

# SPORTS & RECREATION

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## Raiders rally but tumble in final

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER  
domeara@oe.homecomm.net

### BASKETBALL

North Farmington was the team that staged a comeback Friday night, but Comeback of the Year honors have to go to West Bloomfield.

With virtually a new team this year, the Lakers managed to win their second straight Class A district championship in boys basketball.

West Bloomfield had a 16-point lead cut to one in the second half Friday, but it stayed on top for a 58-51 victory over North in the tournament final at West Bloomfield.

The Lakers (16-6) will play Southfield-Lathrup (6-17) in the Northville High School regional tournament at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

"We lost four starters plus Kyle Brown (to a football injury)," Lakers coach Larry Moore said. "We have a lot of young kids, and we were held together by two seniors - Tommy Green and Warren Woodruff."

"I'm really proud of the guys. We didn't have a go-to guy. There was no telling who was going to step up from one game to the next. It was more of a team effort."

"Winning 16 games was not as easy as last year but just as rewarding. More so to the guys here this year, because there wasn't as much expected of them."

The go-to guy Friday for the Lakers was Woodruff, who scored 17 of his game-high 24 points in the second half to keep his team in the lead. Green finished with 12 points; Ed Richardson added six, Zach Hilbers and Kyle Flanchaum five apiece for West Bloomfield, which shot nearly 47 percent (20-of-43).

The Raiders weren't hitting the three-point shots in the first half like they did Wednesday against Bloomfield Hills Lahser, going 1-for-10.

That, plus some North turnovers and opportunistic play by West Bloomfield, helped the Lakers to a 21-7 lead early in the second quarter and a 29-13 score after Woodruff converted a turnover. The Lakers led at halftime, 29-16.

"We knew they were a great three-point shooting team," Moore said. "In the first half, they weren't going down. We knew they would turn up the pressure and eventually the three-point shots would go in."

"All the time we were playing good defense. If they're making threes, it's hard to stop. All you can do is put a hand up."

Please see RAIDERS, C3



Up and over: Six-foot-4 freshman Sean Mackler shoots over the top of West Bloomfield's Phoroah Kirk.

### Avery 2nd in Elks Contest

Kelly Avery of Farmington Hills finished second in the state in the Annual Elks Club Hoop Shoot Contest.

The contest is part of a national event sponsored by the Elks in which contestants shoot regulation-distance free throws.

After a slow start, Avery made 12 of her last 14 attempts to finish in a tie for second place, one shot behind the winner, the Grand Rapids area champion.

In a shootout to determine sole possession of second place, Avery hit four of five free throws to defeat the Iron Mountain area representative.

Avery competed in the 10- and 11-year-old division at Rochester Adams High School. Over 30,000 contestants entered the contest in that age group, and the eight finalists from around the state advanced to the finals.

Avery attends Power Middle School in Farmington and plays for the Oakland Flyers 11-year-old AAU basketball team.

### Carson sparks Alma team

Sophomore Erin Carson helped the Alma College softball team post an 8-2 record last week in the Gene Cusick Collegiate Classic in Fort Myers, Fla.

Carson, a former All-Observer catcher at Farmington Hills Mercy, batted .484 with 15 hits, including three doubles and two home runs.

She led the Scots with a robust .744 slugging percentage while driving in six runs and scoring eight times.

Carson, who is the daughter of Scott and Sue Carson of Farmington Hills, also played errorless ball while splitting time between catcher and first base.

Alma defeated St. Michael's College, Johnson and Wales University, Mercyhurst College, Siena Heights University, Augustana College, Rose Hulman Institute and Ohio Northern (twice).

The Scots, who are ranked No. 7 nationally in the Division III National Fastpitch Coaches Association poll, play again March 15-16 against Capital University and Case Western Reserve in Columbus, Ohio.

### St. Fabian CYO tryouts

Tryouts for St. Fabian CYO baseball and softball teams are scheduled for this week in the school gymnasium at 32200 West 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills.

Boys and girls interested in participating are urged to attend both of the tryouts listed for their grade.

Eligible players must be one of the following: a student or parishioner of St. Fabian, a parishioner of St. Claire or a parishioner of St. Coleman.

The tryout schedule is as follows:

■ 7th and 8th grade boys - Tuesday, March 12, 7-8:45 p.m.; Wednesday, March 13, 7-8:45 p.m.

■ 7th and 8th grade girls - Monday, March 11, 6-6:45 p.m.; Thursday, March 14, 7-8:45 p.m.

■ 6th and 6th grade boys - Monday, March 11, 7-8:45 p.m.; Tuesday, March 12, 5-6:45 p.m.

■ 5th and 6th grade girls - Wednesday, March 13, 5-6:45 p.m.; Thursday, March 14, 5-6:45 p.m.

### Suburban Hockey clinics

Suburban Hockey Schools will conduct its Learn to Check clinics at several locations prior to the spring hockey season, including Eddy Edgar Arena in Livonia (March 16), Suburban Training Center in Farmington Hills (March 26-27), Redford Arena (March 28) and Novi Ice Arena (April 2).

The program is geared toward squirt players moving up to the pee wee level, as well as pee wee and bantam players who need instruction on the techniques of checking.

Arcs of emphasis in the two-hour instructional session include proper checking technique, how to receive a check, how to avoid a check, stick checking, back checking, angling and body positioning.

Call (248) 478-1600 or visit [www.suburbanhockey.com](http://www.suburbanhockey.com) for more information.

(Observer readers can submit information for the Farmington Sports Scene to Sports Editor Dan O'Meara via email to [domeara@oe.homecomm.net](mailto:domeara@oe.homecomm.net) or fax to (734) 591-7278.)

March Madness: North Farmington's Brian Johns steps in front of Zach Hilbers and sets up for a shot attempt Friday in the district final.

## Mercy falls to Marian in regional tourney

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER  
domeara@oe.homecomm.net

### VOLLEYBALL

Birmingham Marian completed a sweep of Catholic League rival Farmington Hills Mercy in the current volleyball season Thursday.

The Mustangs defeated the Marlins for the sixth time in as many matches to win the Class A regional tournament at Troy Athens, 15-6, 15-11.

Marian will play the Fraser regional winner 7 p.m. Tuesday at West Bloomfield in what is expected to be a rematch of last year's quarterfinal contest won by Fraser.

"We have nothing to lose," Marian coach Anne Vondracek said Thursday. "Tonight makes it a good season, and winning Tuesday would be icing on the cake."

"It has the potential to be a great match if both teams come to play."

The Mustangs improved their record to 40-7-2 with regional wins over host Athens (15-12, 15-4) and Mercy, which finished the season with a 45-11 mark.

"Their effort was just great," Vondracek said of her players. "Our goal is to refuse to allow the ball to hit the floor."

"Because of that, we're a scrappy team. Balls that would be kills are coming back over, and we're wearing teams down."

"We have all the elements to be successful in the state tournament."

In the first game of the regional final, Mercy scored the first three points and was ahead early, 4-2.

Marian gained a point off a Mercy passing error and took control with 6-0 and 6-0 runs behind the serving of Christine Cubbin and Erin Poglit for a 14-6 lead.

After six straight sideouts, a block by Katie Henry finished off the win for the Mustangs.

The Marlins were minus senior outside hitter Kristin Loridas, who is arguably their best player.

Loridas suffered a torn knee ligament in the first game of Mercy's first match, which it still managed to win from Walpole Lake Central, 15-12, 10-15, 16-14.

Mercy coach Ed Ruhl described the loss of Loridas as devastating.

"Kristin is a captain and an emotional leader," he said. "She's our kill leader and serve-receive percentage leader. Yeah, it kinda affected everything."

Nonetheless, the Marlins came back with a stronger overall effort and made the second game closer.

Marian turned a 3-2 deficit into a four-point lead with Sarah Kreher on the service line. A Danielle Melone kill, two Mercy miscues and an ace put Marian ahead to stay, 7-3.

The Mustangs threatened to turn it into a rout with a 12-4 lead. But the Marlins chipped away and closed to 13-9 and 14-11 before a Mercy passing error gave Marian the victory.

"We expect that every time we play them," Vondracek said, "because the team that loses the first game raises its level of play and the second game gets a lot closer."

"They came out a little stronger, and we didn't match it right away. Eventually, we did. We played them (previously) when they didn't have Kristin, and they were still a tough team."

Melone led the Mustangs with nine kills; Janine Pesusich had five blocks and Henry three; Poglit had 19 assists; Kreher had 11 digs and Cubbin eight.

"We have a pretty balanced team," Vondracek said. "Erin does a nice job of distributing the ball to a lot of people. In that respect, we're very deep."

"Some teams can say, 'If we dig and block her, we'll be successful.' But we play with a team of hitters instead of a couple stars."

The player who made the biggest difference in the match was Poglit, with her leadership and playmaking, Ruhl said.

"She took a lot of bad passes and made them great sets," he said. "Marian doesn't do a lot of flashy things. They do what they need to get done."

"If you can get them to not run the middle, you can

Please see MERCY, C3

## Shamrocks advance to state final again

BY BRAD MONASTIERE  
STAFF WRITER  
bmonastiere@oe.homecomm.net

The old sports saying goes, it isn't how you start, but how you finish. Catholic Central's hockey team put that theory into practice Friday night.

After falling behind 2-0, the Shamrocks rallied for six straight goals in defeating Port Huron Northern 6-3 in the Division 1 semifinals at the Flint IMA Arena. CC advanced to its fourth straight championship game with the win, this time facing Marquette. Results of that game were not available at press time.

The Shamrocks have been no stranger to adversity this post-season, coming back from a 4-1 deficit to beat Livonia Stevenson and winning close games with Farmington and Tronton in previous rounds. That experience showed through during a semifinal game that was a rematch of last year's tightly played state final.

"We believe in each other, and when we look to the left and right, we see guys we want to win for," said team captain John Perkovich. "We're a close team, we hang together, and our team has a lot of heart."

CC co-coach Todd Johnson said he felt this game was the toughest the team has faced in its run of state championships since 1999, saying the Huskies had the best combination of depth, talent and toughness the Shamrocks have come up against.

"I felt that we had to play not only our best game of the season, but maybe our best game over the past four years, to win this game," he said. "We have a lot of character guys who believe in



Shamrocks stay alive: Brandon Naurato scored the tying goal for CC, which defeated Port Huron Northern in a state semifinal, 6-3.

Please see SHAMROCKS, C3