9-2 the rest of the quarter.

And never looks back. "He does that kind of stuff regularly," said Teachman. "He does it in practice. The guy is a clone of (former Harrison All-American) John Miller in the sense that he wants to win the game. And he makes all the players around him better."

THE FOURTH quarter wasn't very pretty. A frustrated Northville team began getting extra-physical. Harrison, not exactly a patty-cake group, got in

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Snow ball: Softball junkies take game indoors

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

When the wind is ripping along with a skin-freeze factor of 25 below, when the snow is drifting, the furnaces are cranking and cars grow old overnight and die, when winter hits with the fury of an army storming a beach, it's time for some to think of Santa, for others to plan their trips south, and for others to play ball.

Play ball? Yes, to the tune of Silver Bells: "It's softball time in the city." Or, rather, township.

The wind was howling Wednesday night. Furnaces cranked, cars died and the boys from Trenton and Southgate were hanging out the home runs at the Oasis Golf Dome in Plymouth.

AND A weird game it was. Pop flies went for home runs, if they didn't go too high and bounce off the roof and into the glove of a waiting fielder for an out. Foul balls caromed off the sloping side walls and landed either in a glove for an out or on the field of play for a hit.

"It's sort of like wallyball," said Jeff Allen of the R.L. Polk team from Taylor, referring to a tennis-like game with walls. This is softball with walls.

Batters walked on three balls and fanned on two strikes. And the lights — what there were of them — cast eerie shadows as they filtered through the silky material of the air-blown dome.

But, the grass was green, alive despite the frigid tundra surrounding the dome, and the air was filled with the

ping of ball against aluminum bat and the wonderful chatter of "way to rip!", "keep your eyes on the ball!", and, over and over, "get outta here! GET OUTTA HERE! YEAAAAHHHHH!"

IT WAS, IN SHORT, softball. The drug of softball, if you will. And softball junkies from throughout Wayne County — the ones who aren't satisfied with playing at places like the Canton Softball Center or Softball City from April till November — go there to get their fix, to keep their batting eyes sharp and swings level and their arms strong.

The ones like Allen, or his teammate at second base, Lonnie Grantham, a Walled Lake resident who played on the varsity baseball team at Central

before graduating in 1980.

"You got to be a little crazy," said Grantham, laughing. "I was telling somebody: I got it all mixed up. I'm playing hockey outside in Ann Arbor and softball inside. It doesn't make any sense. It should be the other way around, hockey inside and softball outside."

"We play in the summer and fall together. And when the opportunity came up — one of the guys at work heard about it — we signed up," explained Allen. "This is a first for me. It's kind of nuts, but it's fun."

INDOOR SOFTBALL is the brainchild of Joe Paglino, an east-sider who wanted to keep involved in athletics after being released by the Chicago

White Sox in 1984 after a couple of years of Class A ball in the minor leagues.

"By day Paglino is an analyst for Campbell-Ewald, an advertising agency. By night, he does what they said couldn't be done — run a successful indoor softball league in Michigan in the winter."

"I started four years ago at a golf dome in Madison Heights. We didn't know what to expect," said Paglino. "It was even smaller there and so dark you could hardly see. People thought I was crazy."

So crazy that the Madison Heights operation was soon booked solid six nights a week. So crazy that the golf dome in Plymouth asked him to start leagues there, too. So crazy that in his first season, the dome is booked solid, too, with eight-team leagues going from Sunday to Friday, from 8 p.m. till 1 a.m.

THEY COME to Plymouth from Dearborn, Taylor, Livonia, Canton, Northville, Inkster, Wixom, Walled Lake, Farmington Hills, Riverview,

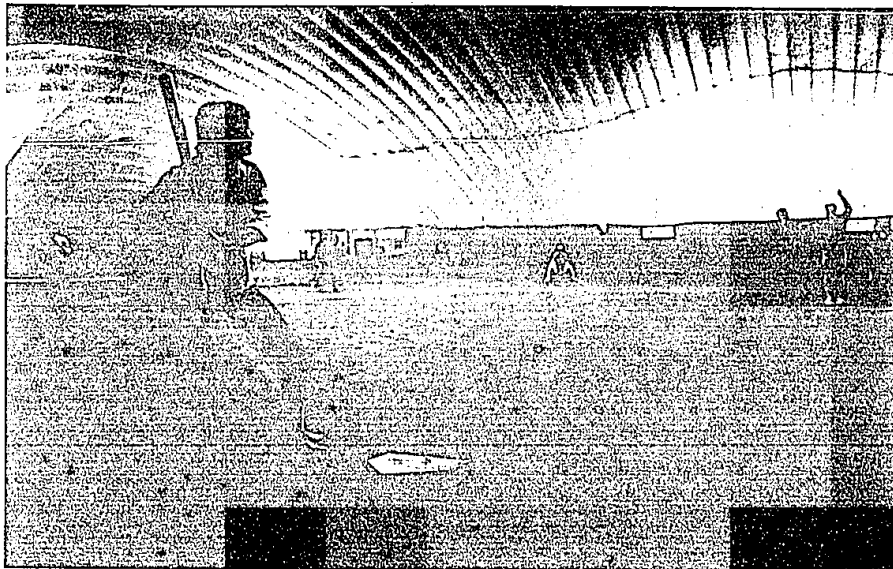
Detroit, Southfield, Garden City, Westland, Ypsilanti, and other points north, south, east and west.

It doesn't matter that the fences are just 260 feet to left and right and only 240 or so to center or that the top of the dome is just 80 feet away. It doesn't matter that the entry fees are rather stiff by summertime standards — \$250 down per team and an additional \$85 per team per game. (You don't have to heat millions of cubic feet of air in the summer.)

"It's still cheaper than going out bowling," said Paglino, who leases the space from the Oasis Golf Dome. "Besides, other places charge for umpires and balls and parking. We take care of everything here."

"Hey, you're talking about guys who'll do anything to swing a bat," he said. "Come March they're all loose and ready for the season. They've got a head start."

Behind him R.L. Polk is wheeling the bases like crazy, alternating with Southgate Ford, which does a lot of wheeling of its own. Final score: 19-16 for Polk. Two more teams are waiting to go. Play ball.



Housed inside the giant bubble west of I-275 at Five Mile is a softball junkie's dream-come-true: a place to play while the snow falls. Plenty of teams are signing up to get in on the winter fun, too.

Photos by Rick Smith