

Seniors take lead role in Mercy win

BY DAN O'NEARA
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Mercy got to the regional finals in girls basketball for the third consecutive year due largely to the play of its seniors.

And that's the way it should be, coach Larry Baker said after the Marlins defeated Royal Oak Kimball 50-41 Monday at Southfield-Lathrup High School.

Mercy (13-11) took an eight-game winning streak into the final Tuesday night against Catholic League champion Birmingham Marian (23-1).

Senior guard Valrie Jones scored seven of her eight points early in the third quarter when the Marlins pulled away from a 26-23 halftime lead.

Senior forward Marshelle Brooks grabbed 11 rebounds and picked up the slack from fellow senior Dana Wade, who was still feeling the effects of a hard fall in the second district game.

"The seniors have really taken over and are showing us the way," Baker said. "Marshelle Brooks gave us some awesome rebounding. Is there a better rebounder pound for pound in the area? The seniors have been picking up the slack and what a terrific way to stop it."

Senior forward Katie Heffernan also had eight points, Brooks four. Sophomore center Julie Angell led the Marlins with 11. Freshman guard Liz Weber and junior guard Zandre Simmons

added six apiece. Jones sank a three-point shot to start the second half, and Heffernan followed with a driving layup before the Knights rallied to within 31-27. Jones scored the next two baskets, and Weber added a perimeter basket to give Mercy a 10-point lead with three minutes to go in the third period.

"Valrie is a real streaky gal," Baker said. "She's hot or cold. Fortunately, at tournament time, she's been more hot than cold. The seniors saved their best for last and what a better time than the tournament."

The Marlins led 40-32 after three quarters, and Kimball never got closer than seven points in the finale.

Mercy adjusted its zone defense at halftime and effectively took away some of Kimball's inside game. The Knights (20-4) were able to work the ball inside to 5-foot-9 post players Amy Forti and Becky Rogers.

They combined for 11 points in the first half but only six in the second. Forti finished with nine and Rogers eight to lead Kimball. "We wanted to keep (Rogers) out of the high post, so they had to run her on the baseline," Baker said. "Suddenly, she has to shoot over Julie and Marshelle. That's not easy and it made her less effective."

"We needed eight to nine minutes at halftime to do it, but I was pleased the kids translated the chalk talk on the court."



BILL BRESLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hold on tight: Mercy's Dana Wade tries to maintain possession of the basketball Monday in the game with Kimball.

Mercy pressured the Knights early in the game and forced 10 turnovers in the first quarter, but Kimball had 11 the rest of the way and its success in the forecourt caused the Marlins to play slower.

"We haven't ridden the shoulders of our half-court offense all year," Baker said. "It was a total, by different style of game than we used in the district. We're like a tournament-tested team, and we finished it off in style."

Raiders earn trophy

Oakland Community College snapped a four-game losing streak last weekend by winning the Sinclair CC (Ohio) men's basketball invitational.

The Raiders, paced by tournament MVP Kevin Woodmore, beat Ohio State University branch campuses Lima (95-77) and Chillicothe (82-77) to earn their first two victories of the season.

Woodmore, a 5-foot-7 guard from Auburn Hills Avondale, came up with 15 points, six steals and five assists in the championship victory Saturday over Lima.

In the semifinal win over Chillicothe, Woodmore contributed 11 points, five assists and four steals.

He shot 10-of-16 from the floor over the two-day span. Craig Martin, a 6-foot guard out of Auburn Hills Oakland Christian, shot eight-for-12 from the field en route to a 22-point outing for OCC in the championship final.

Ray Moreland, a Southfield-Lathrup product who sat out OCC's first five games (hardship rule) after transferring from NCAA Division I school Maryland Eastern Shore, chipped in with 18 points, while Bill Knight contributed nine points, eight rebounds and four steals.

Don Rice paced Lima with a game-high 28 points.

On Friday, Myron Banks, a 6-6 forward from Detroit Radford, led OCC with 26 points and 22 rebounds.

Other OCC players figuring prominently in the win included 6-3 Troy Coleman (Dearborn St. Alphonsus), who added 14 points (on seven-of-11 shooting), 10 assists and five steals; and Bill Thurston (Rochester High), who added 15 points.

Thurston's three-pointer down the stretch iced the victory for OCC.

Mark Stroubovght and Terry Dunkle each netted 16 for Chillicothe.

Marlins from page 1B

The Marlins were led by senior Erika Smith, who was third in the 200-yard freestyle (1:53.44) and sixth in the 100 freestyle (52.95). Both times will be considered for All-America honors.

Smith also anchored the medley and 400 freestyle relay teams, both of which scored points by placing among the top 12.

Jenny McCombs, Andrea Hoeflein, Michele Welch and Smith were 10th in the medley (5:52.93), and the freestyle team of Hope Harrison, Katie Scallen, Hoeflein and Smith was eighth (3:40.72).

Both relay times automatically qualified the Marlins for All-America competition.

"The relays were phenomenal," Cooper said. "All of the girls had fantastic splits and did it when they needed to do it."

Hoeflein also placed 10th in the 500 freestyle at 5:19.73, though she swam 5:16.34 in the preliminaries, and McCombs was 14th in the backstroke with an All-America consideration time of 1:00.37.

Hoeflein dropped eight seconds

in the 500 freestyle, and McCombs managed to score in her event despite missing two weeks in the last month because of illness, Cooper said.

In non-scoring swims, Welch was 20th in the butterfly (1:04.65) and 28th in the individual medley (1:18.76), and Harrison was 27th in the 50 freestyle (25.81) and 33rd in the butterfly (1:04.65).

Heather Yagielka finished 18th (5:28.92) and Scallen 21st (5:32.74) in the 500 freestyle. Bethany Budde dropped two seconds and was 15th in the breaststroke (1:09.90).

North Farmington's Carrie Worthen was 21st in the breaststroke and 25th in the IM. Shannon Bacon finished 29th in the IM. Mandy Terrell 26th in diving and Becky Ashburn 31st in the butterfly. The Raiders had respective finishes of 21st and 24th in the 200 and 400 freestyle relays.

Farmington and Farmington Hills Harrison had no state qualifications.

Warriors aim to finish perfect grid season

BY BILL PARKER
STAFF WRITER

Prior to the start of the season, Walled Lake Western football coach Chuck Apap was asked if he thought his team could earn the school's first berth in the state playoffs.

The veteran coach just smiled and said: "I already bought the tickets."

Hopefully, Apap planned ahead and purchased a playoff series

package that included tickets to Friday's Class A state championship game at the Silverdome, because that's exactly where the Warriors will play. The Warriors (12-0) tangles with undefeated Muskegon Reeths-Puffer (12-0) in the Class A championship game at 1 p.m.

"We're trying to keep it low key," said Apap of the hype and excitement involved in the championship game. "It's the 13th game

of the season, and we want to get our 13th win."

If the Warriors are to earn their 13th win of the season they will have to beat the Rockets off the ball. Coaches claim football games are won and lost in the trenches. That point will be emphasized Friday when these two powerhouses square off.

"We have to do what we've done all year and attack at the line of scrimmage," said Reeths-Puffer assistant coach Gary Mast. "Both teams are run-oriented teams that control the line of scrimmage. The team that controls the front will have the edge."

In past games, Western has had the edge up front with an offensive line that averages 230 pounds and a defensive front that averages 209. But the Rockets have some beef as well, averaging 214 pounds across the front on offense and 202 on defense.

"This will be the best line we've faced," Apap said. "Reeths-Puffer is a helluva football team. They have some big kids up there, so it should really be a battle. We'll find out what we're made of up front."

On offense, the Warrior front is made of center Steve Bigham (238), right guard Derek Lindsay (232), right tackle Norm Garmen (223), left guard Dwayne Lutas (205) and left tackle Greg Garbush (248). Arnie Gillert leads the

running game with 2,042 yards and 29 TDs. The Warriors average 27 points a game.

The Rockets counter with a solid defensive line made up of nose-guard Ron Madison (180), tackles Camp McCreay (225) and Eric McFarfield (230) and ends John Boursema (200) and Dan Brown (175).

"We play a pretty standard type-50 defense," Mast said. "We play hard-nosed football and try to take people on."

Offensively, Reeths-Puffer averages 28 points per game and tries to control the ball by pounding it up the middle.

In last week's 28-22 semifinal victory over top-ranked East Lansing, the Rockets ran 69 offensive plays to 35 for the Trojans. Running backs DeMarko Hill (1,653 yards, 21 TDs on 221 carries) and Stacy Starr (1,318 yards, 14 TDs on 167 carries) lead Reeths-Puffer's offense.

Center Stuart Brown (190) anchors the line and is flanked by guards Mark Aparata (185) and Bob Wilks (200) and tackles Bob Kanaar (230) and Kevin Bahr (265).

"We have to stop them and control the football," Apap said. "If you don't control the ball they will."

Defensively, the Warriors have allowed fewer than 10 points per game.

Shamrocks from page 1B

Wright can be as dangerous as Uteca Eisenhower quarterback Tim Youngblood, who led the CC's defense for 247 yards passing on 18 of 36 completions.

"Youngblood throws the ball a lot more than we feel comfortable with," Arthur Hill coach Jim Eureka said. "Marvin is very gifted, smart, sees what's going on in the field. He comes up big every game."

Arthur Hill's defense also has been tough and last week twice stopped Adrian inside the Lumberjacks' 30 in the fourth quarter to preserve the lead. The task facing Arthur Hill is to stop a CC offense that has averaged 256 yards and 25 points per game.

CC hasn't passed with much success (34 completions in 83 attempts for 496 yards) but Eureka knows few teams can match the rushing attack. The Shamrocks are led by junior tailback Freddie

Taylor, who has gained 1,067 yards, scored 10 TDs and is averaging 138 yards per playoff game. Fullback Jason Krueger has nine scores and 640 yards rushing.

"Knowing what they're going to do is one thing but being able to stop it is another," Eureka said. "It's like they're saying, 'Here's what we're going to do. Now stop it.'"

If CC needs to go to the air, it'll be tough to throw near Foster, one of the Lumberjacks' cornerbacks who has eight interceptions.

Like most CC games, a charman knows the defense could dictate the tempo. Defensive linemen Joe Suhajda, Aaron Babicz and Paul Nemzek have most frequently been in the opponents' backfield during the post-season.

"They're kind of one-dimensional team with Wright," Horman said. "If we can stop him, we can win."

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