

Sports

Chris McCosky, Brad Emons editors/591-2312

Monday, December 16, 1985 O&E



(P18)

Power and finesse: Observer's elite

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

WHAT DO YOU make of the state of girls basketball in Observerland? Sure, the level of individual talent continues to climb to new heights. Girls are doing things on the

basketball courts these days that would have surpassed coaches' wildest dreams 10 years ago.

You only have to look at the skill levels of the likes of Dena Head and Yvette Maisson to find proof of that claim — and those two will return to the prep scene next year. But there's a problem.

There seems to be no middle ground in terms of team strength. For every powerhouse, for every Livonia Ladywood, Farmington Hills Mercy or Plymouth Salem, there's a Farmington Harrison, a Bishop Borgosa or a Farmington.

The margin of victory for the elite teams for most of the season was vast — an unproductive situation for both the winner and loser.

What conclusions can be drawn? Is there a lack of concerned and capable coaches? Is there a shortage of quality players? Do some schools place a higher priority on girls basketball than others?

Perhaps it's a combination of all the factors. Perhaps it's the nature of athletic competition.

Whatever, when the Observerland girls basketball coaches gathered to select the 1985 All-Area squad, there was no problem filling out the three seven-member teams.

Here's a look at the first team choices:

FIRST TEAM

Sue Laliberte, Livonia Ladywood, senior: A three-year starter for the Blazers, the 6-foot post player has helped her team to a state Class B championship in 1983, a state runner-up spot last year and a berth in the final four again this year. She is a strong inside player with a soft shooting touch. She averaged 15.5 points and nearly 10 rebounds per game for Ladywood this season. She's a diligent worker and a highly recruited major college prospect.

Missy Duczynski, Mercy, senior: After seeing the duty as a junior, Duczynski made the most of her opportunity this season. She has already signed a letter of intent with Central Michigan University. Midway through the season, Mercy coach Larry Baker decided to make Duczynski the focal point of his offensive attack. She responded with 20-point performances against Divine Child and Cass Tech, and an 18-point night against Flint

Denise Kokowicz, Garden City, junior: She may have possessed the best perimeter jump shot of anyone in the area. She averaged 13.5 points per game on a very balanced, very good Garden City basketball team this season. She owns four school scoring records. A 5-10 forward, she also played in better than nine rebounds per game. "She excels at both ends of the floor for us," GC coach Marshall Henry said. The best thing about her game, from a Garden City perspective, is that it is still getting better.

Diana Knickerbocker, Plymouth Canton, senior: Plymouth Canton was ranked No. 2 in the area for much of this season. A major contributor to the team's success was this multi-faceted talent. She scored (10.3), she rebounded (8.2), she made steals (7.0 of them in 21 games), she had assists (68) and she played defense. But her biggest role on the team was as its leader. A three-year player, she served as a role model for the team with her tireless work habits and her hustle and determination on the court. Her leadership abilities didn't go unnoticed. She was named

co-captain of the all-Western Lakes team.

Marie Becker, Redford Union, senior: A player with many of the same all-around skills that Knickerbocker possesses — only Becker played more of a scorer's role with RU. She averaged 19.2 points per game and grabbed 12.5 rebounds. She also averaged 4.1 assists and 4.6 steals. She also showed a good deal of grit playing the last nine games of the season with a fractured knuckle and broken left hand. Her efforts have earned her a full-ride with Saginaw Valley State College.

Yvette Maisson, Mercy, junior: After a rocky emotional start — she transferred from Bishop Gallagher, was initially ruled ineligible, then ruled eligible by the Michigan High School Athletic Association — Maisson became Mercy's floor general. She averaged close to 11 points per game, 4.5 assists and four steals. She had three games in which she scored more than 20 points, including 25 against Salem, the toughest defensive team in the area. Mercy coach Larry Baker, who has coached several outstanding point guards, has high praise for Maisson. "She's an exceptional ball handler, not real flashy, but (has) super control of the ball and she sees the whole court. She sees the court better than anyone I've coached and better than anyone I've seen in quite a while."

Ed Kavanaugh, Livonia Ladywood, coach: Many basketball experts thought this would be a down year for Ladywood after losing four starters from last year's state-finalist team. Kavanaugh had to replace Michigan's Miss Basketball, Emily Wagner (Stanford), and consensus All-Star Char Govan (Illinois State).

But Kavanaugh molded a cohesive, balanced all-senior attack, setting a school record for most wins in a season (23) after a 12-win season the previous year.

Kavanaugh is a veteran of the coaching ranks, concurrently serving as the Schoolcraft College women's coach.

all-area girls basketball

FIRST TEAM

Sue Laliberte Livonia Ladywood
Missy Duczynski Farmington Hills Mercy
Dena Head Plymouth Salem
Denise Kokowicz Garden City
Diana Knickerbocker Plymouth Canton
Marie Becker Redford Union
Yvette Maisson Farmington Hills Mercy
Ed Kavanaugh (Coach) Livonia Ladywood

SECOND TEAM

Tracy Leclerc Livonia Franklin
Heather McPherson Farmington Hills Mercy
Cathy Schram Livonia Ladywood
Jenny Nadeau Livonia Ladywood
Toni Ford Farmington Hills Mercy
Kathy Kowalski Livonia Stevenson
Jessica Hendley Plymouth Salem

THIRD TEAM

Beth Fligg Plymouth Canton
Jenny Olson John Glenn
Amy Weber Livonia Church
Tracy Greenwell Livonia Church
Kristen Horvath Plymouth Salem
Dana Hawkins Wayne Memorial
Debbie Lapinski Livonia Ladywood

HONORABLE MENTION: Ladywood: Mary Kozak, Cheryl Church, Jackie Wozniak, Franklin: Rose Ciolek, Gayle Chaske, Steven: Sue Zelinski, Redford Union: Carolyn Shannon, Redford: Thurston: Carolyn Malicki, Holy Spirit: Bishop Borgosa: Cheryl Livingston, John Glenn: Stacy Graham, Michigan: Wendy Knease, Laura Adams, Farmington: Becky Frick, Spence: Stacy Ewandroff, Harrison: Jennifer Hughes, North Farmington: Anne Holm, St. Mary: Mary: Michele Fyatt, Terri Holodick, Salem: Laura Gilford, Julie Torison, Canton: Laura Gentry, Plymouth Christian: Beth LeBlanc, Garden City: Karen Gaudman, Livonia: Terri Paul, Kim Olson, Grandville: Kelly Watson, Ann Leclerc, St. Agathe: Mary Ann Kink.

1985 All-Area Girls Hoops

Sue Laliberte
Livonia LadywoodMissy Duczynski
MercyDena Head
SalemDenise Kokowicz
Garden CityDiana Knickerbocker
CantonMarie Becker
RUYvette Maisson
MercyEd Kavanaugh
Livonia coach

Ladywood wins 'B' hoop title in sweet revenge over DC

By Brad Emons
staff writer

Twelve months ago Livonia Ladywood dreamed what appeared to be the impossible dream.

But the impossible dream came true as Ladywood captured the state Class B girls basketball title with a 45-41 victory Saturday night over Catholic League nemesis Dearborn Divine Child before 1,813 fans at Western Michigan's Reed Fieldhouse in Kalamazoo.

The Blazers, who lost a one-point heartbreaker in last year's state final to River Rouge, was given little chance of returning after losing four starters, including Miss Basketball Emily Wagner.

"As the summer progressed and we won some tournaments, the girls started to believe in themselves and I thought we would be here again," said Ladywood coach Ed Kavanaugh, who carried off his second state champion-

ship trophy. "The first one (championship) is good, but the second one is better."

LADYWOOD gained a measure of revenge in the final, atoning for their only defeat (in 28 games) of the season to Divine Child in the Catholic League championship game. It was a bitter loss after Ladywood had beaten DC handily in the second game of the season.

"The fact that we had played them twice and this was the rubber game was a big motive," Kavanaugh said. "But it's funny, it seems whoever loses in the Catholic League playoffs does better in the state tournament."

LADYWOOD WAS SLUGGISH for nearly three quarters in the nip-and-tuck affair.

But down the stretch the Blazers had the right stuff, especially guard Jenny Nadeau, who made four straight free

throws and came up with a key steal in the final minute of play.

"There is special in because nobody thought we'd be here," said Nadeau, who contributed 11 points. "Because the dynamic duo (Wagner and Char Govan) were gone, nobody thought we'd be any good. But we just didn't get a chance to show our stuff last year."

Divine Child, bolstered by the inside scoring of 5-foot-11 junior Sue Nissen (a key in DC's victory over Ladywood), took a 31-20 lead early in the third quarter.

The Blazers fought back, going ahead for keeps on senior center Sue Laliberte's timely opposite-hand hook shot. That gave Ladywood a 37-35 lead with 4:36 remaining.

Mary Joy Kozak then followed with a medium-range shot to put the Blazers up by four.

Kavanaugh then had his team work the clock, drawing fouls, which ultimately led to DC's demise.

"FROM OUR REGIONAL games on, we've won it from the line," Kavanaugh said. "Free throws were definitely a big part of the tournament."

Ladywood made 19 of 29 from the line, while DC hit just 9 of 16.

Rebounding was also a big factor with Ladywood enjoying a 31-23 edge.

"Everybody seems to think I have something to prove against Sue (Nissen)," said Laliberte, who led the Blazers with 12 points. "And she has something to prove against me — kind of like a showdown. But it's not."

AFTER LOSING last year's final, Kavanaugh said he did a lot of thinking. "We stayed up that night and talked a lot," he recalled. "We started talking about next year, believe it or not."

When asked if he would start visualizing next season, he responded, "Why not?"

That makes the 1985 season "the possible dream."

Blazers survive semi-scare

By Brad Emons
staff writer

KALAMAZOO — Nearly backed into a corner, Livonia Ladywood came out fighting Friday night, escaping with a hard-earned 54-47 girls basketball victory over Frankenthum in the state Class B semifinals at Central High School.

For the third straight tournament game, the Blazers delivered in the clutch when it appeared their opponent was ready to make the kill.

Frankenthum, making its third semifinal appearance in 21 years, bowed out of the tourney with a 24-2 record.

"We talked about thinking ahead (to the championship game) and that's what we were guilty of tonight," said veteran Ladywood coach Ed Kavanaugh, whose team gained its fourth state championship berth. "But you can't take anything away from Frankenthum. They're a fine team."

Ladywood led 10-4 after one quarter,

but the Eagles, backed by a large throng of enthusiastic fans, took a brief 13-12 lead early in the second period.

LADYWOOD, however, regained the lead for keeps on successive steals and layups by Jenny Nadeau and Cathy Schram.

Frankenthum then went flat, failing to score the rest of the period. During the cold spell, the Eagles missed four one-and-one free throw opportunities.

Capitalizing off a zone press, the Blazers opened up a 26-13 halftime advantage.

"That was a critical part of the game when we scored off those steals," Kavanaugh said. "When it was 13-12 I didn't say anything special. I just told them we were in for a ballgame."

Frankenthum coach Art Pelzer said nervousness was part of the Eagles' poor first-half showing.

"The momentum building from our people after we won the district and the regional was unbelievable," he said.

"In the second quarter we made so many errors. I was upset. I told them to quit thinking about the people in the stands and start thinking about the ballgame."

FACING A 13-POINT deficit, Frankenthum battled back using a full-court press of its own.

The Eagles sliced the margin to nine at the end of three quarters, 40-31, and then chipped away in the fourth quarter.

With 3:47 left in the game, guard Sandy Andrews stole a steal and converted a layup to cut the deficit to 45-41. Center Gail Reinhold then made two free throws with 45 seconds left, trimming the margin to three, but Ladywood responded by making six straight free throws in the final 59 seconds, including four from 6-foot senior center Sue Laliberte, to snuff the Frankenthum bid.

"We won our last three games on free throw shooting," said Kavanaugh.

"We feel it's very important. We average over 70 percent as a team."

Pelzer, the Frankenthum coach, said tournament experience was the difference.

"We've been here before but not with this group of kids," he said. "Just give me one more quarter. In the second half we played like we're capable of."

LALIBERTE, the Blazers' standout player during their tourney run, scored a team-high 17 points. Nadeau and Schram, the guards, added 13 and 10, respectively. Both made key long-range shots down the stretch.

Reinhold, who took on the big Ladywood front-line and held her own, led all scorers with 20 points. Andrews, despite early foul trouble, contributed 12.

"When we got the lead I think we got the idea that we wanted to sit on the ball and we were not attacking," said the Ladywood coach. "But it was a good match-up alongside with Frankenthum. We've had a height advantage throughout the tournament."



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Ladywood's Cathy Schram speeds down court on a Blazer fast break during Friday's state Class B semifinal victory over Frankenthum.