

Sports

Chris McCosky, Brad Emons editors/591-2312



(F1D)



C.J. Risak

What's important, statistics or effort?

WINNERS AND LOSERS.
Told you two weeks ago that's what March is divided into, although I've been informed since that winners and losers are also quite prominent during the month.

Still, my point was (and still is, surprisingly enough) that there weren't enough tournaments to satisfy everyone or to honor all the deserving athletes.

Maybe now you'll believe me. My contention is that so many tournaments are crammed into one measly month that heroes keep tripping over each other, while the goats are quickly lost in the obscurity of a news avalanche. None of them are properly lauded or praised or held up for public ridicule.

It's a shame. It's worse than that, it's an injustice.

WANT AN EXAMPLE? Here are a few from just the first two weeks of this sports spectacular month:

- Tom Domako, the Livonia Stevenson graduate, who played an integral part in Montana State's making the NCAA basketball tournament;
- Hank Woodmore, from Avondale, who has scored 18 points coming off the bench in Wayne State's two NCAA Division II basketball tournament victories;
- Char Govan, from Livonia Ladywood, who has helped Illinois State's women's basketball team secure a Women's National Invitational Tournament berth;

- Bob Worden, from Canton, and Chuck Chiatto, from Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook, both members of Western Michigan's Central Collegiate Hockey Association tournament champions and NCAA qualifiers.

I could continue. But why belabor the point? Because if I did, there would be some other very important people we'd be carelessly wounding. People whose teams didn't win.

GUYS LIKE Mike Donnelly. The Michigan State hockey star from Livonia has had a superb season. He's just two short of the NCAA season record for goals scored.

And yet, it was his MSU team that suffered its first defeat at Joe Louis Arena in 17 games when it lost to WMU Saturday.

And what about Schoolcraft College's women's basketball team, which excelled all season long but lost a chance for a trip to the NCAA national tournament when it fell in the state playoffs? These are the losers of March.

Yeah, it's a shame. But people will be people, and most would rather savor the success of the underdog than languish with the champion's demise. Domako is a good example.

He and his Montana State teammates are this year's surprise visitor to the NCAA tournament. The Bobcats are only 14-16, but they won the Big Sky tournament by beating, in succession, the No. 4-seeded team, the No. 1 seed and the No. 2 seed.

THEIR STAY in the field of 64 teams is expected to be short. Montana State faces third-ranked St. John's Friday; for the Bobcats to continue beyond that would take a major upset.

So what kind of attitude does Domako, a 6-foot-8 sophomore forward, copy? Cool, calm, confident. "I don't think we match up badly with St. John's," except for (All-American Walter) Berry at center," he said. "On any given night, anyone can win."

How many times have you heard that? Enough for such a statement to qualify as a cliché, certainly. Problem is, Domako believes it.

All athletes do. That's what separates them from us. We concern ourselves with things like final scores and stats and point spreads. For the fans, winning is nice, but it isn't everything. The margin of victory and the numbers attained rank equally high in importance.

Athletes play to win. They expect to win. To them, there are no underdogs. Which explains Domako's attitude. Any fan would bet the mortgage on St. John's Montana State's players are convinced they have an equal shot at victory, whatever the outsiders — the non-believers — predict.

THIS IS ALL understood, even expected, by the fans. They know the athletes will give an honest effort, but at that point there's a deviation between what should happen and what occurs.

Fans analyze effort, calculate variables (injuries, home-court advantage, etc.) and come up with a winner. Athletes only supply effort and, when needed, more effort.

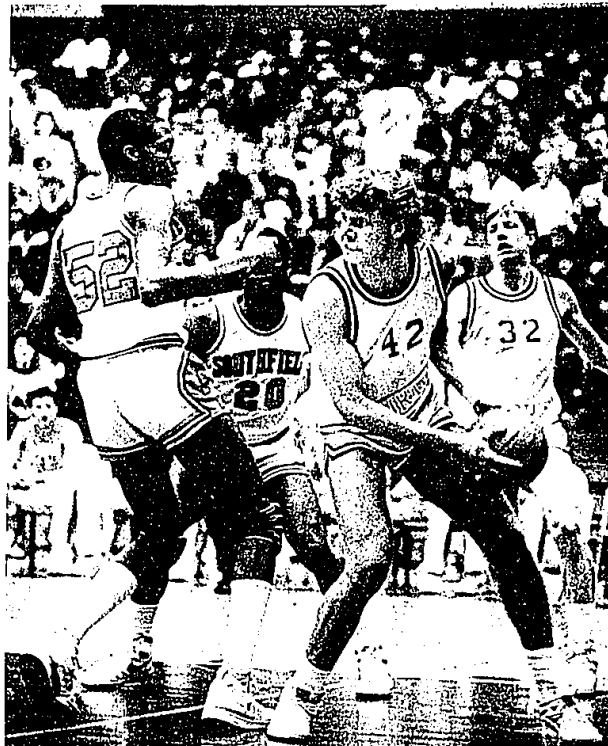
If that results in a win, fine. When a great effort fails, the athlete can shoulder it — as long as the effort existed. He still has to live with a defeat, and that can be agonizing, but he's been taught effort is what's important.

...This explains why athletes have such trouble understanding the fans who laud them unnecessarily when they lose and attack them viciously when they win, or even when they don't win by acceptable standards.

Would University of Michigan's basketball players have been praised so lavishly if they won the Big Ten title with a two-point win over Indiana? I doubt it. And if the Wolverines lose to Akron tomorrow in the first round of the NCAA tournament, what fans will remember the team's school-record 27 wins?

Athletes deserve to be honored for what we tell them is important — great effort, win or lose. That will rarely happen, of course, so the least we could do is create enough opportunities and spread them out over a long enough period of time to do them justice.

Give them all a shot at the limelight, and make sure they know we appreciate the effort.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

North's Rick Karcher (No. 42) snarls a rebound from Southfield's Mark Smith Wednesday. The Jays defeated North.

Farmington to advance to the regional finals Friday.

Blue Jays bop Raiders

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Late in Wednesday night's Class A regional tournament basketball game at West Bloomfield, the large and raucous North Farmington crowd began chanting "Who won last year, who won last year."

Southfield's response was simple: "Who cares?"

Southfield avenged last year's district championship loss to North and advanced into Friday's regional title game against Detroit Mackenzie with a convincing 52-44 victory.

"Last year didn't have anything to do with this," said Southfield coach Gregg Sliwka. "Last year's game was a tremendous win for them and always will be. It was a tremendous loss for us and always will be. But you can't do that over. It's in the past. We had other goals in mind tonight."

Like shutting down North Farmington's Rick Anderson — the theory being, if you shut down Anderson you shut down North.

THAT MAY not always be the case, but it certainly was Wednesday. Roy Bonler and Clarence McMurray took turns guarding Anderson. Guarding? Shackling would be more precise.

Anderson, playing in the final game of his illustrious four-year career (on his 18th birthday, no less), hit three of 13 shots from the field and wound up with 11 points. He got off just three shots in the first half and he didn't score a field goal until three minutes were gone in the final quarter.

"That may have been the best man-to-man defense we've played all year," Sliwka said.

"We have not had the same five guys playing for more than four games in a row because of academic problems and discipline problems and injuries. Without that, it's really hard to play man-to-man, but we did a great job of it tonight."

THE BLUE JAY defense badgered North's guards and made it difficult to get the ball to the front court. As a result, North's perimeter shooting game was out of sync most of the game. The Raiders hit just 12 of 52 shots from the floor (23 percent).

The free-throw line was charitable to the Raiders, however, and allowed them to stay close to Southfield until the final minutes. North was 19 for 24 from the line (13 for 14 in the first half).

"We just couldn't score," said North coach Tom Negoshian. "I thought we played good defensively. But I'll tell you, with the way they can jump, we have to get the over-the-back (foul) calls. Last year we got the calls when we blocked out, this year we didn't. That's basketball."

IT WAS A one-point Southfield lead at halftime, 22-21, but the Jays ran off a 13-3 string to start the second half to assume control. Rod Hurst and Bonler — Southfield's most effective weapons on the night — accounted for nine points in that run.

North pulled to within five, 41-36, with two minutes left in the game, but the Jays hit nine of 12 free throws to clinch the win.

Bonler led Southfield (17-7) with 22 points. Hurst scored 17 and was the man who held the young Jays together down the stretch.

Paul Wahrman led North (which finishes at 14-9) with 14 points. He was 10 for 11 from the free-throw line. Mike Rudin played another strong game for North, scoring nine points and contributing mightily on the defensive end.

"This will always be a tough game for us because of the kind of program they have at North," Sliwka said. "If you come to play North Farmington with the idea of blowing them out, you are dead wrong."

Valiant CC ousted, 69-59

By Brad Emons
staff writer

There may be some dispute about Greg Bent's age, but there's no disputing Detroit Mackenzie is a talented basketball team, despite a misleading 12-9 won-loss record.

The Stags' top scorer, shelved once again by a Wayne County Circuit Court judge, missed his third straight state tournament game, but his teammates continue to win. Mackenzie held off Redford Catholic Central in a first-round Class A regional tussle at West Bloomfield, 69-59.

Picking up the slack in Bent's absence was 6-foot-9 junior center Doug Smith, who scored 22 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and blocked seven shots. Terrence Brock, a 5-6 senior guard who CC fans affectionately dubbed "Spud," added 18 points. Freshman Tyrone Wray added 12 and 6-5 junior forward Johnny Woodson added 10.

"He (Brock) came through and we really need somebody to do that every game," said coach Elbert Richmond, who guided the Stags to the 1979 state crown. "Without Bent we're a lot quicker and we're able to do more pressing."

"But we lose his points and rebounds."

BENT, A NATIVE of Belize City (formerly the British Honduras), was declared ineligible prior to last week's first-round district game after Redford Bishop Borgess coach Mike Fusco complained to the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) that the 6-7 forward exceeded the maximum age limit of 19. (Borgess met Mackenzie in the first round game, losing 101-83.)

Until conflicting testimony on the part of the Bent family and the Detroit Board of Education is cleared up in Wayne Circuit Court, Judge James Miles will not allow Bent, bound next fall for the University of Detroit, to participate in the state tourney.

The Bent controversy was of no concern to the Shamrocks, who had hoped to advance to Friday's regional final. The Shamrocks, outsize and out-matched inside, made a game of it down the stretch after Mackenzie had

Inside:

Regional gymnastics — 2D
State swimming — 3D
CCC basketball — 4D
All-area wrestling — 8D

built a 14-point lead midway through the final quarter.

CC SCORED eight straight points without a Mackenzie reply. Senior guard Sean McCloskey capped the surge with a 15-foot jumper with 1:41 left, slicing the Stags lead to six, 65-59.

Mackenzie then committed a turnover, but CC's Anthony Arrington missed a shot underneath, which could have trimmed the deficit to four with 1:03 remaining.

The Stags, who worked a stall during the final four minutes of play, then made four straight free throws with under a minute left to seal the victory.

"They (Mackenzie) shot extremely well," said CC coach Bernie Holowicki, whose team bowed out at 16-7. "We played a talented team that was hot — and there's nothing worse."

"There was little intimidation factor. A couple of our guys tried to improvise on their shots, but that's part of the game."

Free throws weighed heavily in the Stags' triumph. Mackenzie and CC each made 28 field goals, but the Stags hit 17 of 18 from the line.

"We don't usually shoot that well," Richmond said. "That's what won the game for us."

SENIOR CENTER Paul Tavara, who capped a fine career, led CC with 16 points. Junior guard Lance Vaccarelli, who did an effective job at the point-guard slot after making a position change in last week's district final, added 13 points. McCloskey contributed 12 and sophomore Brian Dugas chipped in with 10.

"If that carpet sale ends and you're not at it, you'll regret it. Maybe not today, but after March 22nd, and for the rest of your life."



Save 20% to 40% on Bigelow Carpet at A.R. Kramer!

Of all the carpet joints in all the towns in Michigan, you have to go to A.R. Kramer. Because now through March 22nd, they're offering 20% - 40% off on thick, luxurious Bigelow carpets. As time goes by, you'll appreciate the stain-sol and static-resistant Anso IV®

nylon more and more. So it will be a long time before you'll want to lay it again, Sam. But you must remember this...the sale ends March 22nd.

So escape to A.R. Kramer today. This could be the beginning of a beautiful floor.

Anso IV
Bigelow

A.R. Kramer Flooring
FINE FLOOR COVERINGS SINCE 1925

ANSO IV

15986 Middlebelt (between 5 and 6 Mile Roads), Livonia 522-5300
Open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9-9; Tuesday and Saturday 9-6.