

## BOYS BASKETBALL

## Plymouth Canton trips Wayne with late surge

By C.J. RUSAK  
STAFF WRITER

Last lull loses.  
Plymouth Canton suffered through it, and Wayne Memorial took complete advantage to pull out a 63-59 season-opening boys basketball victory Tuesday at Canton.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. The Chiefs, 22-2 a year ago, had lost their two top scorers and three starters from that team. Wayne had been to the Class A state semifinals the past two years, and nearly the entire cast was back for a try at another trip.

But after sparring through the first 2 1/2 quarters, with neither team opening up much of a lead, it was Canton that seemed to be taking command entering the

fourth period.

Up 47-42 through three quarters, the Chiefs increased their advantage to 51-44 with 6:34 left on Matt Ammons' layup. Wayne was pointless over the last 6:52 of the third quarter, with the Chiefs scoring 10 straight during that lull, until Karl Callaway's two free throws after the period had ended brought Wayne back to within five.

Then after Ammons' layup, the lull hit Canton. The Chiefs scored just eight more points, converting 1-of-5 chances at the free throw line, in the final 6:30.

"We had a chance, but then we just didn't get it done," said Canton coach Dan Young. "We made some good plays throughout the game. But down the stretch, we needed to break that pressure and get some good shots."

"But we had some turnovers

and made some bad decisions."

And the Zebras pounced on the opportunities. LaVelle Guess did most of the damage, riddling Canton's defense for nine final-quarter points; he finished with 20 and four steals.

Through three quarters, the Chiefs had handled Wayne's pressure fairly well, committing 18 turnovers but forcing 15 by the Zebras.

In addition, Canton broke through to get all kinds of easy baskets for the game, the Chiefs connected on 25-of-38 shots (65.8 percent), with Nick Hurley (56.8 percent) through the Zebras press to score a game-high 26 points on 11-of-13 shooting.

"They're a very good basketball team," said Wayne coach Chuck Henry. "We got a couple of steals in the fourth quarter, and we tried to keep Hurley

under control."

Those factors were major elements in Wayne's turnaround. Hurley's basket early in the final quarter had boosted Canton's lead to seven, but after Ammons reestablished 4-0 at that level with 6:34 left, the Chiefs started to slide.

Nine Canton turnovers in the stretch run ignited Wayne's comeback. Five-straight points by Guess narrowed the Canton lead to 51-49 with 5:45 left.

After a Rob Johnson basket put the Chiefs back up by four, the Zebras really put it into high gear. In the final 4:34, they out-pointed Canton 14-0.

Guess converted a steal into a basket to tie the game at 55-all with 3:35 to go, then Callaway got a basket following yet another Canton turnover put Wayne in front with 2:52 left.

Donte Scott tied it for the Chiefs 11 seconds later, but Rodney Hurst drilled a three-pointer with 2:31 remaining to give Wayne the lead for good, 60-57.

"We really didn't do anything different philosophically," said Henry. "The kids had the will to win, to come back."

"We got a couple of turnovers and a couple of easy baskets. That always helps take the pressure off the offense."

It also helped when Henry put Lorenzo Guess on Hurley. The Zebras' leader offensively, Lorenzo nailed his first shot of the game, a three-pointer, but was held in check pretty well the rest of the way. He finished with 14 points on 4-of-13 shooting.

But as big-time players are wont to do, Lorenzo kept Hurley off the board after his early basket in the fourth. Lorenzo also

had team-highs in rebounds (six) and assists (six), to go with three steals.

LaVelle, meanwhile, nailed 8-of-12 floor shots (including 2-of-4 threes) and made four steals. Hurst finished with 11 points.

Canton got 14 points (7-of-7 from the field) and five boards from Johnson, and 10 points and seven assists from Ammons.

The Chiefs had a 23-18 edge in rebounding, but Wayne held an 8-2 advantage on the offensive boards. In addition, the Zebras made 8-of-21 threes (38.1 percent) to Canton's 1-of-7 (14.3 percent).

"We knew, for the first game of the year, it would be a war," Henry said. "We know when we play them it will be one of the toughest games of the year."

It was all of that — for both teams.

## CC tankers all relative

Danny Knipper knows what parents are probably thinking.

Knipper was recently named the new boys swim coach at Detroit Catholic Central, which means about six months from now the Shamrocks will be looking for another coach.

The Shamrocks have had six coaches the last six years, each staying only one season before leaving for either another coaching job, work or school reasons.

But that pattern stops with Knipper, who insists he's staying long term.

It was one of the agreements he had with athletic director Bob Santello, whom it seems has had to hire more coaches in swimming than all of the other teams at CC the last 20 years.

"Things are great," Knipper said. "I plan on sticking around for a while. Bob stressed that a lot. He didn't want anyone jumping in and covering just one year."

"I've got long-term goals to produce a team that will beat (two time defending Class A champ) Birmingham Brother Rice. I don't worry about their discipline, they have no problems seeing their goals. They're in the water every day at 5:30 a.m. and 3:30 in the afternoon, ready to go. This is a great bunch of boys and I hope to make them produce, try to bring out the best in them."

Knipper, 24, graduated from North Farmington, where he was an all-state swimmer. He was an assistant coach at North in 1992-93 and the head coach at his alma mater in 1993-94, the year the Raiders finished tied for sixth place at the Class A state meet.

## SWIMMING

He has a culinary arts degree from Oakland Community College.

Knipper knows some of the CC swimmers, like juniors Nick Sosnowski, Paul Garabelli and Ryan Meekins from the Clarencville Swim Club, where he is an instructor.

Sosnowski and seniors Kevin Reinke and J.P. Merchant are expected to lead the Shamrocks this season. Other top swimmers include Matt Baran and Paul Connolly.

Knipper thinks those swimmers are capable of placing at the state meet and the Shamrocks can finish among the top 12 in the team standings.

Sosnowski, Connolly and Baran form three-fourths of a 200-medy relay team that could shine at the state meet.

Knipper also has experience training women, as he assisted Stevenson coach Greg Phill in coaching Sheila Taormina in her preparation for the Olympics in Atlanta, Ga. Taormina, a Stevenson graduate, won a Gold Medal in the women's 800-meter relay.

His assistant coach at CC will be his sister, Katie Knipper, a 1992 graduate of Farmington Hills Mercy.

The Shamrocks have practices and home meets at Mercy, but that's not the only reason he has his sister along.

"It's convenient and she wants to get in coaching," Danny said. "She's a five-time high school All-American."

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