

Sports

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Marian tops Mercy, tightens grip on first

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Until the next practice session, winning makes it easier for coaches to accept a less-than-perfect performance.

That's how Birmingham Marian coach Mary Lillie felt after the Mustangs won an important Central Division basketball game from Farmington Mercy 44-41 in the Marlin's gym Tuesday.

At the moment, what mattered most to Lillie was Marian had taken a two-game lead over second-place Mercy with three division games remaining.

The Mustangs, rated No. 3 in Class A, are 7-0 and 12-1 overall, and the Marlin's, who hadn't lost since suffering a 52-51 setback at Marian five games ago, are 5-2 and 8-5 overall.

BOTH TEAMS committed enough

girls basketball

turnovers late in the game to last them for some time, but it was Marian that came up with enough big plays — and points — to weather a nerve-racking fourth quarter.

"It wasn't snazzy, but we came out ahead and that's all that counts," Lillie said.

"We played well enough to win. If that's all we ever had to do, then I'm happy. But I'd like them to go out and execute like they can every time."

For Mercy coach Larry Baker and the Marlin's, the defeat was an opportunity lost. The chance to be divi-

sion co-leaders slipped through their hands when sophomore point guard Jenny Clinton's attempt from three-point distance glanced off the rim as time expired.

"We came up against Marian on a night when we didn't think they were playing their best brand of basketball," Baker said, "and we didn't take advantage of some of the opportunities they gave us."

THE MARLINS held a slim lead throughout the game, but Jennifer Shasky's three-pointer and Mary Rogers' free throws gave Marian a 39-38 lead early in the final quarter.

Adrienne Clark made the front end of a two-shot foul to knot the score with 5:58 to play, but Mercy went 4-4 minutes without scoring as the teams seemed to do nothing but turn the ball over and steal it back again.

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Press key to Falcon win

Farmington's pressure defense turned the tide early in Tuesday's girls basketball game as the Falcons got in front early and coasted past winless Farmington Harrison.

Farmington forced the Hawks into first-quarter turnovers and capitalized for a 24-1 lead. That proved decisive with the Falcons holding second- and third-quarter leads of 41-14 and 59-19.

"That's what won the ballgame (for Farmington) — the first quarter," Harrison coach Jim Neve said. "Our girls have been able to break the press this year, but this time they just froze."

Four players reached double figures for Farmington — Kelli Koss with 16, Melissa Tisdale 14, Stacy Swander 11 and Marisa Ferrari 10. Darcy Pinz paced the Hawks with 13 points and 11 rebounds.

The Falcons are 4-9 overall and ended an eight-game losing streak. Harrison is 9-13 and has lost 95 straight.

"They're really an improved team from last year, too," Neve said of Farmington. "But my girls went out and tried, and our goal is still the same. We're hoping to get a couple victories before the end of the season."

"We have four seniors who put up with the aggravation of the last four years, and it's catching up with

them. It's up to me to convince them they can break that streak."

NORTHVILLE 50, N. FARMINGTON 41: The Mustangs turned a one-point lead into a 25-16 halftime advantage and survived a second-half rally by North Farmington, 7-6 overall.

"They got hot (in the second quarter) and made just about everything they threw up there," Raiders coach Greg Cuppling said.

Donna O'Brien was ill earlier in the week and played sparingly, and her absence from the lineup disrupted North's continuity, he said.

"We didn't pass the ball well and we didn't shoot the ball well," Cuppling said. The Raiders got off to an ominous start when they missed their first 10 shots — all from close range.

"They pressed us and we made some mistakes," he added. "It was probably our poorest game since our first game."

Suri Butcher scored 17 points and had eight rebounds for North. Debbie Weintraub added eight points. Northville is 8-6.



Jenny Clinton (15) passes up court to Adrienne Clark on the fast break Tuesday against Birmingham Marian. The Marlin's lost a sec-

ond time to Marian, 44-41, despite a game-high 18 points from Clark.

Harrison, Rockets meet for league championship

By Dan O'Meara
and Brad Emons
staff writers

Only one school other than Farmington Harrison has won the Western Lakes Activities Association football championship.

That was Westland John Glenn — and it was Harrison the Rockets defeated, 28-7, in the 1985 contest.

In a rematch of that showdown, the tradition-laden powerhouses will go head-to-head for the WLA title at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Glenn.

"I've never thought the revenge factor was that big in football because it's different kids playing each year," said Harrison coach John Herrington, who hopes to guide the Hawks to their fifth championship in six tries since the league was founded in '82.

Harrison, ranked No. 1 Class B, won its sixth straight Western Division championship with a 5-0 record and goes into the game 7-0 overall.

FOR THE second straight year, coach Chuck Gordon's Rockets, 6-1

football

overall, finished in a three-way tie for the Lakes Division title, but Glenn got the nod this year over North Farmington (the '86 runner-up) and Livonia Stevenson since it has the higher playoff-point average.

The running game dominated the league final of two years ago when All-State Tony Boles rushed for 244 yards in Glenn's victory.

But, as Herrington points out, this is a new year, and the current teams could produce a different style of game since both offenses are evenly balanced between the run and the pass.

In light of that, the quarterbacks could play decisive roles, and both have outstanding signal callers — senior Clint Straub for the Rockets and sophomore Millard Coleman for the Hawks.

"That could be one of the keys — who throws the ball best," Herrington said. But the bigger question may be "Who can protect them the best?" he added.

THE 5-FOOT-9, 160-pound Coleman, who has 10 touchdown passes, has a deceptively strong arm and can also scramble. His best day was a 182-yard, three-TD game against Livonia Churchill.

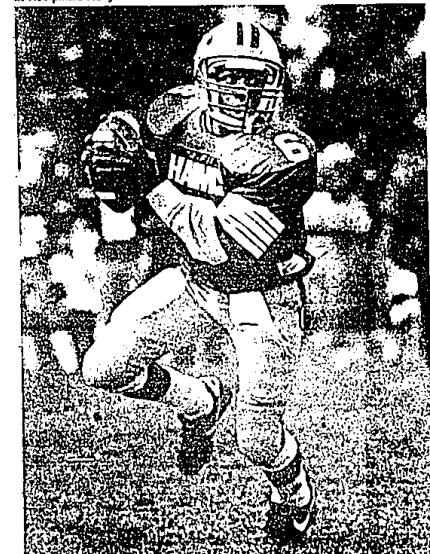
"We've got to control and contain Millard Coleman," Gordon said. "Coleman is mobile, has great vision and sees the whole field."

"We also have to keep (tailback Aaron) Vaverski under control," he added. "When you have a run and pass threat, that puts stress on the whole defense."

Straub (5-10, 155) gives the traditionally ground-oriented Rockets a passing attack that complements their strong rushing game. He has thrown for a school-record 12 touchdowns after an 8-0-13, two-TD showing in one half against Walled Lake Central last Friday.

"I feel our secondary has really come on, but we haven't faced a quarterback as good as Straub,"

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THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

Sophomore quarterback Millard Coleman has been a key figure in Harrison's march to the Western Lakes championship game for an unprecedented sixth straight year.

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