

Rice nips Lahser in battle of unbeatens

By BRAD EMONS

Mike Walsh, a 5-9 senior forward, scored only two points Wednesday night.

But those two points proved to be the margin of victory Birmingham Brother Rice needed to defeat Bloomfield Hills Lahser, 71-70, in a game between two of the state's top 10 teams.

Walsh hit a 12-foot jumper with 13 seconds left to give the Warriors a dramatic win.

Lahser also had a chance for victory as they inbounded the ball quickly the length of the floor. Guard Tim Wain launched a jumper from around the top of the key with just three seconds left.

The ball hit the side of the rim as Warrior guard Brian Brennan latched onto it as time ran out.

"We don't believe in set plays," said Brother Rice coach Bill Norton on Walsh's basket.

"Mike looked inside to Tim (Andree), and there was nothing there," he said. "Mike just popped it through."

Scott Pritchett, Lahser's 6-7 center, put the Knights ahead with two free throws, 70-68, after barely missing a slam dunk and an opportunity for a three-point play.

Lahser had a time-out left after Walsh's jumper, but Lahser coach Nick Conti agreed with his team's strategy to get the ball up the floor in a hurry.

"I DIDN'T WANT a set play at the end," said Conti.

"Tim (Wain) can hit that shot from the parking lot. It just didn't go in," said the Lahser coach.

"If you call time out, you always have the problem of getting it inbounded," he said.

Both teams traded baskets from the opening tip.

The jam-packed crowd at Lahser's gym, appropriately called the "Castle," were treated to a spectacular performance by both teams.

Lahser collapsed around the 8-10 Rice center all night long. The Warrior standout scored 34 points and grabbed 21 rebounds. Wain led Lahser with 23 and Pritchett added 22. The latter grabbed 11 rebounds.

Both teams shot well from the floor in the first quarter.

Rice took a quick 4-0 lead on baskets by forward George Duncan and Andree. Lahser responded by scoring eight straight points. The Knights went up 14-8 (the biggest lead either team enjoyed all night) when Pritchett slammed one through bringing the

third player Lahser crowd to its feet.

Rice, however, fought back as both teams ended the first quarter tied, 20-20.

In the second period, Rice guard Steve Ameli got hot against Lahser's three-zone. Ameli hit three straight jumpers from the corner to vault Rice out to a 31-28 lead at 4:41.

SHAWN SANTA, a 6-4 forward, pushed Lahser into the lead at the end of the first half by hitting three baskets in a row. He finished the night with 14 points.

Rob Manilla scored off an offensive rebound with 14 seconds left in the half to pull Rice to within one, 40-39, as the half ended.

Andree scored 18 points in the first half. Ameli added 11. Lahser also had three players in double figures.

The teams traded leads the rest of the game. Lahser led 57-55 at the end of three quarters. Pritchett made pretty move underneath at 3:07 of the third quarter to give Lahser a 55-50 lead.

Andree then took command in the

fourth period as he scored 10 points.

Andree hit two crucial free throws with 34 seconds left to carry Rice into a one-point advantage, 69-68.

With 59 seconds left in the game and Lahser holding a one-point lead and the ball, Rice guard Mike Dietz came up with a critical steal, setting up Andree's two free throws.

Ironically, Norton said after the game that he almost cut Walsh from the squad before the season started.

"I had the players write down on a piece of paper who should make the team," said Norton.

"We had 18 players last year, and we wanted 15 this season, so that meant a returning player had to be cut," he said.

"WALSH WAS DOWN on everybody's list, so he made the team," said the Rice coach. "This is the second game he's won for us."

In the Lahser dressing room, Conti, who is Norton's brother-in-law, said his team may have given up too much against Rice's perimeter shooters.

"We wanted Rice to take the outside

jumper," said Conti. "We did that but didn't put enough pressure on their shooters."

"We may have lacked some poise at the end but, hey, these are 16 and 17 year old kids. You can't simulate that type of situation," said Conti about the last minute of play.

Norton said Andree's "winning characteristics came out" in the last quarter.

"Our rebounding out there was a factor," said Norton.

"Lahser is a very, very good team," he said.

Rice is now 7-0 and hosts Grand Rapids Creston, next Tuesday.

Lahser, 4-1 overall, plays Birmingham Groves, Friday, Jan. 5.

RICE-71 LAHSER 70

RICE (17): Steve Ameli 5, 3-4, 12; Tim Andree 18, 4-6, 10; Brian Brennan 2, 0-0, 0; Mike Dietz 9, 9-9, 2; George Duncan 3, 2-4, 9; Steve Kainer 1, 0-0, 2; Rob Manilla 3, 0-0, 0; Bruce Perella 0, 0-0, 0; Don Pritchett 1, 0-0, 2; Mike Walsh 1, 0-0, 2; Totals: 71, 9-13, 2.

LAHSER (18): Tim Wain 11, 3-2, 23; Rob Pader 2, 0-0, 0; Frank Hatchett 1, 0-0, 2; Shawn Santa 7, 0-0, 0; Scott Pritchett 8, 4-4, 22; Scott Brown 7, 1-2, 3; Totals: 70, 12-24, 78.

Third Quarter: RICE 7, LAHSER 6.

Fourth Quarter: none.

RICE 71 LAHSER 70

20 18 14 14 71

20 20 17 13 70

Commentary

Rice-Lahser clash a classic

By BRAD EMONS

I knew this was a big game when I drove into the parking lot at Lahser High School.

There were no tickets at the door being sold and when I entered just before the junior varsity game started, a sizable crowd was already inside.

Brother Rice and Lahser were two good basketball teams I had seen last year but didn't really know how good they were this season.

Two minutes into the main attraction, I knew this was going to be some thing special. Rice won it with 13 seconds left, 71-70.

I was amazed at the caliber of play both teams displayed. Not only were both teams well coached, but all the players demonstrated great court sense.

Tim Andree, considered to be one of the top three big centers in prep has been hot today, draws fouls wherever he plays. Wednesday night was no exception.

Bill Foster, coach of the number one ranked Duke Blue Devils, flew all the way from North Carolina to see this one. Duke is one of the six schools Andree has narrowed down his choice to.

Also in attendance was Bill Frieder, top assistant at the University of Michigan. He is also hot on the trail of Andree. A scout from the University of Houston said he flew 1,300 miles round trip for this affair.

The scouts had to be impressed with more than just Pritchett and Andree. There were other players out on the court worth taking a peak at.

It's hard to say how many of these players are major college prospects. Besides Andree and Pritchett, I'd say there were at least three or four which could play in the Mid-American Conference.

But where were those scouts? Did they have a commitment to see somebody else play? I doubt it. Not many high school teams played last Wednesday night.

Western Michigan and Eastern Michigan are experiencing hard times with relatively new coaches. Their programs just a few years ago were at the top but now have slipped. Lack of recruiting has been the main reason. The quality just isn't there.

The quality was there Wednesday night. Just ask the fans.



Rice's Mike Walsh prepares to shoot against Lahser. Walsh took one shot in the game and hit it, scoring what proved to be the winning basket.

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