

Marian's comeback falls short in Class A

BY MARTY BUDNER
STAFF WRITER

Couch Mary Lillie-Cicerone was placed in an unfamiliar situation Saturday after the Class A championship game in girls basketball.

Her Birmingham Marian team has qualified for the state finals four times during her 15-year career, but this year marked the first time she was on the losing end of the score.

The Mustangs captured state championships in 1988, 1992 and 1996. Their dream of back-to-back titles was shattered by Grand Rapids Christian.

Christian completed a perfect season (28-0) by defeating Marian in a highly-competitive and

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entertaining game, 68-66, before a record crowd of 5,693 at Central Michigan University's Rose Arena.

Instead of high-fives and celebratory hugs of years past, Lillie-Cicerone found herself in the role of consoler this time.

After the game, she walked down the bench and consoled each player as best she could. It was a new experience for Lillie-Cicerone.

Although the pain of defeat might linger for a while, she said her players eventually will have fond memories of another terrific season that fell one game short

of a state crown.

"You've got to give them a couple of days, maybe a week," she said, "and they're going to say 'Darn, we had a great season,' or 'We made it to the state finals.'"

"You know, they're going to talk about this for years. We had a great team; we made it to the finals in a couple of years, and we had chances to win it."

"They're going to realize what they've accomplished down the line. And how many kids don't go through this? Boys and girls go through their high school careers without ever getting out of the regional."

"This is a big-time accomplishment. It's hard to swallow right

now, especially the way we came back, grabbed the lead, then blew it."

Marian (22-5) never led in the game until the final minutes.

The Eagles, who lost by a point to Marian in last year's Class A state semifinals, had a strong first half and soared to a 40-28 halftime lead. The Mustangs didn't have a good shooting half and committed an unusually high nine turnovers.

Christian hiked its advantage to 51-38, matching its biggest lead of the game halfway through the third quarter.

That set the stage for a tremendous Marian rally. The Mustangs scored the final six points of the quarter and trailed

51-44 entering the finale.

Marian stepped up its game even more, scoring the first 10 points of the fourth quarter for a 54-51 lead.

Markeisha Thompson hit a driving layup at the 4:18 mark to give Marian its first lead, 52-51. Kellie Byers hit another layup a short time later for a three-point advantage.

Christian's Amanda Vries hit a pair of free throws to bring the Eagles back within a point at 54-53. Marian missed a couple of shots that would have extended its lead. Christian tallied five straight points to ice its first state girls basketball crown.

"We played a heckuva second half to battle back from 12

down," Lillie-Cicerone said. "When we took the lead, we felt comfortable. We worked our butts off to get back."

"They had everything clicking in that first half. Everything we tried to do they countered offensively. We struggled but we never gave up. At halftime, we said 'If they can get up by 12 points, we can catch up.' Once we got our offense going, that kicked in our defense, and that got us right back in the game."

Breana Walas, who is headed to Cornell next year, finished with 18 points. Byers had 11. Thompson and Nicole Anaejionu 10 points each. Anaejionu had a team-high eight rebounds and three assists.

Yellow Jackets looking ahead to '98 title repeat

BY MARTY BUDNER
STAFF WRITER

Jennifer Thomas and Katie Blazewski have played on two state championship teams at Birmingham-Detroit Country Day. There could be a third in their future.

Thomas, Blazewski and their teammates won the Class B title Saturday after a 43-35 victory over Saginaw Swan Valley at Central Michigan University's Rose Arena.

It was Country Day's third championship overall and second in three years. The Yellow Jackets (27-1) didn't have a senior on the team, so they will be heavy

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favorites to defend their title next year.

Thomas is already looking forward to the challenge.

"I think there will be a little more pressure on us to make the repeat, because we'll have the same team," said Thomas, who will be a bonafide Miss Basketball candidate next year.

"We're definitely looking forward to next season and winning another state championship. We're going to work hard in the off season and prepare to win another one. I think we're capable of doing it."

"Our freshmen are improving. I've seen them improve from Day One. We expect to have them come back stronger, so we can have a bench."

"Coming into this season, I knew we had a good chance to win a state championship, because we all played AAU ball together under the same organization. I knew we could do it. It was just a matter of how bad we wanted it."

Thomas knew her role on this team would be different than it was on the 1995 state championship team.

"In my freshman year, there were seniors and juniors who really have to take a leadership

role," she said. "I had to take a different approach to this season, because I knew Katie and I were the only ones with the experience of winning a state championship."

"Every day at practice, I told our team we had to practice intense and hard, so that one day we could make it to the state championships."

The Yellow Jackets not only made it, they won it all with an impressive display of patient, disciplined, quality basketball.

Swan Valley, making its first Final Four appearance, came out gunning with a long-range shooting in the final period.

The Vikings were 5-for-5 from

three-point range in the first half and led 23-20 at halftime. The halftime advantage resulted from a three-point shot by Jenni Sallie, who had 46 seconds remaining in the second quarter.

"We knew they had some good three-point shooters, and they've been effective all year," Country Day coach Frank Orlando said. "The key really was we had to stop their three-point shot."

The Yellow Jackets regrouped at halftime and went on a 9-0 run for a 29-23 lead. Schultz canned another three-point shot at the third-quarter buzzer to make it a 29-26 game heading into the final period.

Country Day scored seven of the first nine points of the fourth quarter. The Yellow Jackets took a 36-28 lead with five minutes remaining, and Saginaw Swan Valley never caught up.

"I believed in this team all year," Orlando said. "This team never wavered."

"If you look all through the state tournament at our first halves, a lot of the teams were tied with us, and we were down by a point. Courage is what brought us to this level. It wasn't always about ability. You have to play with your mind, also."

Thomas finished with a game-high 15 points and 14 rebounds. Hanks was the only other double-digit scorer with 10 points.

Borgess coasts to easy victory in Class C final

BY STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

"Make that three Class C state championships in the last five years for the Redford Bishop Borgess girls basketball team."

Borgess made its fifth straight trip to the Final Four a memorable one, rolling over Hancock, 54-21, in the championship game Saturday night at Central Michigan University's Rose Arena.

"The feeling is twice as nice for senior guard Christina 'Peaches' Anderson, and not just because this is the second medal she's won, being a member of the 1994 title team."

"Anderson was one of three Spartans in double figures with 12 points on 6-of-10 shooting from the floor."

"My freshman year we had Maxann (Reese) and Adrienne

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(Bryant), and I contributed but Anderson said, "This is real big, being my senior year. I've got two gold medals and I'm fine with it."

Senior forward Koren Merchant and senior center Alysha Smith joined Anderson in double figures with 16 and 10 points, respectively.

They each tied with a team-high 10 rebounds as well, helping the Spartans enjoy a commanding, 37-14 edge on the glass.

It was the end of a memorable week for Smith, who received the Miss Basketball award five days earlier.

Could Borgess (27-1) be cor-

nering the market on Class C title? The school's boys basketball team won its first state crown last winter and is favored to repeat.

"They supported us and we supported them," Smith said. The principal (Sister Joan Charney) is very happy for us, too."

The margin of victory was the largest ever for a girls state championship game. The Borgess win also creates some controversy as to who the state's best team is.

The Spartans beat Class A semifinalist Flint Northern earlier in the year. Class A finalist Birmingham Marian handed Borgess its only loss in the Catholic League championship, but the Spartans won two regional consolation meetings with the Mustangs.

Grand Rapids Christian won the Class A championship, finishing an undefeated season with a 58-56 win over Marian earlier Saturday.

"We feel we can play with anyone," Mann said. "I don't know who the mythical champion is, but I think Grand Rapids Christian can make the first claim."

As public pressure mounts to have the Spartans move up to Class B will the school oblige? The Spartans, who won Class C crowns in 1993 and '94, also were runners-up in '95 and semifinalists in '96.

"No, but thanks for asking," Mann said. "This is the second one in four years, but we've been very disappointed the last two years. These kids (Anderson, Merchant and Smith) were able to go out the way they wanted."

Borgess led 10-5 after one

quarter before outscoring Hancock 19-3 in the second quarter for a 29-8 halftime lead. The lead grew to 47-10 after the Spartans outscored the Bulldogs 18-2 in the third quarter.

Hancock (24-3) made six of 34 shots from the floor for 18 percent. The Bulldogs didn't make a field goal in the third quarter and went 16-30 without a made shot, which was the elapsed time between early in the second quarter and early in the fourth.

When Hancock tied Shelby in a semifinal game Friday, Bulldogs coach Mike Williams knew his team won the battle for second place.

Senior guard Elizabeth Pietila, who made three of 17 shots, led Hancock with eight points.

"I felt, looking at them yesterday, they were 30 or 40 points better, and I think the score-

board showed that," Williams said. "We had one very good player (Pietila) and the rest are marginal. For us, this was a tremendous season."

Hancock lost by only eight points during the regular season to Class B champion Detroit Country Day, but the Spartans are a better team than the Yellow Jackets, according to Williams.

"We've seen the size before but not a combination of size and quickness," he said. "They're extremely athletic. In the second half, I sat back and watched; I was in awe."

Mann joked in the post-game press conference that his biggest challenge was yet to come.

"Now we'll go back to the hotel and try to keep them quiet after 11," Mann said. "That's our biggest task."

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have been a disappointment that season."

The Marlins were led by senior starters Kate McNamara, who had 21 points and 10 rebounds in the final, Diane Dietz, Suzanne Brown and Lynn Yazdani.

"I remember that being a seasoned team of all-round players and persons," said Baker, who at 24 was in his second year as Mercy's coach.

Baker was the youngest title-winning coach in Michigan girls basketball history and the first

male to coach a girls team to an MHSAA hoop crown.

"We were the best team in the state that year and the team had great confidence," Baker added. "The (players) were on a mission from the beginning of the season and played with great dedication."

"We had two bonafide consensus all-Americans on that team, and that made coaching very easy in most games."

The 1982 final was perhaps the best in tournament history as Mercy overcame a 19-point

deficit entering the fourth quarter to upset four-time defending champion Flint Northern, 61-58.

At Calhoun Hall in Detroit, the Vikings were up by 10 points after one period and 13 at halftime. When their lead reached 19, Baker was forced to do something he didn't want to do — apply a full-court press.

"We were forced to flash the press on them once only, but we absolutely didn't want to go to it. That was our last resort," Baker said. "That put us into a full-court running game, which we

■ 'The fourth-quarter comeback was the most exhilarating experience I have ever had in sports ... People who attended it still recall it with wonder.'

Larry Baker
—former Mercy coach

wanted to stay out of."

Still down by 18 with under seven minutes to play, Mercy ripped off 16 of the next 18 points to cut the margin to 57-53 with 3:06 remaining.

After a Northern free throw, Amy DeMatin scored three consecutive baskets to give Mercy its first lead, 59-58, with 1:14 on the clock. A free throw by Mary Rosowski with 11 seconds iced the win.

Sarah Basford finished with 20 points to lead Mercy. Carolyn Burt, the only senior starter on the team, added 12 and sophomore Annetta Ruggiero 11.

"We started three sophomores, a junior and a senior," Baker said. "The parents of that team were terrifically involved in that season in a positive way. The whole school community got swept up in or tournament run. We were underdogs in so many games. We were genuinely delighted with each success."

"The fourth-quarter comeback was the most exhilarating experience I have ever had in sports. Our young team worked a near-miracle in that game. People who attended it still recall it with wonder."

Baker retired from coaching last summer with a 381-143 career record.

CITY OF FARMINGTON 1997 WINTER TAX STATEMENT PUBLIC NOTICE

The City of Farmington Winter Tax Statements are payable December 1, 1997 through February 14, 1998. A 5% penalty will be added to delinquent taxes.

As of March 1, 1998, all 1997 taxes must be paid to C. Hugh Dohany, Oakland County Treasurer.

City Hall Offices will be open for payment of taxes 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday except for the following:

Thursday - December 25, 1997
Friday - December 26, 1997
Thursday - January 1, 1998
Friday - January 2, 1998
Monday - January 19, 1998

For your convenience, a depository is located in the City Hall lobby.

PATSY K. CANTRELL,
City Clerk/Treasurer

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