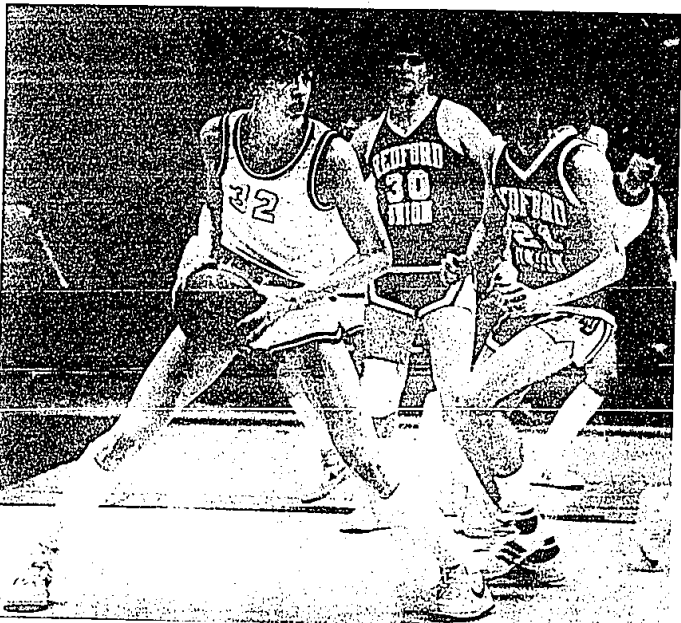


Raiders stay in hunt for NSL title



By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Whatever happened to the old North Farmington basketball team? That's what Redford Union coach Lee Bjerke would like to know.

RU had the Raiders all but beat last month, only to lose in the final seconds, 62-60. That was the Raider team that began the season 1-6.

The team the Panthers played last Thursday hardly looks the same — only the names are the same. The final score Thursday night: North 71, RU 57. Blowout city and the home fans were ecstatic.

"That is a much better team than the one we played a month ago," Bjerke said. "North is a much better team."

The Raider offense was a smooth-running, powerful machine. Point guard Rick Pennala was its spark plug and sophomore stand-out Rick Anderson its pistons. At half the game, Steve Bambach, Bob Chwalik and Scott Draper were the cylinders.

"WITHOUT SAYING TOO much about it, I think Anderson is really going to be a good player. A really good player," said North coach Tom Negoshian.

He may already be. Anderson scored 24 points, the same total he netted in the Raiders' 70-61 loss to Waterford Kettering Tuesday night, to lead all scorers.

Anderson, who has been averaging nearly 16 points and eight rebounds per game, hit five straight hoops to close

out the first quarter helping North take control of the game.

But the catalyst throughout the game was Pennala. The junior triggered a menacing three-quarter court press that caused the Panthers fits right from the opening tipoff. He made five steals in the game, four in the third quarter.

Offensively, he created numerous open shots for his teammates with his ability to penetrate the RU defense and deftly dish the ball off.

Pennala also found time to score eight points.

"Rick Pennala played his best game as a point guard tonight," Negoshian said. "He consistently got the ball into the hands of the open man."

Chwalik, a strong junior center, was a force inside for North tallying 11 points and dominating both the offensive and defensive boards. Bambach and Draper each scored eight points. The Raider starters sat out most of the final quarter.

"We were just outclassed tonight," Bjerke said. "We were outshot, we didn't play good defense, and we didn't seem to play with much intensity."

THE PANTHERS (1-14) were led by their own super sophomore Dennis Bushart who scored 17 points. Keith Ruloff added 11.

The Raiders were red-hot from the floor in the first quarter draining 11 of its 16 shots. They stayed hot through the second quarter (7 of 16), but it was the Raider press that nailed the lid on

the Panther coffin in the third.

North outscored RU 15-8 in the third quarter. The Raider press created seven turnovers, four on Pennala steals. RU hit just four of 14 shots.

The win keeps North (9-9 overall, 6-3 in the Northwest Suburban League) in the running for an NSL title. North needs a John Glenn victory over Redford Thurston Friday night, and the Raiders must defeat Glenn, at Glenn, Friday March 2 to gain a share of the title.

The Raiders almost got a helping hand from Garden City Thursday as the Cougars took Glenn to OT before falling, 65-61.



Raiders Scott Draper (40), Steve Bambach (3) and Bob Chwalik (42) fight for rebound.

Falcons, Hawks fall

Phil Graczyk and John Skruggs combined for 30 rebounds to help Livonia Bentley control the boards and power the Bulldogs to a 56-46 homecourt conquest of Farmington Friday.

Graczyk, a 6-foot-8 senior center, was too big for the Falcons to handle as he scored 21 points and grabbed 14 rebounds. Skruggs, Bentley's small forward, scored nine points and pulled down 16 boards.

Farmington led by a point after one quarter but the Bulldogs erased that lead and climbed to a 23-18 halftime advantage. Bentley increased its lead to nine after three quarters and Farmington never got closer than eight in the last period.

Bentley coach Tom Niemi lauded the work of Graczyk and Skruggs on the

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North alone atop NSL net race

The North Farmington volleyball team is finally alone atop the Northwest Suburban League standings.

North's victory over Redford Union Wednesday, coupled with Livonia Franklin's 15-12, 4-15, 15-10 victory over Redford Thurston, broke the tie at the top of the NSL between the Raiders and Thurston.

North took RU in three games 15-8, 2-15, 15-2. No, the second game score is not a typo. North really did get beaten 15-2 in that game.

"We learned a lesson," said Raider coach Sandy Lubieniec. "You can't just go out there and stand around. We were standing so still that game I wanted to take six chairs out on the court and let them sit down."

Sophomore setter Stacy Talamini, who plays behind Patli Kozicki and has missed much of the year due to illness, played a strong match for North. She consistently set up spiker Amy Austin. Austin responded by nailing 20 of 22 spikes with nine kills.

Senior co-captain Linda Rennard has been playing outstanding volleyball for the Raiders the past three weeks. Against the Panthers, she hit on all 15 of her serves with three aces.

Brooks Landback was tough at the net for North, contributing four key blocks.

The Raiders (19-5, 7-1 in the NSL), Observer's No. 2-ranked team, are off until Monday, Feb. 27, when they travel to Westland John Glenn.

FARMINGTON regained its winning touch Wednesday, knocking off a talented Plymouth Salem team 15-14, 4-15, 15-10.

The Falcons won the match without senior starters Jill Waterman, who is out of the season with a broken tendon in her finger, and Laura Varty, who is still recovering from an ankle sprain.

"I was really surprised," said first-year coach Kim O'Neill. "We were without Jill and Laura and we had four people out sick all week. It was good experience, because we got a chance to see what we will be like next season."

The Falcons got strong performances from Kappy Siles, Jenny Lambert, Pam Faulkner, Laura Spence and Mary Ann Kwasniewski — all will be returning next season.

Senior Tara Twomey, however, was the Falcons' key performer against the Rocks.

"She was just all over the place," O'Neill said. "It was her best game of the season. She just wouldn't let anything hit the floor."

The Falcons were trailing 7-4 in game three, but led by Siles and server Judy Barszyl, they rallied to overtake the Rocks.

The Falcons are now 7-9 on the season. They are off until Monday, Feb. 27, when they travel to Livonia Bentley.

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RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Senior setter Tara Twomey was outstanding in Farmington's victory over Plymouth Salem Wednesday night.