

# Rocks get revenge in district

By Dan O'Meara  
staff writer

Plymouth Salem changed the course of history Friday night in the championship game of the Northville district basketball tournament.

The Rocks didn't have a very good record in big games involving Livonia Stevenson, suffering a pair of one-point losses in last year's district final and last week's league final.

That's why senior guard Tom Noonan, who played an excellent floor game in addition to scoring 15 points, called it double revenge when Salem defeated the Spartans 79-68 to win its first district title since 1987.

Ryan Johnson, who was a major factor with 20 points and 14 rebounds for the Rocks, was more vocal about the outcome.

"We wanted to prove to ourselves and all the other teams in the conference who the real champion is," he said. The Spartans beat Salem once in four games this year, but the lone victory occurred in the Western Lakes Activities Association final, 61-60.

"When Stevenson beat us for the conference championship, we sat there and watched them get their medals. They must have known who the real champion is, because they didn't stick around to watch us get our medals."

SALEM TAKES A 21-2 record into the Ypsilanti regional tournament and will play Ann Arbor Huron at 7 p.m. Wednesday. The final is slated for 7 p.m. Friday. The Spartans finish the season 15-7.

The Rocks got solid play from guards Jeff Gold and Noonan, who keyed Salem's offense with their passing inside to Johnson and Jake Baker, who scored 22 points to lead the Rocks and also grabbed 13 rebounds.

"I give credit to the guards," said Johnson, who sparked Salem to a 43-31 halftime lead with 14 points in the first half. "They're the ones who at-

## basketball

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Salem basketball player

tacked the defense and did what they had to do, and that's what opened me up inside."

The Rocks decided they couldn't allow themselves to be intimidated by Stevenson's 6-foot-9 Glenn Szeman, according to Baker.

"The last time we were pump faking and were worried about getting our shots blocked," he said. "This time we didn't worry about that. Coach told us to take the ball up and not worry about drawing the foul."

Szeman picked up two first-quarter fouls and started the second period on the bench. He missed much of the fourth after getting his fourth foul with 6:24 to play.

SALEM STILL finished with 14 points, second to teammate Ron Baran's game-high 25, which included six triples. Rick Laven got most of his 11 points in the last quarter.

"I thought Z played an outstanding game under the foul situation," Stevenson coach Jim McIntyre said. "He still attempted to guard the basket as well as he could, knowing the next one would be his fourth."

Baran carried the Spartans in the first half when he sank four treys and had 15 points. Szeman, who took a pass from Baran and to score the game's first basket with a dunk, had 10 first-half points.

"Ronnie picked up all the slack in the first half," McIntyre said, "but he was probably forced to score too much too soon. Then he's no longer shooting against one kid but two."

Baran and Laven, who was cold early in the game but hit three triples in the last quarter, tied the score at 65 on consecutive treys with 4:52 to play.

But the Spartans missed four of their next five shots, and Salem resumed what it was doing well early in the game, taking the ball inside.

WITH SZEMAN still on the bench, Baker and Johnson pushed the Rocks into a 69-65 lead with layups. Szeman returned but the Johnson-Baker combination sandwiched two more layups around a triple by Laven for a 73-68 lead with 1:15 remaining.

"They were trying to pressure us a little more, because it was getting near the end of the game," Baker said, "and the guards started looking inside."

The guards were instrumental in Salem's success, as evidenced by Noonan's 10 assists and Gold's eight. Noonan also had seven steals, Gold three.

"Our game plan was to get better penetration from the guards and look for the big guys, and they were to attack the basket," Salem coach Bob Brodie said.

"If you have guards who can pass as well as ours do and shoot as well as ours do, it puts pressure on the defense. We didn't force them to guard our guards in past games."

"The plan wasn't to draw fouls on Szeman, but (when Salem did) that was great," he added. "It was irrelevant whether he was in the game or not. We were going to attack the basket."

WITH LESS than a minute left, the Rocks went to their delay game, and Noonan made the free throw and bonus twice for a 77-68 lead with 20 seconds on the clock.

"They hit a couple threes to get back in the game, but coach said not to panic," Noonan said. "(In the league final), we panicked. Tonight we didn't."

The Rocks went on a roll in the first quarter as the fouls mounted for Stevenson. Forward Phil Woods had three in the opening period and Baran two. The Spartans lost some of their physicalness and defense on Baker with Woods on the bench.

"That took us out of some coverages we had worked on along the baseline with Baker," McIntyre said, adding it was hard for Szeman, after sitting most of the fourth quarter, to come in cold and pick it up late in the game.

"He got bombarded entering the game without getting into the flow," he said. "We wanted him to get a sweat going, but he never had the chance."

Salem led by as many as 10 points in the second quarter (39-23) but, remembering last year's district final when it blew a 20-point lead and lost 71-70, knew it couldn't rest a 12-point halftime lead.

"WE KNEW they'd make their run," Baker said. "They shoot the three if they're 10 up or 10 down. All we had to do was hold our ground and make sure we didn't get caught up in their run-and-gun game."

The foul situation turned in favor of Stevenson in the third quarter, and the Spartans made 10 of 11 free throws to get within 57-64. Laven's hot hand in the final period helped keep it close until Salem rediscovered its inside game.

"I think we gave up more stuff along the baseline (than in the WLA final)," McIntyre said. "They were much more active along the baseline than they had been. We didn't stop the guard penetration, and once they do that it opens up a lot of things."

K.C. Kirkpatrick added nine points for the Rocks, and Woods and Steve Leonard chipped in eight apiece for Stevenson. Salem was 30-of-62 from the floor and the Spartans 22-of-57.

"You play so great in the regular season and feel you're the best in the league," Brodie said, who gave Stevenson its due as league champion. "A team that is 21-2 has to show it somehow. You do it in key games, and we did it tonight."

## Wayne struggles to beat Chargers

By Brad Emone  
staff writer

The numbers were not very encouraging for Wayne Memorial except the most important one — the final score.

Wayne sputtered in Friday's Class A district championship against a determined Livonia Churchill squad, but persevered en route to a 55-46 basketball victory at Westland John Glenn.

The Zebras, befuddled by Churchill's 3-2 zone defense most of the night, shot just 32 percent from the floor (17 of 53) and committed 17 turnovers, but they still had enough to earn a berth in Tuesday's regional at Southfield (7 p.m.). Wayne takes on three-time defending state champion Detroit Cooley (15-6).

The game will be a rematch of last year's regional championship at Southfield-Lathrup in which Cooley won convincingly 88-53.

"We've definitely got to be loose if we're going to shoot well against Cooley," said Wayne coach Chuck Henry, whose team is 21-1 overall. "We'll be out-matched inside. We have to convey the fact that we're playing the three-time defending champion and the pressure is on them. All we can do is give it our best shot. After you win your league and district, anything else is just icing on the cake."

CHURCHILL WAS in a similar underdog role against Wayne.

The Chargers, who finished 11-10 overall, proved to be a stubborn opponent.

Although falling behind 11-5 after one quarter and 26-16 at intermission, the Chargers made things interesting, pulling to within four points late in the third quarter and within seven with 2:19 to play in the game after being down by as many as 15 only 2 1/2 minutes earlier.

But each time Wayne repelled the Chargers.

"We had some good shots and I thought we played hard," said Churchill coach Fred Price. "I thought we played the game we wanted to play. With a basket here and there, or maybe even a three-pointer, we could have really been in it."

Kevin Hankerson, a 6-foot-4 senior center, paced Wayne with 15 points, including a pair of dunks.

Teammate Larry Johnson, who suffered through a dismal shooting night (3 of 17) and missed a dunk, finished with 13. All three of his field goals were from three-point range. Seniors Pierre Hixon and Reggie Brandon added 11 and 10, respectively.

"WAYNE's a decent ballclub with some quickness," Price said. "And Hankerson is tough inside."

Churchill's high man was 6-3 senior Mike Juodawikis, who finished with a game-high 21. Kevin Hannigan was next with seven.

"Churchill played hard in their zone," said Henry, who captured his third district crown. "We got shots, but couldn't hit them. And we did not seem we were able to run. We did not get easy baskets, and when you're not shooting, it's a struggle."

But Wayne was able to hang its hat on defense. The Zebras forced Churchill into 21 turnovers and 33 percent shooting from the floor (16 of 48).

"We didn't panic, normally we stay pretty cool," Henry said. "We've won a lot of games with solid defensive play. That could be our makeup."

The Zebras took advantage of Mike Thomas' absence after the 6-2 junior forward picked up his third foul near the end of the first quarter. With the Chargers' top scorer, ball-handler and passer out of the lineup, Wayne built a 12-point advantage by capitalizing on a couple of Churchill turnovers.

"He's our driving force," Price said of Thomas. "If anybody can take it to the basket and score, he can do it."

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