

Canton cagers fall shy of win

Four games into the season, and already Plymouth Canton's basketball team can be labeled "hard-luck."

The Chiefs proved it Tuesday against visiting Walled Lake Central, a team they had little reason to believe they could match up with. And yet with just a minute left to play, Canton trailed by a single point.

Could an upset be at hand? Chief coach Tom Niemi decided to play for the last shot, letting the clock wind down to 10 seconds before calling time out to set up a final shot.

"We got the ball to who we wanted, we got the shot we wanted," said Niemi. But as Joel Mies put up the final attempt, he was hammered and a whistle sounded. Officials' ruling: Mies stepped out of bounds. Central's ball, and Central's ballgame by a 44-45 score.

AN UNHAPPY ENDING after a valiant Canton effort. The win the game started, it appeared it might be one long evening for the Chiefs. They had a tall order to fill in trying to stop the Vikings' 6-foot-9 Daran Edmonds. Niemi assigned the task to junior Mike LaSota and senior Jeff Lyle, who split the man-to-man defensive duties. They each stand 6-2.

In the first quarter Edmonds had his way, pumping in 10 points. But in the second period "we made some help-side adjustments and played very strong man-to-man defense," Niemi explained, and that helped limit Edmonds' point production to four.

Those adjustments also allowed the Chiefs to get back into the game. After trailing 18-13 at the first quarter's conclusion, Canton pulled to within one (31-30) at the half.

THE CHIEF DEFENSE was even more effective in the second half, holding Central to 15 points. They also shut out Edmonds completely.

But the effort wasn't enough to keep a three-game losing skid from reaching four (0-2 in the Western Lakes Activities Association). Central is 2-1.

"Defensively, I thought we played very well," said Niemi. "We used some full-court zone presses, then fell back into our man-to-man. It proved very effective."

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SALEM 73, W.L. WESTERN 53: Playing at clubs of the Walled Lake schools is never easy. Playing at both the Walled Lake schools in back-to-back games multiplies the difficulty. Plymouth Salem faced that task this week and escaped successfully. An eight-point effort from Bryan Kears sparked a 22-10 second-quarter spurge for the Rocks, putting them in command as they pushed their record to 3-1 overall and 2-0 in the WLAA.

"Both games were tough, both were dog fights," said Salem coach Bob Brodie. "I thought we handled it well. I'm glad to get out of there with two wins."

Salem's 37-25 halftime lead grew by a point after three quarters (53-40). The Rocks finished strong, outscoring the Warriors 20-13 in the fourth.

Kears totaled 16 points, mostly from long range. Mike Hale balanced Kears' outside attack with an inside game that accounted for 27 points (10 in the fourth quarter) and 12 rebounds. Antonio Diaz added 12 points to the Rock offense.

Western (1-1 in the WLAA) got 13 points from Eric Hall and 12 from Kevin Walters.

Observerland sports people

Basketball, Bible bounce south

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

Playing basketball in El Salvador over the holidays may not be your idea of a good time, but Dan Brandel thinks it's a splendid idea.

"I hear it's not as bad as they say it is," said Brandel, "but I guess I'll find out firsthand."

Brandel, the mens coach last year at William Tyndale College in Farmington, will lead six players to El Salvador and Guatemala. They leave Dec. 25, return Jan. 6, and in between play 21 — count 'em, 21 — games. His six players, former college players from throughout the United States, will be joined by six players from the national team of the country they are in.

"We played six games in 48 hours last summer in the Philippines," said Brandel, a Farmington resident and a 1969 graduate of Southfield High. "And the record for Sports Ambassadors is nine games in 48 hours."

And they thought they had it tough in the NBA.

SPORTS AMBASSADORS began in 1952 as a non-denominational way to preach the Christian gospel abroad. The first trip was to Taiwan. Since then, more than 1,000 athletes have played more than 3,100 games in 64 countries.

Brandel, who was born in Africa to missionary parents, is making his second



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There are principles in the Bible that can help people with their game and with their lives. Emotion and attitude play an important part in the game, and my job as coach is to use those principles to help the players deal with those emotions and attitudes.'

— Dan Brandel
Sports Ambassadors coach

trip for Sports Ambassadors, a non-profit organization based in a suburb of San Jose, Calif. This summer he went to the Philippines for six weeks, also as coach.

"At halftime, we'd have one of our guys play the trumpet — 'Sweet Georgia Brown' — and another guy would juggle basketballs. The rest of us would line up in a semi-circle facing the crowd. 'We're not singers, but we'd like to sing for you,' we'd tell them," said Brandel, whose brother Mark is the girls varsity coach at Plymouth Christian. "The first chorus

we'd sing in English and the second chorus we'd sing in their native language. They'd go nuts over that. It'd freak them out. Then we gave testimony of God in our lives."

Literature would be passed out, including coupons for a Bible study course.

Brandel, 34, has been active in Youth for Christ. Previously, he taught Bible class and was varsity coach of the boys and girls team at Flint Christian.

"I fell in love with not only coaching but with teaching," he said. He has

returned to school, to Madonna College, to get his teaching certificate and make himself more employable both as teacher and coach.

BRANDEL SAID that the circumstances vary greatly from game to game. One night you might be playing before thousands in a university, the next day before dozens on an outdoor court in the rain.

"Last summer we played at a high school that was the biggest I've ever seen in my life — and I graduated in a class of 1,000," he said. "The Philippines are obsessed with basketball. There are courts everywhere. This newspaper (the Observer & Eccentric), if it were in the Philippines, would have a court outside so the employees could play on their lunch hour. And they would be playing."

"I love the game. There are principles in the Bible that can help people with their game and with their lives. Emotion and attitude play an important part in the game, and my job as coach is to use those principles to help the players deal with those emotions and attitudes."

Players interested in future trips abroad can write for an application to: Sports Ambassadors, 255 Cornelia Avenue, Milpitas, Calif. 95035.

There is one drawback. Players must pay their way to share the gospel. It costs \$3,000 each for the Philippines trip and \$1,500 for the trip to Central America.

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