

Mercy has 'an awful lot to prove'

By TOM BAER

Nobody could blame Larry Baker if he shed a tear or two during Our Lady of Mercy's graduation ceremonies last spring.

Baker, the basketball coach at the all-girl parochial school in Farmington Hills, watched four exceptionally-talented players receive their diplomas and march off to college. These girls—Diane Dietz, Katie McNamara, Suzanne Brown and Lynn Yadaech—were instrumental in leading Mercy to a 25-0 record and a state Class A championship last season.

That title—earned by beating Detroit Mumford, 63-52, in the finals in Michigan State University's Jenison Fieldhouse last Dec. 17—has a special significance for Baker. Baker, beginning his fourth season as Mercy's coach, had advanced his team all the way to the finals in the two previous seasons, only to lose the big game.

Well, the frustration has ended and

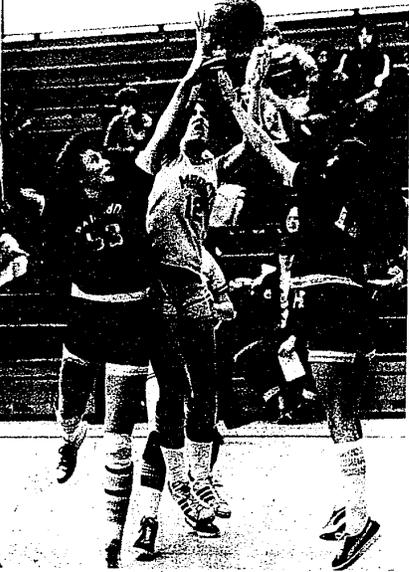
Mercy has finally shaken off its second-best status. But now that Baker has the state championship, he may no longer have the personnel to defend it.

Baker, however, remains confident that this year's team can be a winner despite the loss of all that talent through graduation.

"I know we have a lot to prove yet, but we'll definitely be competitive," said Baker, whose team opens its season Sept. 19 at home against non-league Southfield High.

"I really don't feel a lot of pressure to win," he said. "I probably feel it less than the kids. They feel like they have an awful lot to live up to. But if they lose a game, it won't be the end of the world. I'm not conceding any at this point, but I know they won't string me up over here over a couple of losses."

DEANNE BANFIELD, a 5-foot-7 senior forward who played a key role in the tournament last season, is



Mercy's Deanne Banfield struggles with two Harrison players during last season's district tournament.

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Mercy's only returning starter. She'll join guard Gretchen Larges (5-4), who played quite a bit last year, to form Mercy's nucleus.

Senior Laura Zwilfer (5-8) will provide some "badly-needed rebounding" in Baker's words, and senior Anne Harbold (5-5) should see plenty of action as starters. Baker has two promising juniors in Carolyn Chapman (5-9) and Pat Schneider (5-3), who led last year's reserve team in scoring. Freshman Denise Basford (5-6) has the distinction of being the first freshman to make a Baker squad.

"We've had some pretty competitive practice sessions so far, and some of these kids are looking good," Baker said. "What we don't have at this point are the superstars. But we'll be very competitive, I have no doubt about that. We'll have a good defensive club. Right now I'm not sure who'll be doing the scoring, although I know some of them can score. We'll be doing a lot of shuttling of girls in and out of the lineup because we'll be a running team."

"Compared to last year, we're a little short on height," Baker said. "We could get hurt if Deanne or Laura get into foul trouble because we don't

have the height on the bench. My backup center is quite tall, but she's an inexperienced sophomore."

MERCY, A MEMBER of the Catholic League, also has a conference title to defend. The Catholic League has undergone a realignment this season with Mercy being shifted to the Central Division along with Harper Woods Bishop Gallagher, which won the state Class B title and didn't graduate a girl from that team. The other Central Division teams are Birmingham Marian, Detroit Dominican and Harper Woods Regina.

Mercy also has some tough non-league opponents on its schedule. Besides Southfield, Mercy has scheduled Walled Lake Central, which guided the Marins a real tussle in the districts last season. Always-strong Southfield-Lathrup and the two Ann Arbor schools, Pioneer and Huron, round out Mercy's non-league opponents.

"I'm real happy with our schedule," Baker said. "It's the most competitive we've ever had. It's the only way to go. Tough schedules are the best preparation for the tournaments, and that's what basketball is all about."

Prep cage schedules

FARMINGTON HARRISON

VARSITY SCHEDULE—Sept. 16—Novi High, 6 p.m.; Sept. 18—at Redford Union, 8 p.m.; Sept. 20—at Farmington High, 6 p.m.; Sept. 22—Plymouth Canton, 6 p.m.; Oct. 3—Walled Lake Central, 6 p.m.; Oct. 5—Walled Lake Western, 6:15 p.m.; Oct. 13—at Livonia Central, 6 p.m.; Oct. 15—at North Farmington, 6 p.m.; Oct. 18—Westville High, 6 p.m.; Oct. 21—Redford Union, 6 p.m.; Oct. 23—Plymouth Canton, 6:30 p.m.; Nov. 2—Waterford Matt, 6 p.m.; Nov. 7—Detroit Dominican, 6 p.m.; Nov. 10—Walled Lake Central, 6 p.m.; Nov. 14—Livonia Churchill, 6 p.m.; Nov. 16—Farmington, North Farmington, 6 p.m.; Nov. 21—North Farmington, 6 p.m.; Nov. 27—Dec. 1—state district tournament.

FARMINGTON HIGH

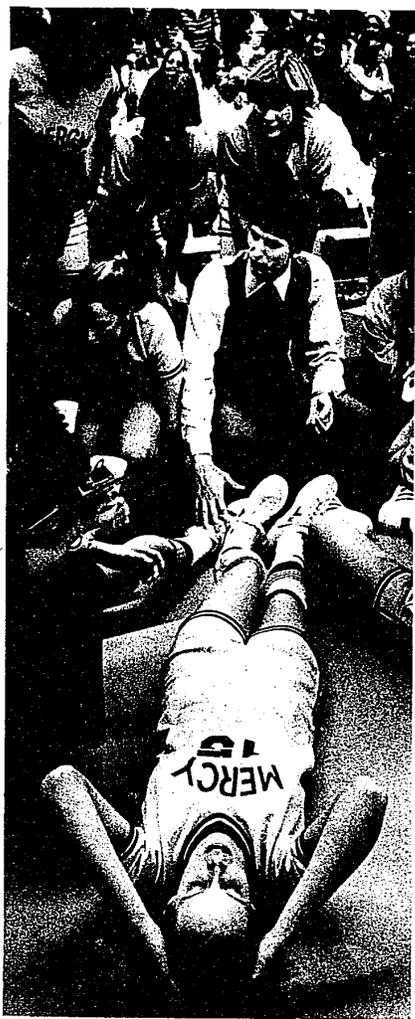
VARSITY SCHEDULE—Sept. 15—Redford Union, 6 p.m.; Sept. 18—Livonia Central, 6 p.m.; Sept. 20—North Farmington, 6 p.m.; Sept. 22—Farmington Harrison, 6 p.m.; Sept. 24—at Millard Leland, 6 p.m.; Oct. 3—Livonia Franklin, 6 p.m.; Oct. 5—Plymouth Canton, 6 p.m.; Oct. 13—at Livonia Stevens, 6 p.m.; Oct. 15—at Redford Union, 6 p.m.; Oct. 18—Walled Lake Central, 6 p.m.; Oct. 21—at Southfield High, 6 p.m.; Oct. 23—at Millard Leland, 6 p.m.; Oct. 31—North Farmington, 6 p.m.; Nov. 2—at Pioneer North, 6 p.m.; Nov. 7—at Farmington Harrison, 6 p.m.; Nov. 8—Waterford Matt, 6 p.m.; Nov. 10—Livonia Stevens, 6 p.m.; Nov. 14—Walled Lake Central, 6 p.m.; Nov. 21—at Plymouth Canton, 6:30 p.m.; Nov. 27—Dec. 1—state district tournament.

NORTH FARMINGTON

VARSITY SCHEDULE—Sept. 15—at West Bloomfield, 6:15 p.m.; Sept. 16—at Plymouth Salem, 6 p.m.; Sept. 18—Dearborn Eased Ford, 6 p.m.; Sept. 22—Farmington High, 6 p.m.; Sept. 24—at Redford Union, 6 p.m.; Oct. 3—at Northville High, 6 p.m.; Oct. 5—at Redford Union, 6 p.m.; Oct. 13—at Livonia Stevens, 6 p.m.; Oct. 15—at Garden City East, 6 p.m.; Oct. 21—at Redford Union, 6 p.m.; Oct. 23—at Farmington Harrison, 6 p.m.; Oct. 31—at Garden City East, 6 p.m.; Nov. 2—Redford Union, 6 p.m.; Nov. 7—Birmingham Marian, 6 p.m.; Nov. 10—Livonia Stevens, 6 p.m.; Nov. 14—Walled Lake Central, 6 p.m.; Nov. 16—Garden City East, 6 p.m.; Nov. 21—at Farmington Harrison, 6 p.m.; Nov. 27—Dec. 1—state district tournament.

OUR LADY OF MERCY

VARSITY SCHEDULE—Sept. 18—Southfield High, 6 p.m.; Sept. 21—at Southfield-Lathrup, 6:15 p.m.; Sept. 23—at Ann Arbor Pioneer, 6 p.m.; Sept. 25—at Harper Woods Regina, 6 p.m.; Oct. 3—at Ann Arbor Pioneer, 6 p.m.; Oct. 5—Birmingham Marian, 6 p.m.; Oct. 13—Detroit Dominican, 6 p.m.; Oct. 15—Harper Woods Bishop Gallagher, 6 p.m.; Oct. 18—at Bishop Borgess, 6 p.m.; Oct. 21—Harper Woods Regina, 6 p.m.; Oct. 23—at Walled Lake Central, 6:15 p.m.; Oct. 31—at Birmingham Marian, 6 p.m.; Nov. 2—at Detroit Dominican, 6 p.m.; Nov. 7—at Harper Woods Bishop Gallagher, 6 p.m.; Nov. 11—at Redford Union, 6 p.m.; Nov. 14—Catholic League playoffs; Nov. 27—Dec. 1—state district tournament.



Mercy coach Larry Baker holds a strategy session during last season's Class A state finals. (Staff photos by Gary Friedman)

Farmington cage squads gear up for girls' season

By TOM BAER

Farmington opens its season on Tuesday (Sept. 12) at home against Redford Union. Farmington's other two public high schools, Harrison and North Farmington, also begin their girls' basketball seasons this week. North opens

Sept. 12 at West Bloomfield, and Harrison entertains Novi High Sept. 14. Lekovish, who has coached girls' basketball at Farmington since its inception in 1975, will be starting five experienced seniors this season. They

include Wendy Dierkes (5-foot-5), Kay Deeg (5-4), Kim Patton (5-6), Clair Noble (5-10) and Theresa Jourdan (5-11). A junior, Julia Zydzynski (6-0) should give the Falcons some added strength on the boards.

"We're experienced with these five seniors, and I look for us to be greatly improved," Lekovish said. "The girls have been working really hard—and it's been like 110 degrees in our gym lately. I'm looking for us to have good rebounding strength and good speed at the guard spots," Lekovish said. "We could have some problems with our shooting. Right now, our outside shooting could stand lots of improvement."

Farmington, a member of the six-team Inter Lakes League, compiled a 1-9 conference record last season, good for a last-place tie with Pontiac Northern.

GIRLS' BASKETBALL is in its third year at Farmington Harrison, and coach Neil Redford is hoping the 1978 Hawks can improve on last year's 7-15 overall record.

A light turnout could hit Harrison this season. As of last week, Redford had just nine girls, and no junior varsity team is planned.

"Our primary feeder school, East Junior High, had mostly eighth graders on its team last year," Redford explained. "This was not the year for ninth graders from East going into Harrison. Redford is expecting a lot from Lena Widman, a 5-5 senior, who is

beginning her third season on the varsity. Other returnees are senior Kathy Corbett (5-7) and juniors Linda Bache (5-5), Lisa Tronconi (5-10) and Beth Dilley (5-4).

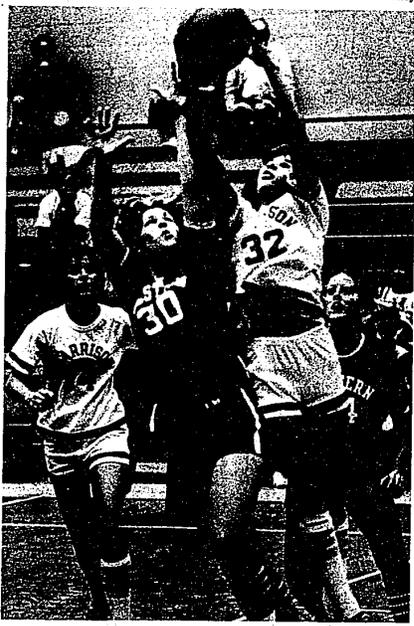
"All five girls are very quick and good shooters, so I guess these'll be our strong points," Redford said. "But I know we'll have some trouble on the boards since we don't have the height, and, after those first five girls, we're in trouble. I don't really have a good sixth girl I can put in there."

Harrison finished next-to-last in its conference, the Western Six League, last season. A low turnout has also plagued North Farmington, where second-year coach Daryl Case is working with only 10 girls. Like Harrison, North won't have a reserve team this season.

"I just don't find much interest in girls' basketball in our junior high schools," said Case, who has coached boys' reserve teams at North.

North, which finished at 1-19 overall and 0-8 in the Northwest Suburban League last year, will be counting on three juniors and a senior to lead this season's squad. The senior is Denise Urwin (6-9), and the underclassmen are Sara Gormanian (5-8), Joanne Cromwell (5-5) and Janice Figueroa (5-5). Barrie Bailey (5-9), a junior, played on the reserve team last year.

"Those three juniors and Denise will have to carry us," Case said. "We don't have any depth, so we're in big trouble if we have to go to our bench."



Harrison's Linda Bache (32) gains experience in a 1977 game.

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