

Loss sends Rockets back to earth

BY BRAD EMONS
STAFF WRITER

Coulda, shoulda, woulda. That's what coach Mike Schuette and his Westland John Glenn basketball team may be asking themselves for days to come.

The Rockets were on the verge of an upset victory Tuesday in the state Class A quarterfinals at Lansing Eastern, but highly regarded Battle Creek Central held on for a 75-71 win.

It was a valiant effort by underdog Glenn, which did not say die until Battle Creek's Reggie Tucker nailed a pair of free throws with six seconds left to clinch the victory, sending the Beacrats (21-4 overall) into Friday's 7:15 p.m. semifinal matchup against Detroit Murray-Wright at the Breslin Center in East Lansing.

"I think we made believers out of them," said Glenn coach Mike Schuette, whose team bowed out with a 20-5 mark. "Once the districts started, we called it a new season and we got some great leadership from our seniors, Tariq Horne and Tony Goins. The close game with Romulus, the overtime win against Livonia Franklin and the two-point win over Wayne in the districts gave us confidence."

"The kids listened and they executed in practice. It got contagious and everything started to work. It's too bad we came up just a little bit too short."

Down by as many as 13 points midway through the third quarter, Glenn quieted the predominantly Battle Creek Central crowd by storming back to tie, 67-67, on a Goins three-pointer with 5:13 remaining in the game.

With the momentum clearly in Glenn's favor, sophomore guard Albert Jones scored a hoop to put the Rockets up 69-67 with just under five minutes left to play.

Central missed on its next trip down as the 6-foot-5 Goins, Glenn's go-to man all season, grabbed the rebound.

Fouled on the play and with Glenn in the bonus, Goins

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stepped to the free-throw line. He missed the front-end, but snared the rebound, only to be called for going over the back, a critical foul, with 4:32 left.

The controversial call, which will stick in the craw of Glenn fans for years to come, ultimately changed the whole complexion of the game.

Nineteen seconds later, Central's 6-9 junior center Cory Gibson scored off a pick-and-roll play and was fouled by Goins, his fifth, sending him to the sidelines for the night with 11 points.

Gibson converted the free throw, putting Central ahead 60-59. The Beacrats then went on an 8-2 run.

"All I saw is Tony getting the ball, with all kinds of daylight between him and the next man, and scoring off the shot to give us a four-point lead," Schuette said. "Except for that call, I thought it was a well-oiled machine."

Without Goins, Glenn appeared doomed, but the Rockets fought back to within two, 73-71, on a three-pointer by Jones with only 15 seconds left.

"We called a timeout to let the kids know that Tony still had more games left and somebody had to step up," Schuette said. "I thought we did fine without him."

Forced to take the Rockets let only four seconds tick off the clock, sending Eric Doggett to the line.

Doggett hit the back of the rim, but the ball bounded directly to the Central guard, who grabbed possession and passed off to Tucker, who was fouled. He sank both free throws to seal the win.

Demetrius VanSyckle, a 6-7 junior who plays inside and outside, led Central with 19 points.

Gibson contributed 16, while the 6-5 Demetrius Virgil and the 6-4 Tucker added 13 and 12, respectively.

Guy Rucker led Glenn with 18 points, 12 rebounds and four

blocks. The 6-10 1/4 junior center stepped back and drilled a big three-pointer with just under a minute to play to pull Glenn to within three, 71-68.

Junior guard Savon Hubbard added 14, while Jones had 12. Home and Brent Washington each netted eight.

Central's full-court press, resulting in 13 first-half turnovers for Glenn, gave the Beacrats a 37-31 advantage at intermission.

"At halftime I was comfortable," Schuette said. "I was not worried because we were still in the ballgame, but I did not anticipate getting down by 13."

Midway through the third quarter, Glenn gave Central a taste of its own medicine, going with a full-court press of its own.

"If I had to do it again, I'd would have gone more with a full-court (press) in the first half," Schuette said. "We really attacked the ball and it brought us back."

Despite a decided height advantage, which also featured a pair of bruising 6-6 players off the bench, Central had trouble dealing with Glenn's quickness.

"We knew Glenn matched up well, but it was their three perimeter people who could really penetrate to the basket," said Battle Creek coach Chuck Turner, who is making his fourth state semifinal appearance in 25 years. "I was really more worried about them than their big people to be honest."

"Our height was a difference, but not necessarily the difference. Our press was maybe the difference, although we gave up some easy baskets."

Glenn outshot Central from the floor.

The Rockets made 28 of 47 shots (59.5 percent) compared with 28 of 67 for Central (41.7 percent).

Another key factor was the free-throw line.

Central was 15 of 23 (65 percent), while Glenn connected on 11 of 20 (55 percent).

Glenn took care of the ball better in the second half, but wound up committing 20 turnovers to Central's 10.

"Gibson down the stretch may have been the difference," Turner said. "He pretty much neutralized Rucker. He's averaging about nine points per game, but he picked it up in the fourth quarter (10 points). He got his outside shot going."

But it was the fourth and fifth fouls down the stretch against Goins which opened the door for Central.

"He's a heck of a player," Turner said. "My guy VanSyckle had a tough time getting past him. And if he beats Goins, Rucker is going to be there."

Madonna wins baseball pair

BY STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

The Madonna University baseball team didn't need to head to the Dominican Republic to play a baseball game last weekend.

But the Crusaders found some favorable weather conditions and two wins in three outings at Ohio Dominican in Columbus, Ohio.

After a 6-1 loss on Saturday, Madonna won a Sunday double-header over Dominican, 11-2 and 9-2. Dominican came into the weekend 16th ranked in the NAIA.

The Crusaders also had a good time last night in Columbus, giving Ohio State a scare before losing 11-10.

"I don't know if they'll let us back in Columbus," George joked.

The Crusaders, who are 12-4 overall, open their home schedule at 1 p.m. Saturday at Madonna Park.

Madonna collected 18 hits in Sunday's double-header sweep.

"What I like is we scored four runs in the last two innings of the second game and eight in the last two innings of the first game," George said.

Senior shortstop Jeff Miller raised his batting average to .465 after going five-of-eight on Sunday. Miller was 3-4 with two runs scored and four RBI, including a three-run home run in the 11-2 win.

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