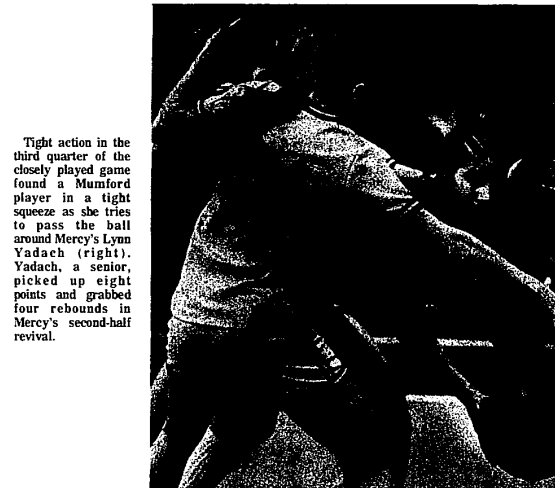




For coach Larry Brown and the Mercy Marlins, 2nd wasn't enough and victory was never sweeter



Mercy basketball coach Larry Brown firmly plants a kiss on the championship trophy awarded to his team after its 63-52 victory over Mumford.



Tight action in the third quarter of the closely played game found a Mumford player in a tight squeeze as she tries to pass the ball around Mercy's Lynn Yadach (right). Yadach, a senior, picked up eight points and grabbed four rebounds in Mercy's second-half revival.

Second best. Runner-up. Can't win the big one. Phrases that Farmington's Our Lady of Mercy girl's basketball team had to live with during the last three years.

Always posting excellent seasons in those years and advancing to the finals of the state basketball tournament, the Marlins of Mercy High could never come up with that final victory, the one that would make a winning season more meaningful. Sometimes a loss in a championship game can make a winning season a little sour. Not this year, however.

The Marlins put on an impressive display of poise and character as they rallied in the third quarter to post a 63-52 win over Mumford in last Saturday's Class A championship game at Michigan State University's Jenison Field House. But their victory didn't come easy.

Opposing Mumford controlled the game as the Detroit Public School cagers held a comfortable nine point lead through the second quarter. Mercy had to do something to get back into the game, and they did, switching to the press and causing many of Mumford's 23 turnovers.

The momentum held after Mercy took the lead in the third quarter and then it increased. They held on, trying to rid themselves of the "not-winning-the-big-one" mystique.

As victory became apparent, Coach Larry Brown sat back on the bench and confessed to his assistant, "No one can say that these girls don't have guts."

The game is now history. Mercy can now lay its claim as being the state's number one girl's basketball team.

As the team made its way into the lockerroom after the trophy presentations, a tape recorder in a corner bleated out the team song: "We are the champions, we are the champions. . . ."



With hair flying and arms waving, Diane Dietz (left) and Mumford's Debra Walker tangle on the court.

Photographed by Gary Friedman



The important fourth quarter was a time when a coach's advice was heeded most (above). And the advice paid off. Mercy held on for a 63-52 victory, and for the first time, pointed their index fingers toward the sky and proclaimed themselves number one (right).

