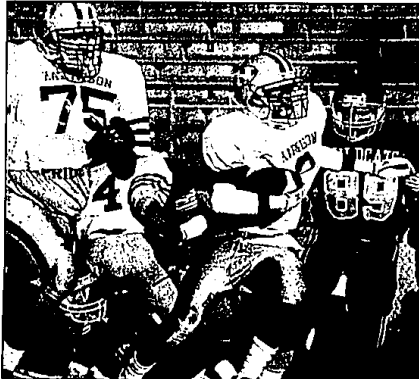




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SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Roy Granger rushed for 184 yards and two touchdowns and also caught a 41-yard scoring pass for Harrison.

Oxford outshoots Hawks

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Offense, offense, offense. Everything was offense Saturday in the Class BB semifinal football game at Jackson Withington Stadium.

Defense was non-existent as Oxford and Farmington Hills Harrison combined for an incredible 86 points and 938 yards in total offense while playing ping-pong with the football.

That was as unexpected as the result, which had Oxford cutting through a vaunted Harrison defense for seven touchdowns and a stunning 48-38 victory over the defending champion Hawks.

The No. 2-ranked Wildcats (12-0) will play Dowagiac for the title at 8 p.m. Saturday in the Pontiac Silverdome. Top-ranked Harrison, which failed to make the state final for the first in four years, ends the season at 10-2.

"Harrison football is like Michigan football," Oxford coach Bud Rowley said. "When you beat those kids, you beat a great, great tradition."

"WE'VE GOT some great athletes, and we got this one. This is the biggest win in Oxford athletic history. We felt we had the athletes, the people, to play with them."

The amazing display of offense featured big plays by individuals and saw the teams score on seven of the first eight possessions, eight of 13 in the first half and 13 of 22 overall.

Harrison's trouble was its failure to stop the Oxford option. Though he never reached the end zone, tailback Steve McCracken got outside for 193 yards on 21 carries and frustrated the Hawks.

"Nobody has really stopped us all year," McCracken said. "It started working, so we kept going to it. (The upset win) is like a dream come true."

Quarterback Mike Fedorichnik, the trigger man on the option, might have been more responsible for Oxford's awesome offensive showing. He rushed

for 162 yards on nine attempts and scored on runs of 33, 10 and 8 yards. Fedorichnik balanced that with six-of-12 passing and another 105 yards.

Halfback Jeff Beane had 3 yards rushing but scored 3 touchdowns — all on 1-yard line smashes. Fullback Lee Fragozo added 77 yards on 14 carries, including a 48-yarder to set up Beane's first TD that gave the Wildcats a 7-0 lead.

"OUR DEFENSE has been good against the power game, but we've been a little vulnerable to the option," Harrison coach John Herrington said. "They run it much better than anything we've seen."

"They've got such a varied offense, because they throw out of the slot and then option it. You've got to get up and make some tackles, and we didn't do it."

Oxford's defense had as much trouble with the Hawks. The Wildcats had 480 total yards, 375 of it rushing. Harrison had 456 yards — 366 on the ground and 90 in the air.

Roy Granger ran an effective counter sweep 11 times for 184 yards, which included scoring runs of 5 and 54 yards.

He also caught a 41-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Plamen Magdevski, who hit six of 21 passes and threw a 19-yard strike to Greg Pliscopink for Harrison's first TD.

Tailback Gary Devine countered McCracken's big day with 161 yards rushing and a 1-yard TD run on 21 carries.

"WE HAD KIDS out there who make you miss on both sides," Herrington said. "It was a defensive coordinator's nightmare. I really thought the score would end in the 20s somewhere."

"I thought four touchdowns would win it," Rowley said. "At the beginning of the third quarter, I was thinking whoever had it last would win it."

In a game that featured six lead changes, the Hawks scored with 20 seconds left in the first half, cutting Oxford's lead to 28-25 on Granger's TD catch and Magdevski's conversion pass to Larry Loewen.

The momentum carried over to the second half, and Harrison scored the first two times it had the ball, taking a 38-28 lead. Granger dashed 54 yards on the counter, and Devine capped a nine-play drive after Dan Hight's interception.

But Harrison failed to stop the Wildcats, who scored on their next three possessions while forcing the Hawks to punt twice.

McCracken picked up the first down on fourth-and-one at the Oxford 41, and Fedorichnik passed 43 yards to tight end Mike Jensen, setting up Beane's second TD (38-34).

McCracken sprinted 46 yards to the Harrison 15, and the Wildcats regained the lead, 41-38, on Fedorichnik's second TD run with 8:26 to play.

"I THOUGHT WE would do a lot better on the option," Herrington said. "We couldn't figure it out; we tried everything."

The Hawks were three-and-out on their next series after a sure first-down pass was dropped at midfield. Oxford decided the game with a time-consuming drive resulting in Fedorichnik's third TD.

The Wildcats, who benefited from good field position much of the day, started at the 50 with 7:00 to play, converted a fourth-and-inches play at the Harrison 26 (McCracken on the carry again) and scored with just 1:42 remaining.

"Our kids were under pressure defensively to get it stopped (when Harrison went ahead 38-28)," Rowley said. "We have the athletes to make a stop. We could have failed, but it wasn't going to happen."

"Oxford can play football. We've got the athletes. We happened to put them in the right spot, got a few breaks and make the right plays."

The Wildcats needed only 2:49 to open the scoring on Beane's first run. Harrison responded with a three-play drive capped by Magdevski's pass to Pliscopink, and a 32-yard field goal by Mark Lebovitz made it 10-7.

Oxford sandwiched scoring runs by Fragozo and Fedorichnik around Granger's 5-yarder, putting the Wildcats in front 21-17 with six minutes left in the half. Back-to-back holding penalties (Harrison was penalized eight times for 95 yards) put the Hawks in bad field position for the punt, and McCracken's 44-yard run led to another Beane run and a 28-17 lead for Oxford.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Harrison quarterback Plamen Magdevski passed for two TDs, but the Hawks lost the Class BB semifinal shootout 48-38 to

Oxford. The loss ended Harrison's string of three consecutive appearances in the final game.

Marlins follow tradition in district hoop

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

The tradition continues for Farmington Hills Mercy basketball, though Walled Lake Central did its best to disrupt the Marlins' amazing success in postseason play.

Mercy won its 14th district championship in coach Larry Baker's 16 years Friday but only after surviving a fourth-quarter rally by the Vikings.

Junior center Laure DeMatia scored 16 points and led an impressive showing at the free-throw line as the Marlins fought off Central 51-48 in the final of the Walled Lake Western tournament.

Mercy (16-5) will play Royal Oak Kimball at 6 tonight in the first round of the Southfield-Lathrup regional. The final is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday. Central finishes with a 12-10 record.

The Marlins appeared to be on Easy Street, breaking away from a 21-21 halftime tie and holding a 42-31 lead early in the final period.

BUT THE Vikings nearly won the game behind the play of senior Karlyn Koslowski and sophomore Cindy Muha, the two of them accounting for all of Central's 20 points in the last quarter. Koslowski had 14 of her game-high 23 points in the second half, Muha 10 of her 14.

"I told the kids it wasn't a matter of us losing our pulse or starting to choke," Baker said. "Credit an exceptional effort by Muha and Koslowski. They really stepped forward and played outstanding basketball. Those two almost wilted the game into overtime."

Mercy still had a 46-38 lead after Maureen Paulin's free throws, but the Marlins committed turnovers on their next two possessions. Koslowski scored five straight points to make it a three-point game with under three minutes remaining.

Muha got the Vikings within two, 47-45, and Mercy again made consecutive turnovers. But Central failed to capitalize, turning the ball over and missing a shot on its possessions. Central coach Ken Butler thought Kerri Kobus should have



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Kathleen Gerigk of Mercy (right) dodges an opponent's elbow to take possession of a loose ball Wednesday when the Marlins defeated North Farmington in the second round of the district tournament. Mercy won its second straight district title Friday

awarded a two-shot foul after driving the lane on the second one.

Mercy's Kathleen Gerigk sank the front end of a one-and-one with 13 seconds left, and Mary Bieniewicz put back the rebound for a 51-45 lead. Muha sank a triple at the buzzer.

"I thought (Mercy) panicked a little, which is unlike Mercy," Butler said. "They couldn't take the air out of the ball because of the pressure we put on them. That's why we're an up-tempo team — a six-point lead is nothing against us."

"WE ONLY got outplayed for four minutes of the game, and that was the first four minutes of the second

half."

The Marlins made more field goals in the first 34 minutes of the second half than they did in the entire first and broke away to a 33-24 lead. After shooting 23 percent (5-22) in the first half, Mercy made seven of 19 field goals in the third quarter.

Carrie Walton, who added 11

points for the Marlins despite playing with a severe case of tonsillitis, scored the first three baskets of the third period, and Mercy's momentum held for a 35-28 lead at the end.

"We set up a little trap we haven't used since early September," Baker said. "It was one of those situations where the coach plays a hunch —

girls basketball

show them something they're not expecting — and we got a couple quick ones. You can attribute that one to coaching genius."

Walton's driving layup gave Mercy its 42-31 lead, but the Marlins went nearly six minutes without another field goal, relying on seven free throws to maintain their lead in the face of Central's comeback.

Mercy was 21 of 30 shooting free throws, the Vikings 10 of 14. DeMatia, who got crunched attempting layups time and again, made eight. Paulin and Bieniewicz four apiece.

"WE KNOW they're not a very physical team," said Butler, who chose not to play senior Kelly Glenie, the team's second-leading scorer, because she missed practice Thursday.

"They don't like the body put on them. Most teams are afraid and back off, but we went right after them. We always do that anyway. I had no question in my mind we could win this game."

While the Marlins took advantage of the free throws, Central's aggressive and physical play had an effect on the Marlins, Baker said.

"Their aggressiveness always hurt us when we lost our concentration," he said. "So it didn't completely backfire. They forced us to make some turnovers."

"I thought we could go inside with Laure. That's just the way they play. It's not as much fun when a Carrie Walton makes a great move, gets cleaned out and has to do it at the free throw line."

Central went ahead 19-13 in the second quarter, but Mercy rallied to tie the 21-21 after going nearly eight minutes without a field goal. A pair of outside baskets by Gerigk were key.

"The '90 Marlins play well together, they move the ball and you never know who's going to come through on a given night," Baker said.