

Loss of key player hurts C'ville

BY BRAD EMONS
STAFF WRITER

When Livonia Clarenceville opens its boys basketball season tonight at home against Southfield Christian, fourth-year coach Rob White can only wonder what might have been.

The Trojans, 12-9 a year ago, had entertained thoughts of challenging defending Metro Conference champ Harper Woods Lutheran East in 1993-94, but lost a key player in the process.

Point-guard Mark Skrelja, who averaged double figures in scoring, was declared ineligible in early September.

Skrelja, it was learned, was starting his eighth semester this fall.

"He could have played four or five games first semester, but it wasn't worth it," White said. "He started at Clarenceville as a ninth grader, went to Ferndale and then came back. He was moving back

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and forth with relatives. He never dropped out of school, but was going part-time."

The 5-foot-11 Skrelja, a strong leader and the team's chief ball-handler, will be missed. Clarenceville also lost starting center Mario Ivezaj and starting forward Ryan McEwen to graduation.

"It's just a killer," White said. "Mark's a good kid. He's still working out, and we're hoping he can get some kind of scholarship for next year."

The ball-handling responsibilities will fall squarely on the shoulders of cousins Mark and John Kalaj.

Mark, a 6-3 senior forward, averaged 20 points per game a year ago, while John, a 6-1 senior guard, contributed 14 points and four assists.

"These are two of the best players in the conference," White said. "But without Skrelja, we'll only be as good as John and Mark and take us."

"It really depends if John can help at guard. Both will have to do a lot of ball-handling."

Other returnees include Lucie Lucej, a 6-2 guard; George Gjoko, a 6-1 guard; Chris Smith, a 6-3 center; and Bryce Le, a 5-8 point-guard.

Promising newcomers include Mark Berry, a 6-6 junior center off the JV squad; Scott Barnhart, a 6-0 sophomore guard; Steve Parks, a 6-8 junior guard; and Bill Lyons, a 6-8 junior guard.

"Actually, this is the biggest team I've ever had," White said. "Berry could start by mid-season."

"I still think we can win 12 to 13 games. Optimistically, I think we can do better than last year." Oh, what might have been.

Crusaders halt losing streak

The mounting losses, something which could destroy a young team, finally were stemmed.

Madonna University's men's basketball team won a game, beating Harris-Stowe College 120-108 Monday in St. Louis. The victory ended the Fighting Crusaders' nine-game losing streak, a streak extended by two losses in Missouri last week, prior to Monday's win.

"I think they were just damn tired of losing," said Madonna coach Bill Sharpe. "I know I'm a lot happier than I was a week ago, and not just because of the win. We're improving, especially our rebounding."

Against Harris-Stowe, J. Dimes paced Madonna with 21 points and 15 rebounds. Kurt Carlos added 19 points and 12 boards, and Brandon Slone contributed nine points and nine rebounds.

The other key factor in the win was three-point shooting. The Crusaders had 16 triples, paced by leading scorers Mike Slone, with seven (25 points), and Shawn Branum, with four (23 points).

Aaron Cook's 21 points led Harris-Stowe. Brian Clemon added 14 and Bake McBride Jr.

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finished with 12.

Last Saturday, the Crusaders lost 94-82 to Hannibal LaGrange College, in Hannibal, Mo. Madonna trailed 46-29 at the half and fell behind by 31 early in the second half before battling back, trimming the deficit to seven.

Mike Slone's 16 points was best for the Crusaders. Dimes added 14. Carlos had 13 and Brandon Slone and Branum each scored 10. Ron Curtis had 15 for LaGrange, with Chad Boudreau getting 14 and Greg Kubik 12.

LaGrange was 17-of-31 from the free-throw line (54 percent); Madonna was just 4-of-9 (44 percent).

In the first game of its road trip, Madonna was clobbered by Missouri Baptist 141-84 Thursday in St. Louis. Carlos' 18 points topped the Crusaders; Donnell Foster had 12. Harold Frost had 24 to lead Baptist, with Anthony Reed getting 21 and Kevin Zouschel 20.

Women's basketball A shabby, uninspired performance cost Madonna's women's team any chance at a victory Friday against Hope College in the opener of the Hope Classic. But the 77-67 defeat did help the Lady Crusaders get focused for their second game in the Classic — they romped over Trinity Christian College, 103-69 Saturday at Hope.

"We thought we should have won the Hope game," said Madonna coach Bill Potter, whose team is 2-5. "We came out with a little more intensity against Trinity. We jumped on them right away."

Megan Marlett's 20 points paced Madonna. Shawn Bannon had 19, Stephanie Creley had 13, Jill Burt scored 12 and April Blanton delivered 10, as all the Crusaders played and scored. Kim Pothoven's 23 led Trinity (3-5).

Madonna led 57-25 at the half, thanks to Bannon's 16 points. In the loss to Hope, Madonna battled back from a 36-32 halftime deficit to tie it at 42. But the Flying Dutch got a pair of three-pointers from Nikki Manns to go ahead for good.

Manns finished with 22; Kristin Carlson scored 20.

Shamrocks open with win over Braves

BY STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Ypsilanti High had trouble stopping the Redford Catholic Central boys basketball team Tuesday night, even before the opening tip.

An Ypsilanti player was charged with a technical foul for dunking in the pre-game warmup and CC's Andy Slankster converted both free throws before any time elapsed.

CC carried the momentum into the game, racing to a 19-11 lead after one quarter en route to an easy 75-55 victory in the season opener for both teams.

Three of Ypsilanti's regular starters are academically ineligible and none of the five who started had any varsity experience, according to Braves coach Bob Rowley.

"The one kid who dunked in warm-ups never played a game in his life, didn't play on the freshman team or the junior varsity," Rowley said. "And that's a solid club CC's got."

CC's 6-foot-6 senior center Joe Daly made nine-of-14 shots from the field and led the Shamrocks with 23 points and 10 rebounds. He had 15 points in the second half.

"In the last 10 days, Joe has upped his game a lot, every day is a step forward for Joe," CC coach Bernie Holowicki said.

Slankster scored nine of his 19 points in the first quarter and sophomore guard Justin Hoenser had a career-high 16 points on 6-

10 shooting. The Shamrocks made 28-69 shots from the field (41 percent) and enjoyed a 42-33 rebounding edge. Ypsilanti made 20-50 shots from the field (40 percent).

The Shamrocks committed only 11 turnovers and looked relaxed in their new shorts, the baggy kind that almost reach the knees. Senior guard Anthony Hoenser, who scored 11 points, said he felt "naked" wearing the short-shorts of the past.

"They didn't know about the new shorts until we pulled them out two days ago. They like them," Holowicki said.

Hoenser sparked the Shamrocks with eight points in the third quarter to help push the lead to 57-43.

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