

Canton rips Stevenson

By Neal Zipser
staff writer

Plymouth Canton took awhile to get going Friday but advanced to the Western Lakes Activities Association basketball semifinals with a 71-55 stomping of visiting Livonia Stevenson.

With a total of 51 fouls called and 46 free throws shot, Canton's 13th consecutive victory didn't come close to setting any records for speed, but was good enough to set up a showdown with rival Plymouth Salem.

The Hawks, 77-56 winners over westland John Glenn, will play host to top-seeded Canton at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday. The Chiefs improved to 15-3 overall and have won all 12 games against league opponents this year.

"It was a very physical game," said Canton center Tony Coshatt who scored 12 points and collected 15 rebounds. "The referees called everything in the first two quarters. They were very long quarters. Canton converted 32 of 48 free throws (67 percent) as the Spartans were called for 41 fouls. Stevenson was just 7-of-18 at the line.

"STEVENSON is a very aggressive team, and we took advantage of their aggressiveness by sinking our free throws," Canton coach Dave Van Wagner said. "This was a great win for our program. We took care of business tonight."

The Chiefs also dominated under the boards, rapping down 55 rebounds to Stevenson's 36.

Jon Paupore poured in 15 points and led four Chiefs in double figures as Owen Crosby added 12 points and 13 rebounds, and Derrick McDonald had 13 points and eight assists. Hal Heard collected 10 rebounds.

The Spartans, 9-9 overall, stayed close early with a three-point shooting display. As Coshatt scored at will underneath the basket, Grodzicki and Tony Stojov bombed away to keep Stevenson close at 13-12 late in the first quarter.

The game resembled the earlier meeting between the two squads in which the Spartans led 14-11 before losing 59-44.

Canton switched its zone defense to a man-to-man and succeeded to go on a 23-4 run over a five-minute period. As shots failed to fall for Stevenson, the Chiefs spent a good part

of the first half at the charity stripe.

THE SPARTANS struggled against the man defense for the rest of the first half and Canton led 38-20 at halftime.

"We decided to give them a different look," Paupore said. "They're a great outside shooting team and we may have confused them."

"We tried to switch up the defense and go in and out from the man," Van Wagner said. "We decided to start in the zone and see if they gave us problems - and they did. Stevenson is a very good outside shooting team. Our man (defense) was our ticket tonight."

"The kids have done a great job of playing defense. It's defense, rebounding and shot-selection that win championships."

Stevenson began the third quarter with a 7-2 run that closed Canton's lead to 40-27, but that was as close as the Spartans got to the Chiefs.

The Spartans employed a full-court press that gave the Chiefs fits for most of the third quarter. Canton committed nine turnovers but remained in control of the game by making most of its free throws.

MCDONALD MADE all eight of his attempts and guard Mike Brennan was 7-of-8 at the stripe in the second half.

The Chiefs played without guard Mike Stafford, who sat out after being ejected from a game against Livonia Franklin last week.

"We've pulled together as a team," Coshatt said. "We understand that if we go into a game and play, we've got to win. But we won't get big heads. I won't let them."

Salem blew an 11-point lead in the season's first meeting between the two Plymouth squads, as Canton used late-game heroics by McDonald and escaped with a 67-64, come-from-behind win. The Chiefs are looking forward to the rematch.

"It will be a great game," Paupore said. "There's going to be a lot of talking (at school), but we'll be ready for them."

"Both teams respect each other," said Coshatt, who missed the first Salem game with an injury.

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Paul Gilydis pulls down one of his 12 rebounds for the Hawks in the WLAA playoff game.

Hawks soar into semis of WLAA hoop tourney

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The Hawks also created a favorable free-throw situation with their aggressive moves on offense. Harrison was 10-of-14 in the fourth quarter and 16-of-23 overall, the Mustangs 8-of-17.

"We created free throw situations when we were not in the bonus with Anderson and Fitzpatrick," Coachman said. "I looked up and the fouls were seven against us and three against them. That's when we started going to the line on our drives." Northville center Mike Maschok scored 13 of his career-high 22 points

in the first half as the Mustangs (10-8) kept pace with Harrison. Ryan Huzjak netted 19, which included three triples, and Matt Schramm 18.

"WE PROBABLY got tired in the second half," Harrison said. "We've been playing that aggressive defense and when you play a good ballclub on their turf it's tough to beat them."

The Hawks lost their first meeting with Walled-Lake Central at Harrison two weeks ago, 67-61. The semifinal winners play for the WLAA championship at 7 p.m. Saturday in the Northville gym.

Vikes need rally to win

By Brad Emons
staff writer

Something appeared to be out of whack.

Walled Lake Central, the No. 2 seed entering the Western Lakes Activities Association boys basketball playoffs, found itself down by margins of 14-0 and 19-5 during the opening quarter against No. 7 seed Livonia Franklin.

But the visiting Vikings slowly, but surely overcame the surprising deficit, taking control of the game and eventually running away with a 67-60 victory.

"The kids showed a lot of character and they didn't panic," said Central coach Steve Emert, whose team is 15-3 overall. "This is a tough place (Franklin) to win down here. It was a nice win coming on the road."

Only in the wacky WLAA playoffs does a lower seed end up hosting a first round game. All quarterfinal matchups on Thursday and Friday were hosted by teams from the Western Division. Tuesday's semifinals returned to the Lakes Division sites.

And the host Patriots (10-8 overall) seemed primed for the upset, getting 11 first-quarter points from seam guard Keith Roberts to take a 24-12 advantage. Franklin shot a blistering 66 percent from the floor in the opening quarter (10 of 15).

BUT CENTRAL, thanks to some stellar defense by junior Christian Emert, limited the foul-plagued 5-9 senior to six the rest of the way to gain the victory.

Franklin in fact, went scoreless for the first 3½ minutes of the second quarter while Central reeled off 12 consecutive points, knocking the count at 24-12 with 4:38 left in the half on a pair of free throws by Ron Thompson.

During the surge, Roberts picked up an untimely technical foul to go along with his third personal. He eventually fouled out in the second half along with teammates Joe Jarvis and Jason Pacione.

Central took the lead for keeps with only 23 seconds left until interception on a three-point bomb by guard Steve Habaut, who led a balanced Vikings' attack with 17.

Adam McCarthy added another three-pointer with only a second left in the half, one of 11 tries on the night for the Vikings, propelling his team a 35-31 advantage. Central outscored Franklin in the second period 23-7.

"It was fast-paced at the start and we weren't mentally ready for that pace," Steve Emert said. "Rod Hanna, Franklin's coach had them ready."

"But we had to stay with what we've been doing and start playing some defense. We had to pick it up defensively."

Central opened up a 10-point lead in the third quarter, but Franklin trimmed the deficit to five after three quarters, 45-40.

BUT HABAUT opened the fourth quarter with a pair of 'threes' and Franklin could never recover.

"I thought we took away their inside game but Central is talented inside and outside," Franklin coach Rod Hanna said. "They went to their outside game and hit 11 'threes,' and that's quite an accomplishment on the visitor's floor."

Three other Vikings scored in double figures: Thompson (16), Eric Leaf (12) and Chris McFarlane (10).

"We had to go to 'Mac' (McFarlane) and he got us a couple of buckets early, and then the 'threes' helped a lot," Emert said. "Rabaut can shoot, and he hit some key baskets for us in the third quarter."

Russ Keberly, a senior forward, tallied a game-high 23 points (on eight-of-13 shooting), while grabbing 11 rebounds. Roberts added 17 points and Jarvis had nine.

"Russ had his best game varsity-wise and I hope he continues to do that," Hanna said.

Franklin, however, went to the free throw line only 13 times (making 10) to Central's 16-of-28. The Patriots racked up 26 fouls to Central's 18.

"We did not show enough discipline defensively," Hanna said. "We were not moving the feet and we were reaching. We knew the way the officials were going to call it early and we picked up unnecessary fouls. They were soft fouls, but fouls. We did not do a good job of adjusting to what the officials were calling and you don't put a team like Central on the line like we did."

CENTRAL WON despite hitting only 38.5 percent from the field (27-of-70) compared to Franklin's 20-of-50 (40 percent).

But the Vikings did a better job of taking care of the basketball. They had only 13 turnovers to Franklin's 18.

"This team is unique in that they all like each other and hang around together," Emert said. "It's a very cohesive group."

Hickman tries to rebound at Liberty

By Brad Emons
staff writer

Parish Hickman said "I'm willing to forgive, but not forget."

Now reunited with former Redford Bishop Burgess High teammate Cordell Robinson at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., the former All-State basketball player Hickman is trying to get his life back together after being acquitted Nov. 27 of federal drug charges.

Hickman, who played three seasons at Michigan State, was charged, along with three other men, for trying to sell 2.2 pounds of cocaine to an undercover drug agent for \$28,000 on the East Lansing campus last April.

He was ultimately acquitted of all charges and is now suing MSU after being refused readmission. MSU officials said Hickman, who sat out two quarters (semesters), did not have enough credits (under NCAA rules) to remain eligible for his final season.

The 6-foot-7 forward, who started seven games last season as a junior, averaging six points per game, thought we would regain his athletic scholarship after being exonerated following his trial last fall in Grand Rapids.

"It's sad to think that after all the time you put in, then they turn their backs on you," said Hickman. "I tried as hard as I could to be reinstated, but they told me to leave."

"I SAID to myself, 'Why run and hide when you're innocent?' I was warned that I'd probably catch a lot of abuse if I came back to play at MSU, and that people would talk behind my back and crack jokes. But I'd be immature to let that affect me."

Basically I was railroaded. Other guys (MSU athletes) who were in trouble with the law were allowed to keep going to class. I couldn't believe it, especially after

the way they treated a guy like Scott Skiles. There's definitely a double standard."

(Skiles, a former All-America guard at MSU, now with the NBA's Orlando Magic, pleaded guilty to drug possession charges, but remained in school and on the MSU squad.)

Hickman said he got little support from the MSU coaching staff or his MSU teammates during the trial.

"None whatsoever, except from Mark Montgomery (MSU's starting point-guard)," Hickman said. "He came over to my house and wanted to come to the trial, but I guess the word got out that I was off-limits. A lot of people who I thought were in my corner weren't there. You find out who your friends are or who is behind you when you're backed into a corner."

HICKMAN said "I felt lonely" during the ordeal, drawing strength from his immediate family.

"My father, mother, sisters and brothers stood behind me, along with Bertram Waldon (his ex-teammate at Burgess) and Cordell," Hickman said. "I really became spiritual (through the trial) when nobody else was there."

"I've never sold drugs or used drugs, and then to be indicted by the police, let alone by federal agents, is a nightmare."

Through contacts made by Robinson's father James, Hickman was able to enroll at Liberty, a Division I school based on strong religious principles.

"At MSU there's a lot of immorality, but here everybody is together in the belief of Christ," Hickman said. "It's a big difference being here. It's a better environment. It's demanding, but the coaches look at you as a person first."

Eleventh-year Liberty coach Jeff Meyer has taken a wait-and-see approach regarding Hickman's January transfer.

"All I know is that he (Hickman) has enrolled, but has not practiced or has had any direct involvement with our basketball program," Meyer said.

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