

Coach's homecoming dampened by loss

By Neal Zipser
staff writer

Farmington boys basketball coach Denny Mikel didn't receive any Valentine's Day good wishes when he returned to the North Farmington gymnasium Friday.

Instead, the former Raider assistant's homecoming was ruined by a 66-49 thrashing by cross-town rival North.

The Falcons, coming off a tough, 45-48 loss to Farmington Hills Harrison on Tuesday, were never in the game and fell to 1-8 in the Western Lakes Activities Association and 3-11 overall.

The Raiders, who kept their post-season playoff hopes alive, improved to 6-8 overall and more importantly 4-5 in the WLAA. The top eight teams qualify for the playoffs.

Mikel, who is in his 15th year as a counselor at North, would have liked

his return to be much different.

"IT DIDN'T really matter if we won or lost, but I wanted it to be a competitive game and it wasn't," Mikel said.

"I've coached against (North coach) Tom (Negoshian) before when I was a junior varsity coach at Redford Thurston and he coached the JV here. But it was strange being in this locker room and being on the other bench. It will be special every time we play here."

Negoshian agreed the game was a little strange being on the opposite side of the scorer's table from his long-time friend.

"It was a funny, emotional game because Denny was an assistant here for nine years," Negoshian said. "It's like coaching against your brother. As a coach, it's one of those type of games you wish you didn't have to participate in."

"Denny knows our kids and has probably coached all of them at one time or another. He was a big part of our program, and you can tell by looking at Farmington that he's doing a lot of good things with them."

The Raiders, who led the entire game, were led by Dean Pennala, a senior guard who scored a game-high 23 points. Eleven of the Raiders scored.

"I DIDN'T think it would be this easy," Pennala said. "I think they came out flat, and (Steve) Gallagher didn't have one of his better games."

"Playing against a city rival means more, and we didn't want to lose to both Farmington schools. But it also is important because the playoffs are approaching. I think we're playing more as a team now. We are running our offense well and looking for better shots."

Harrison won the Farmington bragging rights with Tuesday's victory over the Falcons and its victory over the Raiders earlier this season. North jumped out to a quick 8-0 lead behind three-pointers by Mark Temple and Jon Sturtz. The Raiders made eight of 19 three-point attempts for the game.

"North played well and Temple, Pennala and Sturtz are good players and good kids," Mikel said. "I knew, if they were on, it would be a tough game."

"North is like we are. They don't have a tough inside game. If they weren't going to hit the outside shots, I wanted us to get the rebound and hold them to one shot, but the game plan didn't work out that way."

THE FALCONS stayed close with a six-point, three-rebound quarter from Brian Afterbaugh. The senior scored all 10 of his points in the first half.

But North's hot shooting never cooled long enough for Farmington to make a serious rally. The Raiders shot 47 percent (24-51) from the field, compared to the Falcons' 38 percent, and held a 33-28 rebound advantage.

"We expected a tough struggle but some shots didn't fall for them and shots were falling for us," Negoshian said. "If some shots fell for them, it would have been a different game."

"We're a very small team and, for us to win, we have to make good decisions and make our perimeter shots. It's hard to post up 5-foot-11 players. The team has done a good job to understand this."

Senior forward Matt Fitzpatrick led Farmington with 13 points, and Junior John Rudolph added 11. North received 11 points from Temple and 11 rebounds off the bench from senior Eric Hovett.

Part of the problem for the Fal-

cons was a zero-point performance from senior Gallagher.

"STEVE IS A good ballplayer," Negoshian said. "He can do a lot of good things on the floor. Like tonight he was playing point guard. We talked about him and he was matched up almost every where he went."

The Falcons, who seemingly play better against tougher opponents, continue to struggle against teams with average or losing records.

"You don't know which team will show up," Mikel said. "I thought we played well against Harrison Tuesday, but tonight we didn't play well."

"(North) may have had more incentive because I was their coach and they're still in the running for the playoffs. But that's not an excuse. When you play an intra-district school, you expect your team to be ready."

Oakland CC gives up lead, game to Alpena

It's beginning to seem that when the game is on the line, Oakland Community College's men's basketball team loses its grip.

The Raiders were ahead of Alpena CC by a point with 40 seconds left Wednesday in Alpena. They ended up losing by six, 99-93.

The defeat dropped OCC to 11-14 overall, 6-7 in the Eastern Conference. The Raiders' hopes for a lousy berth in the conference playoffs seems remote, although they're still attainable. But they will probably have to win their last three conference games, at Highland Park CC (played last Saturday), at home against first-place Henry Ford CC, and at Mott CC.

Mott and Highland Park are also very much in the running for second place.

THE ALPENA game was a seesaw affair in the first half until OCC missed a free throw that would have tied it at 31-all. The Lumberjacks (now 8-6 in the conference) then went on a 17-5 run to finish the half, building a 46-35 lead.

But OCC battled back. "We did a really good job on defense for a long period of time in the second half," said Raiders coach Lynn Reed. They managed to recapture the lead and were ahead by three with two minutes left.

Two turnovers in the final minute, though, proved costly. The Jacks scored the final seven points of the game to win going away.

Rashe Reviero led OCC with 35 points. Rod Hall had 20, Khari Maxwell scored 12, and Bill Knight and Dale Craft had eight apiece. Knight also grabbed 10 rebounds.

J.B. Gould led Alpena with 25 points. Tim Newman added 16 and Gene McBride had 11.

"We're right there," lamented Reed after the loss. "We just don't do the right things at the right time. It's not just one kid. They're all trying so hard; they're not quitting."

Pilots buzz Shamrocks, 57-42

By Brad Emons
staff writer

Redford Catholic Central's 57-42 basketball loss Friday night to visiting Warren DeLaSalle was painful in more ways than one.

Not only did the host Shamrocks end up sharing the Catholic League's Central Division title with DeLaSalle, but they also lost their top seeding for the eight-team playoffs, which start Sunday at the University of Detroit's Calhoun Hall.

Both teams finished 8-2 in the Central, but DeLaSalle earned the Central's No. 1 spot for the playoffs under the league's complicated tiebreaker system.

Under the tiebreaker format, the Pilots needed at 15-point margin of victory and got it when Jeff McGavin nailed a three-pointer with only 11 seconds left in the game. No. 2 seeded CC will play Dearborn Divine Child (11-4) at 2 p.m. Sunday in a quarterfinal game at Calhoun Hall.

"It's hard to swallow in your own gym when you get taken to school," said CC coach Bernie Holowicki, whose team fell to 13-3 overall. "We put players in and out. We were looking for a spark, somebody with fire in their eyes, but it never happened."

The Shamrocks' two main sparkplugs, 6-foot-5 Chad Varga and 6-6 Bob Kummer, each averaging over 20 points per game, were handcuffed by DeLaSalle's defense for a combined 20 points.

VARGA, the University of Richmond-bound

center, scored 32 in CC's 83-60 victory Jan. 28 at DeLaSalle, but finished with only 11 on 5-of-12 shooting.

He had to share team-high scoring honors with junior forward Brian Paluk, who came off the bench to net 11, generating the only offense CC could muster.

Kummer, meanwhile, was plagued by foul problems from start to finish, recording an uncharacteristic nine points on 3-of-9 from the field.

The senior forward, headed for UNC-Charlotte, had a chance to protect CC's top seeding for the playoffs, but missed two shots in the waning seconds.

"A lot of teams the last three or four games, especially after seeing us play U-D Jesuit (a 64-53 loss), have been clogging the paint with a zone and daring us to beat them with outside shooting," Holowicki said. "Most teams now are going to try and shut down Chad and Bobby because they think the rest of our team is mediocre. And it's not a myth. It was proven tonight."

The Shamrocks shot only 31.2 percent from the field (15-of-45).

Outside of Varga and Kummer, the remaining CC cast connected on just 7-of-26 shots from the floor (26.9 percent).

"We wanted to take Varga and Kummer out of the game and obviously we were successful at doing that," DeLaSalle coach Tim Turner said. "But we know how good they'll be the next time, if we're fortunate to meet them in the playoffs."

THE PILOTS, who raised their overall season

record to 11-4, ran their game plan nearly to perfection, controlling the tempo and taking away CC's vaunted inside attack.

"It was absolutely the best game we've played all year," Turner said. "I can't remember a better performance. We did exactly what we set out to do. We were patient offensively, their (CC's) press didn't bother us, we wanted our No. 11 to take the ball to the basket and our No. 12 to shoot the three-pointer when he had the opportunity."

No. 11 was 5-10 junior guard Don McDonald, who led all scorers with 18 points. He gave CC his all night long with his spin moves to the basket, challenging the Shamrocks' big people.

And No. 12, McGavin, a senior guard, chipped in with 15, including four 3-pointers, the biggest coming at the 11-second mark.

"Being co-champs (in the Central) was our No. 1 goal," Turner said. "We didn't want to focus on that (15-point margin), we just wanted to win by one."

Two other DeLaSalle players netted double figures including 6-7 senior center Ron Ankwilich, who tallied 11, and 6-4 senior guard Craig Abraham, who added 10.

"Abraham is an excellent point-guard, but we ask him to guard Kummer, break the press and score, too," Turner said. "If he didn't have so many responsibilities, he could really show his true worth, and I think he's a Division I point-guard."

For the Pilots, it was a victory sweeter in more ways than one.

St. Mary's solid defensive team

There's something about this St. Mary's College basketball team, an element seemingly missing in the previous five years of Glen Donahue's tenure as coach.

Defense. It isn't missing any longer. The Eagles have rather suddenly become quite an effective defensive team. That was evident in Wednesday's 106-69 thrashing of Northwood Institute in Orchard Lake, a team that less than a month before had beaten St. Mary's 98-92 in overtime.

But it hasn't been a singular instance. In the Eagles' last 17 games — 15 of which have been wins — only one team has reached the 50 percent plateau against them shooting from the field. That was Grand Rapids Baptist, which defeated St. Mary's 53-35 on Jan. 30.

Seven of those 17 opponents have made less than 40 percent of their shots, and 13 have been under 45 percent. Another comparison: Last year, the Eagles scored 98 points a game and gave up just under 92; this season, they're still averaging about 98 a game, but they're surrendering only 82.

"THERE'S NO question our defense has improved."

Hawks fall 2 games back in WLAA

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The Hawks missed some early shots and went scoreless for more than four minutes until Gilvydis sank two free throws with 3:49 on the clock.

"THOSE THINGS do happen when you have tall people around you, and most of the game they had three 6-5 players out there," Teachman said, regarding the misses.

"Their height at guard was an obvious factor. Brennan has done a lot for them, because he's 6-7 and guards a guard. They've been playing a 2-3 zone, and he disrupts a lot of shots."

Night kept the Hawks in the game with a pair of triples, the first cut-

ting Canton's lead to 45-43 with 1 1/2 minutes left and the second making it 51-48 with 12 seconds remaining.

The Chiefs missed the front end of a one-and-one, leaving the door open for Harrison to tie, but Night failed to sink a third triple with :02 to play. A quick outlet pass led to Coshatt's finishing touch.

"I have a lot of faith in my team, and I thought we were going to start playing good basketball," said Van Wagener of Canton's fourth-quarter resurgence. "I didn't know if it would be enough to win, but I knew my team would turn it around and play well."

The Chiefs hit eight of 11 shots in the fourth period, Harrison four of 13. After scoring 15 points in the

middle quarters, Gilvydis was held to one field goal and four free throws in the finale.

"Paul would flash to the high post, and that is where he was getting his shots," Teachman said, adding Harrison adjusted it offense to get three men moving in the paint after taking too many outside shots in a 3-of-15 first quarter. "Then they collapsed on him. Brennan or McDonald would be guarding our point and then drop down on him."

CANTON RACED to an early, 9-2 advantage, but the Hawks regrouped in the second quarter to take a 20-13 lead as Harrison reversed the situation and became the dominant inside team.



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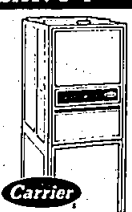
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