

Sports

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Poised Mercy wins 5th regional in row

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Detroit Murray-Wright found out that champions are not easily rattled. Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy survived a relentless band of Lady Pilots, some questionable officiating, and its own inability to make free throw shots Thursday night to win its fifth straight state Class A girls basketball regional tournament, 46-36.

The Marlins have won more regional titles than any school in Michigan. Nobody said it was going to be easy for the Marlins, but this one was a dog fight. The noisy crowd of more than 750 inside the Southfield High gym got its money's worth.

"The big issue going in was how we were going to play against an offensive powerhouse like Murray-Wright," said Mercy coach Larry Baker. "Should we play man-to-man or a zone defensively? Logically, a zone should be more effective."

"But, we played the kind of defense we play best (man-to-man), and challenged them to beat us."

A SIMILAR THEORY was employed by Livonia Bentley last Tuesday in the regional opener against Murray-Wright, and the Lady Pilots destroyed them.

Compare: Against Bentley, Murray-Wright scored 20 points in the first quarter. Against Mercy, Murray-Wright scored 20 points in the first half.

"That was the key," Baker said. The Lady Pilots talented junior center Angie Middleton, who scored 31 points against Bentley, was held to just five points. She made just one field goal all night.

Mary Rosowski deserves some recognition," Baker said. "She frustrated Middleton inside."

Not only did Rosowski shut down

Middleton, but she grabbed 19 rebounds, helping Mercy to a 42-34 edge in that category.

"We were very concerned about the rebounding. But everyone blocked out very well," said Baker.

Amy DeMattia grabbed nine rebounds and Terri Ford five for Mercy. Middleton pulled down a game-high 23 rebounds for the Pilots.

BAKER FELT THAT his team had the psychological advantage going into the contest. The Marlins were the defending Class A champs, rated No. 1 in the state, and have already beaten the likes of Cass Tech (the team that had given the Lady Pilots their only two defeats), Flint Northwestern, Livonia Ladywood and a score of other top-ranked teams.

"We had the edge, but our job was to keep the edge," he said.

Senior Sarah Basford took care of that.

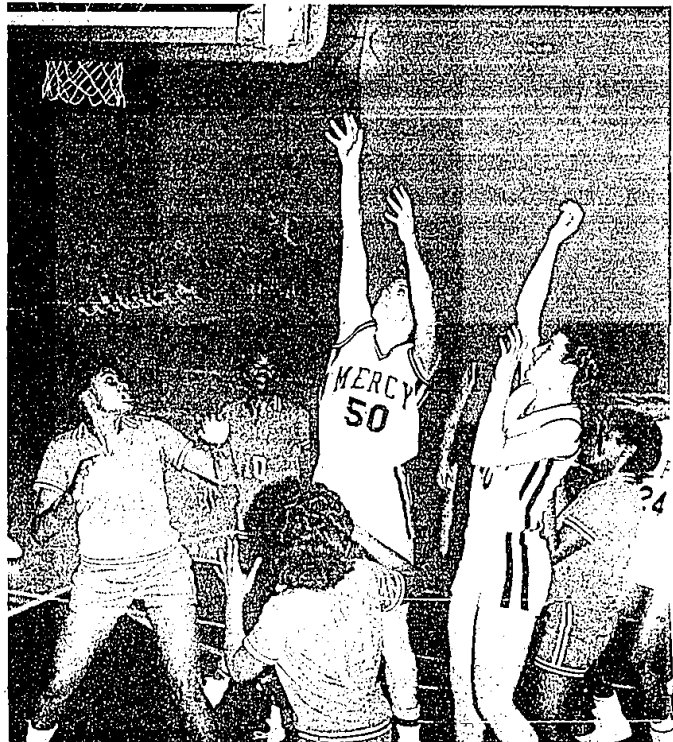
Murray-Wright won the opening tip, but Basford promptly stole the ball from the Pilots' Regina Wise, and calmly sank a 10-foot jumper at the other end of the court. The next time down she hit another jumper. Then, after the two teams traded hoops, Basford sank another.

When the first quarter ended Basford had hit four of seven shots and Mercy led 18-8. Murray-Wright could manage just seven shots against the Mercy defense.

Basford finished the game with 17 points to lead all scorers.

The Pilots, as they would go throughout the game, fought its way back into contention before the end of the half.

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Mercy center Mary Rosowski (50) and teammate Amy DeMattia (40) rise above the Murray-Wright players Thursday night to pull down a rebound. Rosowski grabbed 19 rebounds and held the Pilots' star Angie Middleton to just five points in the Marlins win.

Salem defense will test taller Marlins

"We want Mercy, we want Mercy." So, the Plymouth Salem crowd chanted after the Rebels had defeated Trenton in their regional championship match Friday night.

The Rebels are asking for Mercy now, but they may be begging for it after Wednesday night.

You don't have to be Al McGuire or Billy Proctor to figure out that Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy will be the heavy favorite in Wednesday night's quarterfinal contest in the state Class A girls basketball tournament at Southfield High.

THE MARLINS are the defending Class A state champs. They are 13-2

this season, collecting such state-ranked powers as Flint Northwestern, Cass Tech, and Livonia Ladywood. They have won 10 titles in their district and regional tournaments, the Catholic League championship and the Operation Friendship championship.

So, on paper, it appears Mercy will have an easy time of it.

But, whatever Mercy team you've seen, there are certain things that don't show up

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North's Steve Bambach drives around the Harrison defense for two of his game-high 22 points Friday night.

North guns down Hawks in opener

Cosch Tom Negoshian wondered how his young North Farmington boys basketball team would fair this season.

basketball

After 5-foot-4 sophomore Rick Anderson copped his first three shots Friday night in North's season opener against Farmington Harrison, and the Raiders went on to humiliate the Hawks 73-34, Negoshian must have sighed with relief — and joy.

The Raiders shot a torrid 30 of 61 from the floor against Harrison's 1-2-2 zone defense.

"That's pretty good shooting," Negoshian said. "We'll take it."

GUARD STEVE Bambach led the Raiders with 22 points. Anderson had 19 points and seven rebounds. Center Bob Chawlik scored ten points and grabbed 10 rebounds.

North led 32-19 at the half. Then, after a fairly even third quarter, the Raiders sent the Hawks packing with a 24-3 burst in the final eight minutes.

John Miller led the Hawks in both points and rebounds. He tallied 17 points.

While North was red hot, the Hawks were ice cold. They could make just 14 of their 56 shots.

"You have to remember that Harrison was playing without their point guard Brian Hickey (who has been sidelined by mononucleosis). When he comes back, they will be much stronger," Negoshian said.

Freshmen hold key to OCC lady cage year

By C.J. Rlesk
staff writer

Looks like trouble ahead for Oakland Community College's women's basketball program.

After all, three starters are gone, including All-Region guard Annette Wagon and a pair of All-Eastern Conference forwards, Beth Porter and Denise Schlaf.

But do not lament for OCC and coach Larry Hojna. He's got some solid starters back from last season's conference championship squad and more than enough talent to fill the gaps.

Returnees like All-Conference center Diane Kalbfleisch of Brown City, a 12.2 points and 11.7 rebounds per game player, and 5-foot-7 point guard Wendy Keely from Walled Lake Central, who averaged eight points and nearly six assists last season, and 5-5 guard Rhonda Hotteer from Oscoda, who hit for 11 points per game.

AND NEWCOMERS like 6-1 center Dawn Allen from Tawas, 5-7 guard Wendy Jenkins from Livonia Stevenson, 5-9 forward Karen Kennedy, a transfer from Saginaw Valley, 4-0 center-forward Chris Dietz from Waterford Township, 5-9 guard Lori Zauner from Berkley, 5-10 forward Shannon McDow from Waterford Mott, and guard Debby Redding from Brighton.

That's a lot of freshmen, but size and talent are not lacking, according to Hojna. Already Allen has moved into the post and Kalbfleisch, at 5-10, has moved to forward. If those freshmen can develop, well...

"If the freshmen can mature in the pre-season, then when we start our conference season we have a good chance of repeating," Hojna said optimistically.

The Lady Raiders coach called Henry Ford and Scholcraft the conference favorites "mainly because we lost so much." OCC was 19-7 overall last season and 11-1 in Eastern Conference play. They reached the state tournament semifinals before losing to nationally-ranked Lansing Community College.

Lansing CC, ranked among the top teams again this year, had trouble disposing of OCC in the season opener last Friday, winning 60-51 in Lansing.

"We looked real good, but ran into a cold night," Hojna said. "We only shot 34 percent."

Hojna figures he's got the talent and experience to make a run at a third straight conference championship. But the young players will have to come through.

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