

Ocelot playoff stay is short

By C.J. Rissak
staff writer

Just when Bob Wetzel thought he had found Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde materialized.

And of all places to show up — in the Michigan Community College Athletic Association basketball playoffs, Wetzel took his Schoolcraft College team to Delta CC to play a first-round game Monday, and the result was as ugly as Jekyll's alter-ego: a 59-73 rout favoring Delta that was every bit as one-sided as the final score.

How bad was it? SC led once, 3-4 with 17:41 to play after a Pat Wagner three-pointer. The Ocelot lead lasted 13 seconds. That's when Delta's Mike Ody hit a pair of free throws to start the Pioneers on a 17-0 run.

That settled it. SC went nearly 5 1/2 minutes without scoring. The Ocelots did make a game of it later in the first half — briefly. A Derrick Kearney basket trimmed Delta's lead to 25-17 with 8:49 to go. SC was still within 10 (35-25) with 3:47 left after a Desmond Steele free throw, but then...

THE PIONEERS reloaded and finished the half the way they started it, scoring the final 10 points to build a 46-25 halftime bulge. Delta outscored SC 11-3 in the first three minutes of the second half to take a 57-29 lead, and the Ocelots never got within 20 after that.

"I really don't understand it," said Wetzel, whose team had a different look in back-to-back wins last week. "We needed good performances from four or five guys to win this game, and I can't say anyone played well for us."

"I'm disappointed with our effort and our performance."

Wetzel's starting lineup had a different look. Kearney, Zolite Stevens and Steele began the game on the bench — Kearney because he was late for Sunday's practice. Wetzel went with Wagner, Les English, Jeff Vakarata, Mike Sullivan and Matt Burdick.

That didn't help the Ocelots. As Wetzel noted, "This is the lineup we used in the last two games, and we won both. We wanted to get off to a good start tonight, and we didn't." But that wasn't the reason for the loss. The underdog Ocelots have had problems rebounding all season, and against Delta it showed. They got few second chances on offense, and they gave up a lot. The Pioneers inside game dominated, both offensively and defensively.

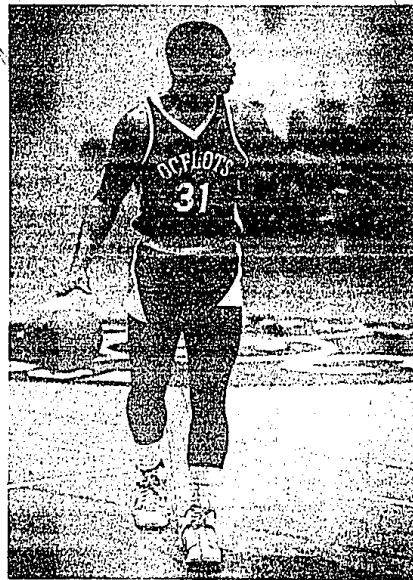
SC MADE its first-half run by converting in transition. When forced into a half-court game, the Ocelots were totally ineffective against Delta's zone. Turnovers hurt, too — nine in the game's first six minutes and 17 in the first half.

"We've been running our half-court offense well, too," said Wetzel. "I don't understand it. And in our last game against Delta, we had no problem with their press. Tonight, we made a lot of unforced errors."

"In a state tournament game, I don't know how you can come out and play so unprofessionally."

Stevens finished with 22 points to pace SC (11-17 overall). Kearney added 11 and Steele had eight. Lloyd Sargent's 22 points was best for Delta, with Steve Bard and Ody getting 16 apiece and Dan McLeellan scoring 11.

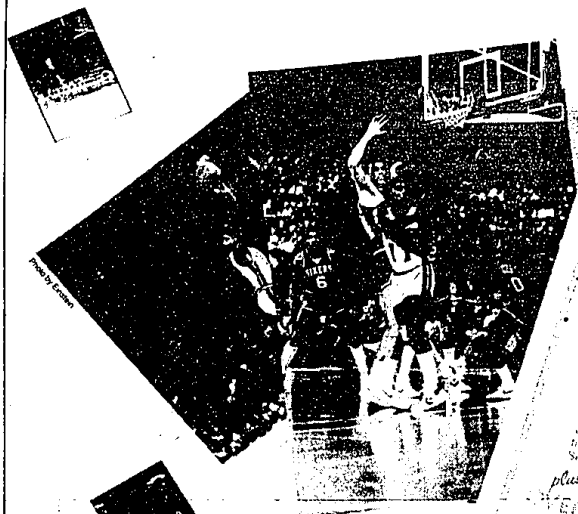
SC is now idle until the NJCAA Region 12 tournament at Vincennes (Ind.) CC March 3-5.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Desmond Steele scored 10 points for Schoolcraft in Monday's state playoff opener at Delta CC, but it was hardly enough to help the Ocelots.

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Late rally boosts Pioneers by WSU

When Wayne State's and Oakland University's men's basketball teams squared off earlier this season, the Tartars rode a bullish inside game to a 63-59 victory. On Saturday at WSU, the Pioneer big men redeemed themselves, powering OU to a thrilling 61-60 victory.

John Henderson, a 6-foot-6 sophomore center, scored the game-winning basket on a controversial play with four seconds left to cap a furious Pioneer rally that saw them storm back from a 59-52 deficit with 1:22 left. Henderson was credited with the field goal when WSU's Maurice Macon was called for slapping the backboard.

WSU officials applied to the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) for a correctable-error rules review, contending an incorrect rules application. Macon's violation should have resulted in a technical foul, one free throw and the ball out of bounds for OU. Instead, it was treated like goaltending.

If allowed, the final four seconds of the game could be replayed.

WHATEVER THE OUTCOME of the protest, it was a remarkable comeback for the Pioneers. WSU's Grady Lowry hit one-of-two free throws with 1:22 to play to give WSU its 59-52 lead, but five Mike McCan points (including a three-pointer with 48 seconds left) narrowed it to 59-57.

The Tartars made it 60-57 with 23 seconds to go on a Bryan Doss free throw. Stacy Davis hit an inside shot to bring OU to within 60-59 with 13 seconds left. Lowry then was unable to get the ball inbound and WSU turned it over to the Pioneers with six seconds to play, setting up Henderson's controversial score.

Henderson, who had just eight points in the first meeting, netted 16 this time. Davis, a 6-5 freshman forward, added 15 and junior guard Scott Bittlinger scored 13. McCan, a

sophomore forward, finished with seven points, 13 rebounds and five assists. In the previous meeting, OU's front-court players collectively scored 16 points and nabbed 15 rebounds.

Lowry's 15 points was best for WSU. Ted McCree netted 13.

It was a game with major consequences. For the Tartars, it dropped them a game behind Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) leader Ferris State. Ferris is 12-2 in the league. WSU is 11-3. Both have two GLIAC games left. Tartar hopes for a post-season NCAA Division II tournament berth were also damaged. WSU is 18-8 overall.

For OU, it was a landmark victory. It guaranteed the Pioneers their first-ever winning season in the GLIAC — they are 9-5 with two games left. It also kept alive hopes for a 20-win season and a possible post-season tournament berth. They are 18-8 overall.

OU'S WOMEN'S TEAM had no problem with the struggling Lady Tartars Saturday at WSU, waiting to an easy 100-61 triumph behind a record-setting performance by junior point guard Margaret Boyle.

Boyle broke her own single-game assist record by dishing out 14. That improved her league-leading total to 117, a GLIAC record.

The Lady Pioneers, 19-7 overall and 9-5 in the conference, rolled to a 46-32 halftime lead and were never threatened. Five players reached double-figures in scoring: Sarah Knuth (21), Leah Fenwick and Debbie Delie (14 each), Celeste Sartor (15) and Sooja Pearson (11).

Lisa Palazzola's 12 points was best for WSU (0-14 in the GLIAC, 3-23 overall). Kelly Kowalski had 10.

OU's teams finish their regular season with home games against Michigan Tech (5:30 tonight) and Lake Superior State (1 p.m. Saturday).

Late-season surge can't save Eagles

The surge has come too late for St. Mary's College's basketball team.

The Eagles defeated Aquinas College 59-52 Saturday at St. Mary's behind Jon Bow's 29 points. It was their third-straight win and fourth in five games, all against NAIA District 23 opponents.

Such a streak might have made a difference, had it come earlier in the season. But the four qualifiers for the district tournament have already been decided, and Aquinas, which beat St. Mary's earlier, is one of them. The others are Siena Heights, Northwood Institute and Grand Rapids Baptist.

The Eagles, who improved their record to 15-17, led 51-46 at the half. Aquinas (14-18) rallied to tie it early

in the second half, but St. Mary's scored 13 straight points to ice the victory.

The Eagle lead reached 29 points (23-46) late in the game. Joining Bow in double figures in scoring were Bradley Turner (15 points), Safa Qasawa (12) and Mo Steward (10). Bow also had nine rebounds, and point guard Lance Davis collected 11 assists and five steals.

Aquinas got 25 points and 14 rebounds from Cory Branch. Darryl Martin had 23 points, all in the first half.

St. Mary's closes its season at Spring Arbor (7:30 p.m. tonight) and at home against Saginaw Valley State (2 p.m. Saturday).

Lady Ocelots tune up for tournament in style

Schoolcraft College's women's basketball team tuned up for the Michigan Community College Athletic Association (MCCA) state tournament by trouncing Siena Heights junior varsity 74-61 Saturday at Siena Heights.

Tracy Ladouceur did most of the damage for the Lady Ocelots, pouring in 23 points and hitting all nine of her second-half floor shots to help SC pull away from a 32-29 halftime lead. Sue Lubbe added 17 points and Lori Abbas had 15. Lisa Kline had eight rebounds and six assists.

SC, 19-7 overall and Eastern Conference co-champions, begins its quest for a state title by playing Highland Park at 6 p.m. Thursday at Glen Oaks CC. If the Lady Ocelots

Schoolcraft sports

win, they will meet the Muskegon-Delta winner at 8 p.m. Friday.

The state championship game is at 8 p.m. Saturday at Glen Oaks. It will be preceded by a state all-star game at 6 p.m., which will feature Ladouceur, Lubbe and Abbas if SC isn't playing in the state final. Ladouceur was named all-state, Lubbe was an all-Eastern Conference selection, and Abbas earned honorable mention all-conference.

Engineers split at Miami

It wasn't exactly "Moon over Miami," but Hennessey Engineers hockey coach A.J. Baker was satisfied with his team's performance over the weekend.

The North American Junior League team scored a 6-5 win Friday and then battled to a 4-4 draw Saturday in a two-game series against the Miami University JV team at Oxford, Ohio.

"Both games the kids worked hard and they got something for it," said Baker, whose team is 20-14-9 overall. The Engineers blew a 4-1 lead in the series opener, but Jay Jewett scored the game-winner with only two minutes to play, his second of the night, to give Hennessey the win.

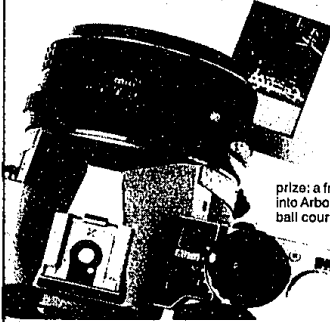
Just coming off injuries, Bryan Brygger and Left Gustafson each contributed a goal and two assists in the Engineers' triumph.

hockey

IN A PENALTY-FILLED game on Saturday, Hennessey rallied from a 4-1 deficit, capped by Tom Madden's goal with only five minutes remaining, to earn the tie.

Hennessey returns to North American Junior Hockey League action, beginning at 8 p.m. Friday against second place Compuware at the Plymouth Cultural Center.

The Engineers, 16-12-8 in league play, then travel Saturday to Oak Park to play Compuware in a 7:15 game. On Sunday, the third place Engineers meet the first place Falcons, beginning at 2 p.m. at Fraser.



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