

Canton hands North league playoff loss

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Plymouth Canton's playoff opener held little suspense Tuesday night as the Chiefs bowled over North Farmington 71-25 in the Canton gymnasium.

The Chiefs, champions of the Western Division and 14-4 overall, will face Walled Lake Central in the semifinals of the Western Lakes Activities Association girls basketball tournament at 6 p.m. Saturday at Plymouth Salem.

"It was a good start because it's a tournament game," Canton coach Rob Neu said. "Any time you experience a do-or-die situation, you're putting a nice challenge on your team."

"And it was good for us because we took care of the game."

That the Chiefs did. After a tentative few minutes in which the Raiders held the early lead, Canton came on strong and won going away.

NEU'S SQUAD didn't press at the start. North saw the opening and grabbed a 6-2 lead while the Chiefs missed six of seven shots to begin the game.

"Right now our main focus is to get our best defense ready, and that's our half-court man," Neu said regarding his decision not to press early.

Karen Boluch's shot from the corner tied the score with 2:52 left in the first quarter, and Karen Perko's layup half a minute later put Canton in front to stay.

The Chiefs' inside defense tightened up and kept the Raiders away from the basket for the most part. Canton eventually applied some pressure, which forced North into half-court turnovers.

The Chiefs were 10-of-18 from the floor in the second quarter and extended their lead to 38-18 at halftime behind eight points from both Heather Miller and Perko.

THE RAIDERS shot well, hitting 50 percent of their first-half attempts, but they just didn't have many opportunities against Canton's defense. North was 4-of-8 in each of the first two quarters.

"We had a little trouble getting ready for the ball game," Neu said. "Whether it was Parents' Night or the seniors' last game (at home), I don't know."

"Hopefully, that won't be an issue when we need 32 minutes of sound basketball. If we can just extend our game a few more minutes to the full 32 instead of 27 or 28, we'll have a chance to win some big game."

The Chiefs continued to capitalize on turnovers in the third quarter, and Miller's rebound basket and three-point play upped Canton's lead to 48-21.

"They put so much pressure on you," North coach Greg Capling said. "We've got sophomore guards handling the ball, and young kids are going to make mistakes. We'll have to live with that until they mature."

THE RAIDERS lost Vikki Seamons with torn ligaments in last week's game with Farmington, and center Suzi Butcher played three quarters Tuesday with a sprained ankle before retiring to the bench early in the fourth.

"We might as well save her for the district as much as we can," Capling said.

"It's just hard keeping everything together when everybody is injured and not used to playing with each other."

The Chiefs scored the first 11 points of the final period for a 63-29 margin and ended up shooting 14-of-31 in the second half. North's only fourth-quarter points came on free throws as Jennie Basford connected on five of six to cap a 13-point night for the Raiders, 7-10.

Canton's Perko finished with a game-high 16 points, and Miller, playing in her final game at Phase III along with fellow senior Boluch, had 15. Amanda Bell chipped in with 12 points.

"SHE'S A good player to come off the bench for us," Neu said of Bell, who dropped in some long-range shots.

"She enables me to put her in for anybody, and all of a sudden we have an outside scorer."

"They're big, they shoot well and you can't concentrate on anybody, because they can all put the ball in the basket," said Capling, whose team faced a definite height disadvantage.



Lynn Pennala protects the basketball from an aggressive Canton defender, Jenny Russell, during Tuesday's WLAA playoff game. Jennie Basford had 13 points to lead the Raiders.



Karen Najarian and her Farmington Harrison teammates played Livonia Stevenson evenly for three quarters Tuesday before falling 63-39 in league playoff action.

Mercy to face Marian again

'We lost the first one by one point and the second by three, so we hope we can get a jump on them this time. This is the one that counts.'

— Larry Baker, Mercy coach on 3rd meeting with Marian

A final-quarter rally couldn't save Southgate Aquinas from a 39-32 defeat Tuesday against Farmington Hills Mercy in a Catholic League girls basketball first-round playoff game played at Aquinas.

Mercy now advances to play Birmingham Marian in the league semifinals at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in University of Detroit's Calihan Hall. It will be the third meeting this season between Mercy and the defending league champions; the winner advances to the championship game against the Dearborn Divine Child-Livonia Ladywood winner Sunday at Calihan.

Mercy lost the first one by one point and the second by three, so we hope we can get a jump on them this time," said Marian coach Larry Baker of Thursday's game against Aquinas. "This is the one that counts."

Had Aquinas hit its free throws, it might have upset the Marins. The Raiders certainly had more chances, taking 15 shots from the stripe to just eight for Mercy. Problem was, Aquinas made just four; the Marins hit five.

Mercy (now 11-6) led 16-7 at the half and 27-15 after three quarters, but foul trouble allowed Aquinas (19-6) close to within five in the final quarter. That was as close as the Raiders could come, though, thanks in part to the scoring of Jan Herberholz (18 points) and the scoring and rebounding of Jennifer Slosar (10 points, nine boards).

Leanne Tennant paced Aquinas with nine points.

FARMINGTON 52, CHURCHILL 13: The Falcons knew where to draw the line in Tuesday's game at Livonia Churchill — exactly 15 feet from the basket.

Because it was at the free throw line that Farmington had the edge

against the Chargers. Each team shot 25 free throws. Churchill made nine, the Falcons canned 16.

The game was even after three quarters, tied at 36-36. A 16-7 final-quarter outburst gave Farmington the victory.

"I didn't think we played a good game," said Falcon coach Diana Fair. "Churchill's improved a lot, but we didn't play our kind of game. We had trouble holding onto the ball, but we managed to pull it off."

Leading Farmington (now 6-11) was Stacy Swanderaki, with 16 points, including 10-of-13 free

throws, and Kelli Koss with 15. Linda Harker contributed nine points, all in the second half, and Erica Hatcher had six points and nine rebounds. Shelly Porter paced Churchill (2-15) with nine points.

STEVENS 63, HARRISON 39: Once again, Farmington Harrison threatened to end its nearly five-year winless streak. The Hawks closed to within 45-39 with five minutes left to play, but then Livonia Stevenson coach Chuck Hobestreit inserted his five starters and they triggered an 18-0 streak to win going

girls basketball

away Tuesday at Harrison.

The Spartans (6-11) led 10-9 after one quarter, 25-19 at the half and 43-35 after three periods. Sue Zatorski led Stevenson with 17 points and 10 rebounds. Marcella Allen added 13 points, including nine in the final quarter, and Kristin Hellman and Lee Ann Luoto grabbed 10 boards apiece.

Harrison (0-17) got 13 points from Darcy Pinz and 11 from Lanell Shoemaker. Each also nabbed 15 rebounds before fouling out midway through the final quarter — and, as Hawk coach Jim Neve put it, "That was the ball game right there."

A week earlier, the Hawks lost by just two points (27-25) to Churchill. The two teams meet again Saturday in the Western Lakes' tournament at Plymouth Salem.

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