

North falls short in semifinal

BY SCOTT DANIEL
STAFF WRITER

Basketball games are rarely over won by just one player.

But Melissa Marzolf had more to do with Plymouth Canton's 33-28 Western Lakes Activities Association semifinal road victory Tuesday over host North Farmington than anybody.

With the Chiefs down 15-6 midway through the second quarter, Marzolf, a senior guard, ran off five straight points. Canton cut the North lead to two by halftime, then dominated the third quarter to take control of the game.

"Marzolf took the ball to the hole well tonight," Canton coach Bob Blohm said. "She was awesome. I think she's really elevated her game."

The win sets up a Canton-Salem conference final Friday. The Chiefs (16-3) beat their cross-campus rivals earlier this season.

For the Raiders, Tuesday's loss was tough to take. North played inspired basketball but ran out of gas in the third quarter.

BASKETBALL

"We had some layups we couldn't finish with their defensive pressure," North Farmington coach Linda Perkins. "That may have been the difference."

The Raiders (11-8) will play Farmington Harrison for third place at 5:30 p.m. Friday.

With the score tied midway through the first quarter, North Farmington went on a 5-0 run. Katie Vihelie scored inside and Kellee Fournier swished a three-pointer minutes later to put the Raiders up 9-4.

Back-to-back triples by Samantha McComb and Fournier put North on top 15-6 in the second quarter.

While the Raiders were burning the nets, Canton was icolod. The Chiefs got good shots but simply couldn't make them. Canton connected on just six of 24 from the field in the first half.

"We struggled against their zone," Blohm said. "We weren't getting many second shots."

The momentum quickly shifted, however. Marzolf scored her

first points of the game at 4:37 off of a scramble near the basket. She added a free throw and a baseline shot to make it 15-11. Canton's Kristin Mayor converted a pair of free throws to make it a 17-15 game at the half.

The third quarter was all Canton. North managed just two points in the period, and the visitors led 25-19 at the end.

"We came out a little flat and weren't able to finish our shots," Perkins said of the third.

Canton maintained a comfortable lead much of the fourth quarter, but North made a late rally. A pair of free throws by McComb made it a 31-28 game with 23 seconds remaining.

Marzolf put the game away with a pair of free throws a few seconds later.

"North played hard from beginning to end," he said. "They played great ball. It was everything they could do to win."

Marzolf scored nine points to lead Canton. Nkechi Okum-abia added eight and Mayor had six. McComb led the Raiders with 13 points; Fournier added nine.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

Marian has final say vs. Borgess

BY STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Birmingham Marian senior guard Breean Wala has a trio of three-point plays and a game-high 27 points as the Mustangs won their second straight Catholic League girls basketball title Sunday with a 61-52 upset win over Redford Bishop Borgess at University of Detroit-Morey's Cullen Hall.

The loss was Borgess' first in 19 games. Marian, which will play Detroit Martin Luther King in the Operation Friendship game at 2:30 p.m. Saturday at U-D, improved to 15-4.

Borgess beat Marian in two earlier games en route to winning the Central Division regular-season title.

Remarkably, the Mustangs made their first 17 free throws before finishing the game 21-for-24 at the line.

Wala had 10 points by half-time and 16 more in the second half, making 10 straight free throws at one point. She finished 11-for-12 at the line.

"If I'm driving to the basket, I just try to make the shot and draw the foul, especially against this team because we want to get them in foul trouble," Wala said.

The Mustangs ended the first quarter on a 9-0 run to open a 17-9 lead, and Wala's three-point play with 7:47 left in the second raised the lead to 20-9.

Wala made another remarkable three-point play among Borgess' half front line with 2:31 left in the half to give the Mustangs a 29-21 lead.

Marian junior center Nicole Anaejionu added 14 points and 12 rebounds, and junior guard Jasmin McAlpin added 10 points and outstanding defense against Borgess' senior guard Christina Anderson, who was limited to four points.

The Mustangs also outrebounded the Spartans, 35-19, with Markeisha Thompson joining Anaejionu with 11 rebounds.

"It feels good and we're finally playing like I feel we're capable," Marian coach Mary Lillie

Cicerone said. "We always play good defense, but we're really putting our offense together. They beat us twice but we missed so many puppies (easy shots) and they intimidated us. We talked about getting the ball to Nicole, who can create for others, along with Breean, and manned Peaches (Anderson). Jasmin is a good little defender."

The Mustangs had to overcome a sometimes awesome display from Borgess' senior forward Koren Merchant, who finished with 25 points and six rebounds.

The Mustangs were willing to give Merchant hot points in exchange for only four from Anderson, who managed only four shot attempts against Marian's box-and-one defense.

Borgess' senior center Ayisha Smith, whose three-point shot in the first quarter gave the Spartans their last lead, 9-8, was held to nine points and three rebounds.

The Spartans made seven of nine at the free-throw line.

Salem coasts to victory over Harrison

BY C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

It figured to be a thriller, Tuesday's rematch between last year's Western Lakes Activities Association Basketball tournament finalists Farmington Harrison and Plymouth Salem.

But it wasn't. The host Rocks took the thrill out of the game early, allowing Harrison to lead just once — on a three-pointer by Ari Ault 40 seconds into the game.

That lasted less than a minute. Salem scored the game's next 14 points, converting six of its first seven shots from the field, and the Hawks were never closer than four after that.

The final: Salem 59, Harrison 32.

Now the Rocks can prepare for their next two games — both against Plymouth Canton, which beat Farmington 33-28 to advance to the WLA final at 7 p.m. Friday at Livonia Franklin.

"We've shut down some pretty good basketball teams the last two games," Salem coach Fred Thomann said. Walled Lake Central was the first.

BASKETBALL

"In that game (against Central), we got it going in the second half; in this game, we got it going in the first half and sustained it in the second."

Andru Pruetz and Amanda Abraham ignited the Rocks, combining to score all but two of their 16 first-quarter points. Pruetz had 13 by halftime, Abraham nine.

Four straight points by Harrison's Cassie Jemison to close the first quarter narrowed Salem's lead to 16-9. Amy Roble nailed a three-pointer with 6:45 left in the half to trim the gap to four. Unfortunately for the Hawks, they managed just one more point in the period while Salem scored 12 to take a 28-13 advantage into the intermission.

"I think we're a deceptively quick team for our size," Thomann said. "In this game, we found the open player as well as we have all season."

Salem (33) outscored Harrison 12-5 in the third quarter for a 40-18 lead.

Pruett paced the Rocks with 20 points; Abraham totaled 15 points and Tiffany Grubaugh seven points.

For Harrison, Roble's 12 points was best; Jemison finished with nine. The Hawks (14-5) play North in the consolation game at 5:30 p.m. Friday at Franklin.

"Salem played better than we did," Harrison coach Pete Mantyla said. "For us to be successful, we have to play harder than what we did."

Mantyla was not happy with the officials, who called Amy Roble for four travels and the Hawks for three illegal screens in the first half alone.

"We were called for carrying the ball more in one game than we were the last two years, and we were called for more illegal screens in one half than we were the whole season."

"I'm not happy with the way we played but, if that makes sense in a playoff game, I don't understand it."

"I've been a varsity coach in this league for seven years, and it's a shame that's the kind of officiating we got in this game."

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