

St. Mary's rolls short-staffed OU

One basketball team's troubles are another's salvation.

Or so it appeared Saturday when St. Mary's College visited Oakland University. The two teams had met earlier at SMC's Dombrowski Fieldhouse, and OU came away with a 77-64 win. It was the "Pioneers' seventh-straight triumph. For the Eagles, the loss came midway through what turned out to be a seven-game losing skid.

So it seemed at OU Saturday, the 6-8 Eagles would be hard-pressed against the 9-2 Pioneers. But off-court occurrences evened it out for SMC, enabling it to temporarily snap out of its downward trend to post a 70-60 victory.

The victory, while needed and appreciated, did not reverse SMC's losing ways. The Eagles lost a heartbreaker at Northwood Institute Monday, 91-87, making them 0-3 in the NAIA District 23 games they've played thus far this season. In SMC's win over OU, the Eagles took advantage of a Pioneer team crippled by the loss of starters Dave Hintz, Jimmy Johnson and Mike McCann. Hintz suffered a hairline fracture in his ankle an hour before the game, while Johnson and Hintz were both absent for personal reasons.

SMC LED 33-27 at the half, thanks to seven points from Jon Bow and six each from Theo Pearson and Safaa Qasawa. OU battled back to tie it in the second half at 44-41 on John Henderson's jumper with 10:27 left, but the Pioneers could not keep pace. A basket by Brad Turner and a three-pointer by Greg Spraggins put SMC back up by five with 9:36 left.

The Pioneers never pulled even again. With 1:23 to play, Henderson scored and was fouled. His three-point play narrowed it to 62-57, but Bob Bringham's lay-in and free throw with 55 seconds left pushed SMC's advantage to 67-57, icing the win.

Bow's 20 points and 11 rebounds paced the Eagles. Lance Davis added 11 points and three steals, and Pearson and Spraggins each scored 10 points. Spraggins also had four assists.

Scott Bittinger netted 20 points for OU, while Henderson contributed 15 and seven rebounds. Rob Alvin, a junior from Birmingham Groves, came off the bench to hit three-of-six three-point shots, scoring nine points. SMC outshot OU, hitting 28-of-52 floor shots (54 percent) to the Pioneers' 22-of-56 (39 percent). The Eagles also outrebounded OU — without team-leaders McCann and Hintz — 42-30.

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ON MONDAY, Kevin Austin hit a baseline jumper with 10 seconds left and Kevin Brown earned two free throws four seconds later to lift NI past SMC.

The late scoring surge by the Northern cast a shadow on a valiant Eagles' rally. SMC trailed 76-68 late in the contest, but stormed back to tie it at 87-87 on Spraggins' two free throws with 19 seconds remaining. Then scored and was fouled with 13 seconds to go. He missed his free throw, but Brown grabbed the rebound and was fouled.

Five Northern reached double figures in scoring: James Simmons and Brown, with 21 a piece; Fred Ashe with 16; Austin with 12; and Steve Sontlich with 10.

SMC got a superb performance from Bow, who hit 10-of-15 floor shots, scoring 25 points and grabbing eight rebounds. Pearson added 18 points, Spraggins had 16 points, four assists and three steals, and Davis contributed nine points. The game was tied at 40-40 at the half before NI (7-3) took control.

ON DEC. 30, OU built a seven-point halftime lead (25-18) by limiting Tri-State University (Angola, Ind.) to six-of-28 first-half shooting (21 percent) en route to a 68-56 win at the Pioneers' Lepley Sports Center.

Bittinger and Stacy Davis sparked OU. Bittinger got 20 points, four assists and two steals, while Davis collected 18 points, seven rebounds and three steals. The bench also contributed, with Henderson chipping in nine points, six rebounds, two assists and two steals, and Alvin adding three-for-three floor shooting for eight points, two assists and two steals.

Greg Graff's 22 points and eight boards was best for TSU. For the game, the Trojans hit just 36 percent (22-of-61) from the floor. OU was 25-of-54 (46 percent). The Pioneers also had the advantage on the boards, 41-34.

OU now embarks on one of the most treacherous stretches of its schedule as it visits Grand Valley State tonight and Saginaw Valley State Saturday. SMC travels to Dubuque, Iowa, for the National Catholic Basketball Tournament, which features 16 top NAIA Catholic teams. SMC plays host to Loris College at 8:45 p.m. tonight.

Free throws boost Pioneers

By C.J. Rieck

staff writer

Is Bob Taylor serious? Does the coach of Oakland University women's basketball team really believe "we are the worst 10-1 team in America?"

Believe it or not, the Lady Pioneers are just that after spurring to a 70-64 triumph over University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Monday at Lepley Sports Center. Junior guard Margaret Boyle's 20 points, including a school-record 12-for-12 free throw shooting, and six assists ignited OU.

The win did not come easily. "I felt we were going to win the game, but it would be a struggle," said Taylor, in his first season coaching OU. "We could never get into our pressure (defense). I thought we could get to them."

What prevented the Lady Pioneers from applying full-court pressure, which Taylor figured would be instrumental in overcoming UW-M's superior size and experience, was the loss of three players.

GUARD KIM KLEIN went first. The junior had poured in eight points with 2:35 left in the first half when she was elbowed under the boards, opening a gash that required eight stitches to close.

With Klein done for the game ("She wanted to come back. She's a tough kid," said Taylor), freshman Dawn Lichty was summoned. Lichty, the Troy Zion Christian product who often is called on in Taylor's three-guard set, played well — until fouling out with 9:38 left to play. Then, with 4:26 to go, starting center Debbie Delie followed Lichty to the bench with her fifth personal.

All of which forced Taylor to do some juggling. "No one was in the right position," he said. "It was a left-handed game. Everything was backwards."

Still, the Lady Pioneers' trademark of this season surfaced again. As Taylor explained, "We always find a way to win." They did again, using most of their damage at the free throw line.

Both teams made 25 field goals, but UW-M made just 14-of-31 free

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throws. OU was far better, connecting on 36-of-39.

IT WAS A game of surges throughout. OU outscored the Panthers 15-5 over the final six minutes of the first half to go up 35-26 at the break. In the second half, the Lady Pioneers were able to open up leads of 13 and 12, but UW-M kept bouncing back. With 8:20 left, the Panthers' Polly Hagg hit two free throws to make it 66-65.

OU mounted the next drive, though, outpacing the Panthers 10-4 over a 2 1/2 minute span. The Lady Pioneers were six-for-six from the line in the rally. UW-M's last gasp came in the final minute, when Umenia White's basket narrowed the gap to 70-64 with 51 seconds left. But OU got the final six points to secure the win.

Sarah Knuth also had a strong game for the Lady Pioneers, netting

19 points, 10 rebounds and three steals. Socia Pearson contributed 11 points. White paced UW-M with 27 points and 12 rebounds. Hagg had 14 points and Carrie Nonhof added nine points and 11 rebounds.

ON DEC. 31, OU was a near-perfect host to Aquinas College. The Lady Pioneers trailed 34-11 with 2:30 left in the first half before coming alive, outscoring the Saints 14-1 to narrow the deficit to 35-25 at the intermission. The second half belonged to OU, which rallied for a 60-55 victory.

Again, Boyle triggered the win with 13 points, seven assists and a school-record 11 steals. The Lady Pioneers had 26 thefts in the game to 10 for Aquinas. Lichty collected 14 points, three steals and three assists and Knuth had 10 points, 10 rebounds and four steals. Brenda McNeil's 14 points and 10 rebounds led the Saints. Cheryl Carpenter had 12 points, six rebounds, six steals and six assists.

OCC women raise record to 7-3

Oakland Community College's women's basketball team ran its overall record to 7-3 by splitting a pair of games against Western Conference foes before the Christmas break.

OCC lost to Muskegon CC 68-50, then rebounded to defeat Grand Rapids CC 60-26. In the loss to Muskegon, the Lady Raiders trailed 16-4 early before rallying to pull to within 27-20 at the half. They kept their comeback rolling in the second

half, and got as close as 40-38 before disaster struck.

Michelle Taulbee drew her fourth personal foul and Heidi Eklundson was sidelined with a twisted ankle. Combined with a severe cold-shooting spell, the Lady Raiders went from two points down to 14 in a seven-minute span.

Maria Long netted 13 points, Shelley Duncan scored 12 and Kelley Geiger added 10 for OCC. Joanne Gregory contributed eight points and Taulbee grabbed 12 rebounds.

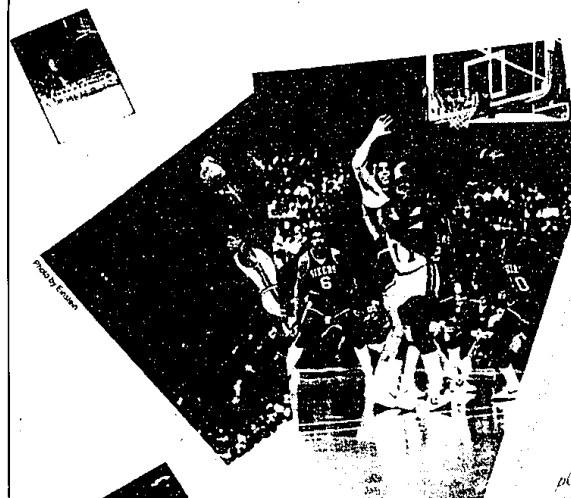
IN THE VICTORY over GRCC, the Lady Raiders constructed a 19-4 scoring surge over the last 13 minutes of the first half to go from an 8-4 lead to a 27-4 halftime advantage. By the six-minute mark of the second half, the victory was assured as OCC outpointed GRCC 12-2 to stretch its lead to 39-10.

Geiger's 16 points and 11 rebounds was high for OCC as the entire Lady Raider squad got into the act. Long

had seven steals and six points and Gregory collected eight rebounds and six points.

Prior to playing the two games against Western Conference foes, OCC improved its Eastern Conference record to 2-1 by blasting Highland Park CC 10-47. Four Lady Raiders reached double figures in scoring: Duncan (20), Long (12), Taulbee (11), and Geiger (10). Duncan and Taulbee also had 10 boards apiece, and Long dished out eight assists.

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OCC men rip HFCC

A solid first five minutes enabled Oakland Community College's men's basketball team to outscore Henry Ford CC 44-32 in the first half, en route to an 89-68 victory Saturday at HFCC.

Balanced scoring was the difference for the Raiders, who evened their Eastern Conference record at 2-2 thanks to five players reaching double figures. Carson Butler's 19

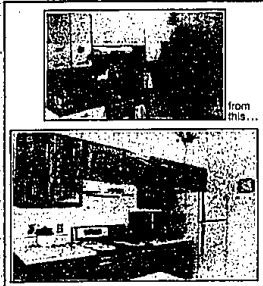
points was high for OCC, followed by Gary Holt's 15, Derrick Williams with 13, Sam Smith at 12 and Greg Davis with 11.

Williams also nabbed 14 rebounds and Davis, a 6-foot-6 freshman center, grabbed 10.

All 13 of Williams' points were scored in the first half. Holt scored 11 of his 15 in the second.

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