

Overaitis, DC boot Mercy in Catholic League playoffs

BY CHRIS MCCOY
STAFF WRITER

Uncharacteristic. That's the best way to describe the manner in which Farmington Hills Mercy was dispatched from the Catholic League Playoffs Wednesday.

Not so much that the Marlins (10-8) were beaten, 53-47, by Dearborn Divine Child (16-2) in the semifinals at Schoolcraft College. No great surprise there. But the Marlins were, well, very un-Mercy-like in their approach.

"I was extremely frustrated," said Mercy coach Larry Baker. "I felt there was a certain lack of confidence that showed up for such a big game."

Mercy has built a reputation on playing huge in big games, especially in an underdog situation. Mercy is a team that, when presented with a small crack in the dice, will barge its way on

through.

Divine Child left the door wide open a couple of times Wednesday, and the Marlins hesitated just long enough to have it slammed back in their face.

"I was really surprised that we were ahead," said Divine Child coach Marylou Jansen, whose players will play Tuesday Bishop Borgess for the Catholic League title at 4 p.m. Sunday at Caliban Hall. "If we play like this on Sunday, we'll get beat by 40 points."

The person most responsible for keeping DC ahead was senior Tara Overaitis. The former All-Area player from Livonia-Ledywood scored 26 points, 18 in the first half, and pulled down 17 rebounds.

"I'm certainly not sorry to be coaching against her for the last time," Baker said. "The student who she transfers to (Michigan State) will be out of the Catholic League."

Divine Child, the smaller but much quicker team, rattled the Marlins early with an assortment of full-court presses. The Marlins turned the ball over 11 times, and their hurried shooters hit just 9 of 25 shots in the first half.

The DC guards — Carrie Carpenter, Anna Yochas and Jennifer Jansen (the coach's sister) — were extremely effective penetrating the Mercy defense and dishing off for easy shots.

The problem — or break, if you're Mercy — was that DC had a hard time knocking down the short shot.

"You can't let Mercy stay in the game like that," Jansen said. "We kept getting good shots and when we didn't finish, boom, they would be right back down our throats."

Mercy pulled within six points twice: once at the end of the third quarter (37-31) and again with 5:43 left in the game. Each time, Overaitis stepped up to stop the bleeding. She hit two free throws at the end of the third quarter and a basket to start the fourth. Then she had a basket and a steal to start a 6-0 run that effectively buried the Marlins in the final minutes.

"I don't mean to stress the negative to the point of doing a dis-

service to Divine Child; they are an excellent team," Baker said. "But we had to do a lot of rotating just to find combinations of players who would play with poise and execute. We just had some fundamental breakdowns that surprised me."

"When we play aggressively and with abandon, we are successful. When we get tentative, we pay a price for it. Even when we got within six, I didn't get a sense that we were very sure of ourselves."

Uncharacteristic. Mitch Budzick scored 13 points to lead the Marlins. Carrie Schwage, who hit a couple of triples in the final minute to keep the game exciting, finished with 10 points.

"We have had a good solid season up to this point and now we get ready for the district," Baker said, indicating that he likes his team's chances. "Five of our losses have been to Divine Child and Borgess. Neither is in our way now."

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ing experience for our team. But when they set their minds to something, they go after it."

IN NORTH GOES TO STATE

The Raiders were a team awaiting a breakthrough all season, and it finally happened for them in the biggest meet of the year.

Raiders Catholic Central won the boys regional, but North jumped ahead of Western Lakes Activities Association champion Plymouth Canton, 121 to 124.

"I thought all along if we could get our fourth and fifth guys to come down a little, we had a chance," North coach Paul Welch said.

"We knew it was going to be close. We were looking at abounding for the third-place slot, but the guys ran better than I thought they would."

The Raiders were led by junior Brian Hadd, who was fifth (16:52). He had a great start this year and never seemed to match his performance of a year ago until last weekend.

"It took a while to come around," Welch said. "As the big races come around, he tends to come on strong and this year is no exception."

"He's running very competitively, but I still think there's room for him to come down. But he's definitely moving."

Senior Tom Stumboulman managed to finish 10th (17:09) despite running with a blister on one of his feet.

"North's Steve Chen was 27th (17:45), senior Kristian Stod (17:52) and Ninu Nakh 47th (18:15)."

Tom hung on and still had a pretty good race," Welch said. "We'll get him some more abuse for the state meet, and I think he'll be all set."

The times are not extremely fast, but

they ran with the people I told them they had to run with and did a great job."

"I'm real happy with Steve Chen, a sophomore who's come on and done a great job for us," he added.

O'CONNELL RUNNER-UP

Farmington Hills Mercy senior Ellen O'Connell was second in the Class A regional meet, finishing behind Livonia Stevenson freshman Kelly Travis.

Travis (19:28) took the lead at about the two-mile mark and outdistanced O'Connell, who ran 19:26 followed by West Bloomfield senior Lara Rals (19:56).

"This is the first time I've been here," Travis said. "Our coach (Paul Hestberg) told me just to do my best and not to worry about anyone else. I kind of expected to get second."

"After the first mile, I kept getting closer and closer to (O'Connell) so I really pushed myself. I passed her in the woods, but I could hear her behind me."

"I kept asking people how far back she was. I was really scared because I thought she was going to catch me, but she didn't."

Since the Marlins didn't qualify as a team, O'Connell will go to Grand Rapids and compete in the individual race Saturday.

"Give the other girl credit; she ran a good race," Mercy coach Gary Servalis said. "O'Connell was never lower than second all year, so no one can anyone be disappointed?"

"She was in the top 15 combined last year at state and, hopefully, she'll be in the top five this year."

"She likes that course, and she was there last year. That's two advantages and it's her lady's school race, so that's another motivating factor."

The Marlins did as well as they could

in the team race, Servalis said. Junior Lisa Nobles was 30th (21:21), senior Brandy Johnson 34th (21:40) and the freshman duo of Jackie Bogus and Mandy Phelps 39th (21:56) and 61st (22:25).

MORE STATE QUALIFIERS

Farmington Hills Harrison's Allison Noe earned a yester day trip to the state finals, and Farmington High's Tom May put behind him a disappointing regional meet last year to qualify.

Both are seniors.

Noe will run in her third straight girls state individual race, having finished 18th last year and 49th as a sophomore. She will work in the regional Saturday with a 20:04 time.

"She definitely has some high hopes for the state meet," Harrison coach Mark Babcock said. "We all do, and I think she's going to do real well."

"She's unlimited in what she can do at the state meet. She's earned her way there; she hasn't had an off day all year."

May just missed going to state last year, finishing one place away from taking a qualifying spot at the boys regional. He was seventh this year in 17:00.

"He didn't have his best race, but he ran well enough to qualify," Farmington coach Chip Bridges said. "He feels he can have a better race at state."

"He was second at the conference and a couple guys he beat got in front of him (at the regional). He said he hopes to make a better mark at state."

Bridges added May has a good chance to achieve his goal of a top-15 finish and to earn a medal.

"I don't think we've scratched the surface of Tom May's ability. If he's feeling well and takes an aggressive attitude, he can run a fast time and place real high."

CC runners win regional

BY BILL PARKER
STAFF WRITER

Tony Magni was a little worried during the boys race Saturday at the Class A regional cross country meet at Marshbank Park in West Bloomfield.

Magni, the veteran coach at Redford Catholic Central, told his team not to get caught up in the hype of the race and not to go out too hard.

"They laid back a little more than I thought they would early in the race and I was worried," said Magni, who led the Shamrocks to the Catholic League championship and an undefeated dual meet season. "At about the 24-mile mark we had caught up,

X-COUNTRY

I knew we had seven runners up there and I started to feel a little better."

Magni was feeling fine by the end of the race as the Shamrocks captured the team championship with 73 points.

"The fact that we qualified is the important thing," Magni said. "I told the kids to do their best and that if we won we'd qualify for sure."

Junior Joe Leo paced the Shamrocks. Leo took the lead away from Plymouth Salem junior Scott Pengilly about midway in the race and never trailed

again. He won the individual crown in 16:06, 10 seconds ahead of second-place finisher senior Rob Radtke of West Bloomfield. Pengilly was third in 16:23.

CC senior Matt Groczynski was 11th (17:19), senior Mike Danic 17th (17:32), senior Phil Camilleri 20th (17:35) and senior Derrick Faunce 24th (17:41).

"What makes us strong is that we have a lot of people who run together," Leo said. "We'll run the best we can at state and probably shoot for a top-five finish. Most of the guys are back from last year when we finished 10th so we should do pretty well. I really don't think we'll win it, but it's nice to dream."

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