

Raiders, Falcons out of tourney

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

North Farmington's Tom Negoshian knew his coaching opponent well, which helped him to devise a strategy that threatened an upset favored West Bloomfield in district basketball action Wednesday.

The Lakers of coach Tim Domke, a longtime friend of Negoshian, overcame a sluggish performance and stubborn North team for a 53-45 victory in the tournament at Walled Lake Western.

"Tim and I have been friends for 20 years, and our wives are good friends," said Negoshian, who coached with Domke at St. Mary's College. "My wife told me if we beat up on Tim Domke she wouldn't talk to me for a week."

West Bloomfield (18-3) will play Walled Lake Central in the district final at 7:30 p.m. Friday. The Vikings (9-12) defeated Farmington 53-46 in the second game of a double-header Wednesday.

"We coached together for six years," Domke said. "We do all the same things, and they disrupted our flow."

"I think we started playing at their tempo instead of ours. They made us score from the perimeter and, fortunately, we made some threes that saved us."

The Raiders (8-13) held West Bloomfield's top scorers, Matt Domke and Josh Kobay, to 14 and 10

points, respectively. Kobay had only two free throws in the second half. Mike Roberts added 11 for the Lakers.

West Bloomfield struggled with its shooting, going nine of 23 in the first half. But the Lakers led 26-17 at halftime because North had only three field goals and 16 shots in the first half.

"It was one of those days," Domke said. "(Kobay) missed a couple easy shots and let it bother him. He was trying to be careful and make sure we won the game."

"Our whole rhythm seemed to be off from the time we left school. That was not the team that played in our league."

Jon Sturtz led the Raiders with 15 points and sparked a second-half rally. Chris White scored 10, Mark Temple and Bill Chwalik eight apiece.

Trailing 39-24 after three periods, North got within 43-36 midway in the final period before Domke, Harley Marks and Roberts combined to push the Lakers lead to 49-26 with 2:44 to play.

The Raiders were seven of 21 from the floor in the last quarter, and West Bloomfield was three of three but made eight of 14 free throws.

"We changed the tempo of the game and maybe it threw us off too," Negoshian said. "It's very difficult to coach against that close of a friend. If you're going to lose someone, it's like losing to your brother."

"We did a great job on their two best kids, but some of the others hit threes when they needed it."

I told the kids, if it was in single digits with two or three minutes we'd have a shot. Unfortunately, the shots didn't go."

Farmington's defeat was frustrating because the Falcons (2-19) were close all the way but couldn't get any closer than three points in the second half.

Steve Gallagher scored a game-high 20 points for Farmington, and Jay Jensen tossed in 10. Central was led by Christian Emert's 13 points. Chris McFarlane added nine, Ryan Dowd and Eric Leaf eight each.

"They threw that 1-2-2 at us, and we just didn't handle the pressure well," Farmington coach Bob Kaump said. "We didn't shoot well, and we had trouble getting people in the right spots."

"I really think we got tired. I tried to get my kids to up-tempo the game but we couldn't run. We wanted to rebound and get it up the floor to beat their pressure, but we played into their hands by walking it up."

"The kids have been working hard, and we've had pretty good practices. I just can't get them to play up tempo."

The Falcons rallied from a slow start to tie 19-19 but trailed 43-26 at halftime. They were down 39-34 after three periods and were within 49-46 on Gallagher's three-point play with 1:20 remaining. Joe Sharpe and Emert clinched the win for Central with free throws in the final 20 seconds.

St. Mary's wins title

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

The shoe not only shifted to another foot, it's claimed a new victim.

For the first three years Glen Donahue coached at St. Mary's College, he couldn't deliver what he wanted most — an NAIA District 23 championship and the accompanying trip to Kansas City for the national tournament. Something always derailed the Eagles — usually injuries.

This time, St. Mary's had everybody healthy as it prepared for Wednesday's district final at their own Dombrowski Fieldhouse. The team the Eagles faced — two-time defending district champ Siena Heights — was the short-handed one, playing without starting center Brent Tucker, injured in a car accident last Thursday.

And although the Saints battled to the end, they just didn't have enough weapons to handle the Eagles, who claimed their first-ever district title, 47-72.

The win raised the Eagles' record to 24-11 as they head for the 32-team NAIA tournament next week. Siena Heights' nine-game win streak was snapped; the Saints finish 17-16.

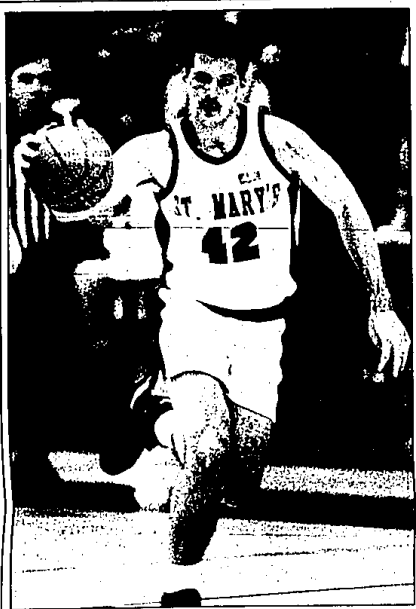
ST. MARY'S was ahead 38-35 at the half and never again relinquished the lead, although Siena Heights kept it close. A three-pointer by Tony Itasca (from Farmington Harrison) pulled the Saints to within 72-70 with 2:07 left.

But the Eagles pulled away, scoring nine straight points — the first four coming at the free throw line from guard Jimmy Bolden (from Detroit Country Day). Siena Heights kept firing triples, but kept missing.

"Our hope was to be right where we were at the end," said Saints' coach Fred Smith. "We couldn't get a rebound at the end, but we were where we wanted to be."

And St. Mary's did what it wanted to do — limit Siena Heights' leading scorer, Craig Tanis, to eight points (he was averaging 16.3) and control the Saints' inside game (Lester Dickerson, Jamie Salenben and Reggie Smith combined for 17 points).

The difference, according to Donahue, "certainly had to be our defense. We limited their inside players. And we were able to post up our guards on offense, Jimmy Bolden and James Gillespie."



The Eagles' Jeff Szczepanski heads upcourt on a fast break. St. Mary's defense was the difference in Monday's win over Grand Rapids Baptist.

Eagles triumph in NAIA playoffs

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Maybe it shouldn't be shocking. After all, in a coaching career spanning more than 550 victories, should one be singled out and treated with particular pride?

Glen Donahue refused to. But St. Mary's College's 79-65 triumph over Grand Rapids Baptist at Dombrowski Fieldhouse was a milestone of sorts — and it also marked the ending of a millstone.

Donahue was able to guide the Eagles to an NAIA District 23 playoff berth in each of his first three seasons as team coach. Indeed, St. Mary's hosted its first-round playoff game all three times.

And all three times, the Eagles lost.

The previous failures dissolved Monday under St. Mary's intense defensive pressure. The two teams had met just two weeks earlier, and the Comets had forced St. Mary's to overtime with a patient, slow-down offense before succumbing.

"I THINK we were better prepared for it this time than last time," said Donahue. "The first time, it seemed like we were on defense all night and they were on offense all night."

The Eagles trashed Baptist's game plan by halftime with a pressure defense that forced seven turnovers. The Comets could get little going offensively — in fact, if not for Todd Bayle's outside shooting prowess (three three-pointers) and 10 first-half points, their troubles would have been greatly multiplied.

As it was, the Eagles had a 35-21 advantage at the intermission. Jeff

basketball

Suspek's 12 points in the opening 20 minutes were important, sure, but no more so than the eight provided by both James Gillespie and Kevin Nicfield.

Nicfield came off the Eagles' much-deeper bench to do his damage, wreaking havoc with Baptist's interior defense. Gillespie, the senior from Detroit Redford, had an interesting game — 0-for-8 on three-pointers, 8-for-8 on twos. He led St. Mary's with 20 points, five assists and four steals.

Three of his steals came in the first half as Baptist rotated the ball around the perimeter, trying to run the shot clock down. All resulted in baskets.

"HE'S A very smart defensive player," said Donahue of Gillespie. "We had to have some (defensive) stops when they run a patient game like that."

The Eagles got them, the most important covering a 4:48 stretch, from

8:21 to 3:33. Baptist did not score a point in that span; St. Mary's got 11, going from 17-17 tie to a 28-17 lead.

"The difference in the game was a three-minute span in the first half," agreed Baptist coach Tom Martin, whose team finished its season at 18-15. "You can credit that to poor execution. We ran the clock, then we rushed our shots."

"We let their defensive pressure take us out of what we wanted to do."

Martin had his Comets abandon the slow-down strategy in the second half. "We were down 14," he said. "If you hold the ball, you shorten the game. But we weren't going to score a lot of points like that."

BAPTIST DID make inroads by pushing the ball in the second half — they were within eight with 10:30 left — but not enough. Several times, the Comets got as close as seven, the last coming on Doug Muxlow's three-pointer with 1:44 left. But the Eagles slammed the door on any comeback hopes by nailing eight-straight free throws and adding a steal and slam

by Garth Howard, outscoring Baptist 10-3 down the stretch.

"I knew we'd get good shots," said Donahue. "We just had to make sure we took good shots."

The Eagles gave their coach what he wanted, making 27-of-46 floor shots (58 percent). Baptist, meanwhile, was limited to 21-of-48 shooting (44 percent) — including just 6-of-18 in the first half (33 percent).

For the Eagles, Jimmy Bolden notched 14 points and had five assists, three steals and two blocked shots. Nicfield had 13 points and six rebounds; Suspek scored 12 points, and Howard had 11.

Bayle's 23 points (6-of-11 threes) was best for Baptist. Matt Miller pitched in 17 and Brad Richards got 10.

The win put St. Mary's within a victory (the Eagles played Siena Heights last night) of the NAIA national tournament. And that's just how Donahue chose to view it.

"(The victory) means we're onto the next step," he said. "I think we can compete at the national level. I really think we can."



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