

Talent remains on SMC squad

By C.J. Flisak
staff writer

Goode — and now forgotten. Goodbye, Jon Bow, Theo Pearson, Brad Turner. So long, Clarence Jones, Anthony Strickland, Hoadling for greener pastures. Well, good riddance and good luck. Those five — together with Mo Steward — were expected to be the nucleus of St. Mary's College's basketball team this season. But when coach Rich Zaleski abandoned the program in late August to accept a coaching position at Bristol (Tenn.) College, he decided to take his recruits with him.

Zaleski convinced Pearson and Turner — starters at St. Mary's last year — and Strickland and Jones, redshirts who were expected to start this season, to go with him to Bristol.

After he accepted the new coaching post, Zaleski immediately put together a Bristol roster that featured half St. Mary's team. Two other top recruits who planned to attend St. Mary's, Dave Leyerla and Dwight Garrett of Lapeer East, also changed course thanks to Zaleski and are now at Bristol.

SO — WHO'S LEFT?
New coach Glen Donahue, believe it or not, still has some talent to work with in spite of Zaleski's efforts. The Eagles put their talent on display last weekend in the Gino's Pizza Classic at Dornbroski Fieldhouse.

St. Mary's opened strongly, whipping Tiffin 86-83 Friday behind Safina Qasawa's 18 points and Jim Butcher's 16.

On Saturday, St. Mary's played Purdue-Calumet in the championship game. The Eagles had a chance to win the tournament; they had the ball out of bounds with 12 seconds left and the score tied. But a charging call and poor defense gave Calumet a 91-90 victory.

It was the first loss in three games for St. Mary's. There will be others, certainly; Donahue is aware of that. He's already set his recruiting goals.

"We're obviously a long way from where we want to be," he said. "And yes, we do have to upgrade the caliber of players. All the players we have now are good players; what we need are some great ones."

BUT FOR NOW, Donahue — who compiled a 401-205 record in 19 seasons as Highland Park CC coach — is happy with the 10 players left him, including seven who played at St. Mary's last year and another who transferred from St.

collegesports

Mary's to University of Michigan-Dearborn for a year, then came back when the UM-D basketball program was canceled.

"I know we'll play hard every game," said Donahue. St. Mary's has a good mix of talent, with both size and speed. Donahue has "always played a lot of players," which means all 10 Eagles will get time on the court.

At center, big things are expected from 6-foot-8 junior Jerome Washburn. He was named to the all-tournament team last weekend. "He can post-up, he's very strong and he plays good post defense," said Donahue. "And he's a good rebounder."

BACKING UP Washburn — who weighs 240 — is 6-5 junior Mike Moroney. Other "wide bodies" Donahue can call on for inside strength are 6-8 senior Mike Belczak (from Redford St. Agatha), the UM-D transfer, and 6-4 sophomore James Laker. Both need to supply a bit of everything — scoring, rebounding, passing, defense — in Donahue's scheme.

At small forward is Qasawa, a 6-3 senior, and Laker. Qasawa is a hard worker who averaged 7.2 points a game a year ago.

Two more returnees fill the guard spots. Greg Spraggins, a 5-10 senior, started most of the season and averaged 10.8 points. Bob Bringham, a 6-4 shooter, scored 4.5 points per game coming off the bench.

Also seeing plenty of action in the backcourt will be Butcher, a 6-foot junior sharpshooter who led St. Mary's in three-pointers last season (39 of 107); James Curtis, a 6-1 junior transfer from Oxnard CC in Los Angeles; and Denny Butcher (not related to Jim), a 6-foot freshman and son of former Detroit Pistons coach Dennis Butcher.

THUS FAR, Donahue has been pleased with his team's "ability to set the tempo of the game. Any time we don't, we'll be in trouble."

Just like his Highland Park CC teams, you can expect lots of points in St. Mary's games. "But the high scoring will come from pressure defense," he pointed out.

Rebounding, Donahue added, "is the one area that hurt us in the tournament. We let our opponents get a few too many extra shots."

Rocks league champs again

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

The winner and still champion — Plymouth Salem.

The Rocks left no doubt they deserved to keep the Western Lakes Activities Association girls basketball trophy Saturday night as they KO'd Plymouth Canton 57-42 to claim their third straight title.

In boosting its season record to 19-1, Salem started fast and raced to an 18-2 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Dena Head, who has played on all three championship teams as have fellow seniors Keri McBride and Stacy Sovine, collected 21 of her game-high 28 points as the charged-up Rocks had the game well in hand by halftime, 35-16.

"I don't think we came prepared to play any differently than we normally do," Head said. "The lead doesn't say anything until the final seconds tick off."

"This championship is great, but Thursday's game means a lot more," she added. "That game will be the test for our team."

SALEM and the Chiefs, who have been the losers in each of the last three WLAA finals, will meet again at 7:30 p.m. Thursday when they square off in the first game of the Class A district tournament at Salem.

"Can't wait," said Canton coach Rob Neu. "We're delighted to get to play these guys again. We'll look at the film, make our adjustments — and we'll come to play."

In retrospect, it's possible the decisive point in Saturday's game was the opening basket. McBride dropped in a three-pointer shortly after the opening bell, and the Rocks never looked back.

"That was a big score, because that put us back on our heels," Neu said.

IF THAT was a turning point, then the game was decided in the first quarter. Salem led 11-0 before Susan Ferko, who led Canton with 17 points, broke the ice with two free throws at 3:22.

But Head converted a three-point play, Jill Estey drove the baseline for two and Head scored off the fast break to put the Rocks on top by 18 at the end.

"Being able to start like we did helped us for 32 minutes," Salem coach Fred Thoman said. "We put them in the position of playing catch-up, and that's a tough position to play from."

Salem's 2-3 zone defense was the biggest factor in establishing a lead for the Rocks.

The Canton girls had trouble shooting over the combination of

Farmington charges past Harrison

Farmington charged out of the gates, raced to a big halftime lead and won going away over Farmington Hills Harrison in girls basketball Saturday, 66-26.

The Falcons, who improved to 5-11 in league games and 7-12 overall, led 20-1 after one quarter and 32-9 at the end of the half.

Kelli Rose scored 10 of her game-high 17 points in the first half, including eight in the opening period.

"She really played a nice game, offensively and defensively," Farmington coach Diana Fair said. "She's really been playing well lately."

Stacy Swanderski added 13 points and Kirsten Norman 12. Melissa Tisdale and Erica Hatcher tossed in eight points apiece, and Tisdale also led the Falcons with nine rebounds. Norman pulled down eight caroms.

The Falcons led 5-1 early in the game and then went on a roll, Fair said, using their press to harass the Hawks.

"The defense began forcing some bad shots, and we were able to get the rebounds," she said. Lanell Shoemaker scored 11 points for Harrison, 1-19 overall, and Darcel Piny and Kris Waldman added five apiece.

MERCY 64, DET. WESTERN 44: Marlins coach Larry Baker hopes his team is ready for the state tournament after trouncing a good Detroit Western ballclub in the Operation Friendship program Monday.

"I hope this was a gauge for the next three games," said Baker after Mercy upped its season record to 12-7.

Krug in the middle and either McBride, Sovine or Shelley Bohlen on the sides. The Chiefs were forced to shoot off balance, and Head and Estey were there to hassle them whenever they tried to put the ball on the floor in the post area.

"I THINK putting them in a position where it was really hard for them to score was a key for us," Thoman said. "I thought the kids had tremendous intensity tonight, especially at the defensive end."

Canton didn't score a field goal until Ferko put back a rebound at 6:55 in the second quarter. The points came a little easier after that, but the Rocks were still too tough on defense, too efficient on offense and too far ahead.

Because Salem shut the Chiefs off inside, Canton had to work the ball around more than usual. But that set up the Chiefs for some turnovers and left them vulnerable to the quick hands of Estey and Head on the perimeter.

Neu said he thought the Chiefs, who have lost three times to Salem during a 15-5 season, played well once they recovered from the bad start, but credited the Rocks with playing at an even higher level.

"I won't take anything away from our kids, because I thought they played well, but Salem was outstanding," he said. "They did a job of using their athletic ability at

The Lady Cowboys slipped to 11-3. Adrienne Clark was the ringleader for the Marlins, scoring 16 points and recording a school-record 12 steals. She also had eight rebounds, and teammate Patty Chapp added 12 points.

Western's Frances McCowan was the leading scorer with 22, and Michelle Roper had 15. Mercy's big quarter was the first in which it grabbed a 16-4 lead. The Marlins, with excellent free-throw shooting throughout the contest, maintained their lead with a 48-40 advantage the rest of the way. Mercy was 18-of-20 at the line, Western 8-of-12.

N. FARMINGTON 56, FRANKLIN 46: The Raiders won their second straight in an up-and-down game that saw North gain the decisive edge with a big third quarter.

The Raiders saw a 12-point lead in the first quarter disappear when they managed only four in the second. Franklin led 21-18 at halftime, but North regained the lead with a 20-10 third period. The Raiders applied effective pressure and forced the Patriots into costly turnovers.

North, which lifted its record to 9-11, got 19 points from Kim Gurecki and 16 from Suzi Butcher. The Raiders were 16-of-25 shooting free throws. Franklin 17-of-22.

Rose O'Beay also had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Patriots. 7-13. Leslie Szafarski added 13 and 10, respectively.

the guards and height advantage inside."

Canton got within 15 points (37-22) early in the second half on baskets

by Candi Jones and Ferko and free throws by Boluch. But the Rocks, beginning with five points from Krug, scored the next seven and outpointed Canton 11-2 the rest of the quarter.

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