

Marlins stumble to DC for 2nd straight defeat

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Farmington Hills Mercy basketball coach Larry Baker slumped back against the hard bleachers at Dearborn Divine Child Saturday. He looked beat, on the verge of tears as he reflected on a most disturbing 49-47 loss to the Falcons.

"Hey, tell your kids they played a great game. They sure did take a beating. I apologize for that, but there isn't anything I can do about it," The coach speaking was Divine Child's assistant coach. The DC head coach, Kathy Sullivan, echoed her assistant's sentiments.

It was the second straight time officiating has played a hand in a Mercy defeat. In a 48-44 overtime loss to Ladywood, Mercy was bushwhacked by a mere succession of foul calls in the second half, most of which were disputed by Baker.

"If I seem a bit shaken by all of this it's because I feel bad for my kids," Baker said Saturday night. "They are playing hard and they are playing well enough to win. It's very difficult for them to understand what's been happening."

Here's what happened Saturday.

THE MARLINS fell behind 37-29 with three minutes left in the third quarter. At that point, Mercy looked ripe for a burial.

The Marlins' press, keyed by a hustling Jan Herberholz, forced eight consecutive turnovers. "That led to eight unanswered points and a tie game at the end of the quarter."

It also set up the win finish. DC went up by three, 47-44, with 1:25 left. Margaret DeMatia hit two free throws with 1:10 left: 47-46, DC.

Here is the play that eventually beat Mercy: DC's Gabe Senatore took a pass at center court, fed Sue Nissen underneath the hoop for the backbreaking score. Un-

girls basketball

seen by the officials was the fact that Senatore committed two traveling violations on the play — once when she caught the pass, and again before releasing the ball to Nissen. There was no foul on the play because both officials — Marty Andrews and Dick Buckholz — were on the other side of the court. Neither saw the play.

MERCY HAD a chance to tie the game in the final seconds. With 44 seconds left, Adrienne Clark hit one of two free throws to reduce the DC lead to a basket, 48-47. The Marlins forced a turnover with 19 seconds left and called time out.

They worked the ball around the perimeter against DC's zone. Yvette Malson, who led Mercy with 21 points, made a move toward the basket with four seconds left. She put up a shot from about 16 feet. Nissen, DC's powerful post player, smothered Malson's shot. It was a thunderous block and the Mercy bench screamed in vain for a foul call.

"I knew we were running a risk coming in here to play," Baker said. "This is a very tough gym to play in. But I felt we could run the risk of a loss in the face of the great competition we would get. And this was a great basketball game. Our press was their muscle. I felt this was a very constructive game. It was certainly no fun to lose, but I don't expect that this will devastate us."

Malson was the only Marlins to score in double figures. Nissen led with 18. Senatore added 11 and Andrea McAllister tossed in 10.

THERE WAS another controversial exchange between the officials and the Mercy bench during Saturday's game. One that eventually worked against the Marlins.

With his team up by three points in the second quarter, Baker wanted to pull DC out of its zone. He wanted his guards to hold the ball and force the DC guards to come out and challenge them. The rules state that the defensive team, if behind in the game, must challenge the offense with two or more players.

On the first exchange, Mercy turned the ball over. On the second exchange, DC sent one player out to challenge Malson, and Buckholz called Mercy for a five-second violation. The next time Mercy held the ball, DC again sent one defender to challenge. This time, Andrews called a technical foul against DC.

As it turned out, it was a damaging series of events for Mercy. DC went from three points down to two points up at the half.

"Obviously, holding the ball at that point didn't help us," Baker said. "It took away our momentum. But we would have much preferred to attack their man-to-man defense."

The Marlins (13-6) will open the state tournament Thursday night at Southfield. They will play Redford Union at 7:30 p.m.

MERCY 53, AQUINAS 40: Yvette Malson's 23 points helped the Marlins break a two-game losing streak with a comeback victory against visiting Southgate Aquinas Tuesday.

The win allowed Mercy to finish its regular season at 14-6. Aquinas takes an 11-7 record into the state tournament.

The Marlins, who had lost their two previous games to state-ranked Divine Child and Livonia Ladywood, started sluggishly against Aquinas. They trailed 15-9 after one quarter and 24-23 at the half.

— Chris McCosky

Mercy should roll early

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Flint Beecher. But remember, Ladywood has played in a lot of tough games this season.

TAKE A CHANCE

Westland John Glenn (16-4): The Rockets have the home court advantage in a first-round district game against Salem, but in the last outing, at Glenn, the Rockets took care of business. Glenn pulled an upset over Salem four years ago, but it's very unlikely in 1986. Glenn scored Salem earlier in the season, 47-45, but that may have been a fluke. Glenn frontliners Stacy Graham, Jenny Okon and Melissa Smiley must go wild on the boards.

Plymouth Canton (13-6): The Chiefs may be a great buy next year with several talented underclassmen. They made the Western Lakes Conference final against Salem, but did not perform well. Their first round game is a severe test — Garden City. Canton must be hitting on all cylinders to make a go of it.

Garden City (16-3): The area's most puzzling team, since at the start of the season by injuries to starters Shelly Malcoe, Terri Paul and Denise Kokowicz. Although they won the Northwest Suburban League as expected, the Cougars have yet to prove themselves against good opponents. Beating Canton would give coach Marshall Henry and his team a boost. This is a veteran team that reached the regional last year. Its most injured player is 6-foot-1 senior center Linda Lankford.

HIGH RISK

Livonia Churchill (12-8): A Jekyll and Hyde team that has beaten Garden City and lost by six to Plymouth Salem. But the Chargers been waxed by Plymouth Canton (by 43 points) and upset by Livonia Franklin. First-year coach Tom Lang's unpredictable team should not be taken lightly in the Glenn district.

PENNY STOCKS

North Farmington (9-12): A young team that has an outside shot of winning the Northville district if it gets past the host team.

Redford Bishop Borgess (5-13): The return of senior Katy Foley would help the Spartans' cause in the Dearborn Fordson district. After playing a tough Central Division schedule in the Catholic League, sophomores Pat Hines and Tanisha Stokes grew up in a hurry. Dearborn Edsel Ford, the Northwest Suburban League's runner-up and Borgess' first-round foe, should beware.

Livonia Franklin (7-13): The Patriots are playing better of late, stunning Churchill a week ago, but they are a real longshot to make the district finals at Glenn.

DON'T RISK IT

Redford Thurston (12-9): The Eagles have enjoyed a decent season under coach Mike Schuetz, but the Class B district at Dearborn Heights Robichaux is a real bear. Thurston drew a bye and will meet highly touted Dearborn Divine Child in second round.

Wayne Memorial (7-11): The Zebras, another good buy in the future, could win their first round game against a weak Taylor Truman team, but beating an above-average Taylor Center team in the Kennedy district finals is remote.

Livonia Stevenson (5-15): The Spartans have been a two-man show of late, Denise Vince and Sue Zatorski. Playing host Northville in the first round of the districts will provide little satisfaction.

Livonia Clarenceville (7-12): Sputtering of late, the Trojans have little depth and have the monumental task of beating host Royal Oak Shrine in their district opener.

SELL NOW!

(Before it's too late)

Redford Union (4-16): What a lucky break. The Panthers get to open with (please have) Mercy.

Farmington (2-18): Give coach Diana Fair some credit. She's never been down despite a dismal season. Beating Novi (13-4) is out of the realm of possibility.

Farmington Harrison (0-20): Still on the board, but what can you say. The Hawks have remained aloft, despite almost filing for bankruptcy before the season started.

OFF THE BOARD

Plymouth Christian (record unknown): After a few forfeits, Wall Street analysts don't want to speculate.

Hawks set sights on Silverdome

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"Oh, no. There will not be a let-down," Herrington said. "This is the big game. This is the one that gets you into the Silverdome (state final). In a lot of ways, the semifinal game is the hardest one to win."

Harrison has used a simple but effective formula for success thus far: no mistakes. Consider:

In the two playoff games the Hawks have forced nine turnovers which led to 21 points. They have committed four turnovers resulting in seven points for the opposition.

Riverview was penalized six times for 50 yards. One penalty nullified a touchdown. Northern was penalized seven times for 45 yards. In the two games, Harrison has been flagged just three times for 50 yards.

Harrison, as has been its trademark over the years, rarely beats itself.

HARRISON'S OFFENSE, which has put up 57 points in the two games, has been a two-pronged attack. Scott Bissell has carried the ball 47 times for 146 yards. He has

also scored six TDs, 11 TDs in the Hawks last four games. Then there's the strong right arm of Mark Murray. The senior has completed 22 of 39 passes for 348 yards and two touchdowns. He's been picked off three times. He has used five different receivers: Mark Schmidt, Gary Krollick and Kurt Davis.

By the way, do you remember what happened the last time Harrison beat Marysville in the Class B state playoffs? The Hawks went on to win the state championship.

Engineers win twice off the ice

The Hennessey Engineers Junior A hockey team picked up a couple of wins last week without taking to the ice.

Because Chicago has dropped out of the North American Junior Hockey League, league officials have agreed to include the Little Caesars Junior Invitational Hockey Tournament games played in October on the teams' records.

"We need to have 45 league games in order to qualify for the national tournament," said Engineers coach A.J. Baker. "To make up for Chicago, we get to add the tournament games to our record. Each of the teams in our league played common opponents in that tournament."

So the Engineers, suffering through a five-losses-in-six-games

skid, gladly accepted the two victories.

BUT BACK on the ice Friday night, the Engineers suffered a 7-3 defeat to the Detroit Falcons at the Plymouth Cultural Center ice arena.

"If we could wipe out that first period, we win the game," said Baker. The Falcons bombarded the Engineers with five first-period goals.

The onslaught was triggered by Plymouth resident Sean Worden. Worden scored two goals and added an assist. One of his goals came while the Falcons were killing a penalty. Worden intercepted a pass at the blue line, skated in all alone and drilled a shot past goalie George Abbott.

"We gave them four incredible opportunities and they cashed in on

every one of them," Baker said.

The Engineers got second period goals from Jeff Smith, Larry Pilt and Tom Madden. Bryan Kryger assisted on two of the goals. Doug Brown relieved Abbott in goal in the second period and effectively shut the doors on the high flying Falcons.

The Engineers, 7-8 on the season and at the bottom of the three-team NAJHL, outshot the Falcons 32-31. Compuware, 14-0, continues to pace the league.

The Engineers will travel to the Detroit Skating Club Arena in Birmingham Saturday for a 7 p.m. clash with the St. Clair Shores Junior B team, the premier Junior B team in the Detroit area.

— Chris McCosky

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