Warriors eliminate Shamrocks in opener

BY MARTY BUDNER
STAFF WRITER

There weren't many observers who gave Redford Catholic Central a chance to win its first-round Class A regional ice hockey playoff game Monday evening against Birmingham Brother Rice. And for good reason.

For one, the Warriors are the state's top-ranked team. Rice also defeated the Shamrocks twice this year by a combined score of 11-2.

As expected, Rice officially ended CC's state-championship reign with a 7-5 victory before a less-than-capacity crowd at Oak Park's Compuware Arena.

But like true champions, the Shamrocks went down fighting.

The Warriors owned a 5-0 lead before the second period was one minute old and it appeared a blowout was in the making.

CC, however, scored five of the next seven goals and had Rice reeling throughout the third period. Matt Giordano scored for CC with three minutes remaining in the third period to bring the Shamrocks within a goal at 6-5.

CC pulled freshman goalie Phillip Osaer with less than a minute left, but could not score the tying goal.

Rice's Mike Jalaba put it away with an empty-netter directly from a face-off just outside the Shamrock zone.

You could almost hear a collective sigh of relief from Rice's coaches, players and fans when Jalaba's goal slid into the net.

"We got up 5-0 and it was like 'let's watch the clock tick,' " said Rice coach Mike Brown, whose team is 22-1 overall. "We started to let some of our back-checks go and we allowed them to walk right through the slot."

CC coach Gordon St. John was proud of the way his team rebounded from that early deficit.

"I'd like to have that first period back, but Rice is a good team and they got a good jump on us," said St. John. "We gave a classic comeback and our guys showed a lot of guts to comeback.

"They just never gave up. They could have folded when they got down like that. They fought harder than you could even expect. They're a proud group of kids.

"We gave it everything we had but we just couldn't quite pull it off," he said.

Once again it was Rice's top line of Jalaba, Mike Wojcik and Scott Walosin which did most of the damage. Wojcik had the hat-trick and two assists, while Walosin and Jalaba contributed a goal each. Senior winger Owen Townsend netted the other two Rice goals. Defenseman Brad Bass added a pair of assists.

Senior forward Dan Hunt tallied three goals for Catholic Central, with Peter Davis and Giordano accounting for the other two goals.

Rice, which outshot CC 24-18, had a 4-0 lead after the first period and a 6-3 advantage after two periods.

"I admire the way Catholic Central plays," said Brown, a former Shamrock player. "They put a lot of pucks in our net. They got five goals and that's a little more than what I like."

CC, which tied Harper Woods Notre Dame, 4-4, Saturday at the Redford Ice Arena in the regular season finale, bowed out with a 13-6-2 overall record.

Mercy's Gable settles for 3rd in state meet

BY BILL PARKER
STAFF WRITER

SKIING

While friends and family were busy at home chipping away Monday's glazing of ice, the Redford Catholic Central ski team was busy carving out a niche for itself at the Michigan High School Athletic Association's Alpine Ski Finals.

The 10th-ranked Shamrocks, led by Jeff Buckley's fifth-place overall finish in the giant slalom, hit the steeps at Nubs Nob in Harbor Springs and skied away with an eighth-place finish.

"We were rankled 10th coming in so anything above that would have been great," said CC coach Tom Gable. "We were dumping a lot of people, but we got four finishers in each race. A lot of teams were having trouble, so it says a lot for the finishers."

Traverse City continued its dominance by winning the boys title for the eighth straight year. The Trojans finished with a team-low 44 points, 41 ahead of runner-up Harbor Springs. Rochester (263) and Birmingham Brother Rice (296) were behind CC.

The top two teams from five regional meets qualified for state. The top four individuals at the regional meets who were not members of one of the qualifying teams qualified for the state meet as individuals.

CC placed ninth in the GS and eighth in the slalom. Among team racers, Buckley placed fourth in the GS with a two-run combined time of 51.37. Williams was 40th (58.37), Matt Connolly was 42nd (59.15) and Steve Hartsock was 45th (60.20).

Williams led the Shamrocks in the slalom by placing 21st (78.46). Connolly was 22nd (79.26), Tom West was 33rd (88.20) and Hartsock was 36th (90.83). Nick Muccino and Mike Phillips also competed for CC.

"I had fun today and that's the most important thing," said Buckley. "This is the first time we've been to state (as a team) since 1991. I thought we performed pretty well as a team."

In the girls race, Farmington Hills Mercy's Niki Gable capped a brilliant four-year career with a top-10 finish in the slalom and the GS.

Only four girls earned a medal (top 10 finish) in both events. Gable qualified for the state meet as an individual. Last year, Gable placed sixth in the slalom and did not qualify for state in the GS.

"It went pretty well," said Gable. "I had hoped to finish in the top three, or at least the top five in both races, but that's the way it goes."

Gable turned in a two-run combined time of 56.57 to place third in the GS and clocked a 70.69 to place seventh in the slalom.

The state meet wrapped up a busy schedule for Gable, who competed in the Central United States Ski Association regional meet Saturday and Sunday in Marquette.

"Overall, she missed the Junior Olympics by one person," said Tom Gable, her father and coach of the Mercy and CC teams. "She skied real well overall. She's been in the snow for six days in a row, and I think she's a little bit tired right now. That's a grueling schedule, and I give her a tremendous amount of credit."

Team depth carries Salem to swim title

BY C.J. RISAK
STAFF WRITER

Imagine going into the finals in one of the biggest meets of the season (second only to the state finals) with your three or four best swimmers all plagued by illness.

Sounds like a coach's nightmare.

But for Plymouth Salem swim coach Chuck Olson, it turned out to be a dream come true — for that is just the situation his Rocks faced at Saturday at the Western Lakes Activities Association championships.

Olson's Rocks were heavy favorites going into the meet and why not? They had not been beaten by anyone in any type of meet all season, which is why they were ranked No. 4 in the state.

But Salem was ailing. Top swimmers like Eric Seidelman, Joe Ervin and John McLenaghan (all state qualifiers) were either still sick or just getting better. Which spelled trouble; they wouldn't be in top shape, giving the rest of the league's rested and shaved swimmers a good shot at them.

Unfortunately for the rest of the WLAA, what Olson had said all season long about his team — that depth was its best asset — proved true. Although Salem won just three events, it still collected its third consecutive league title and ninth in the WLAA's 13 years.

"We're happy with the way things went," Olson said. "We swam not as well as we wanted to. But we didn't win this meet with our Seidelmans and Ervins and McLenaghans. Of the 50 guys on the team, it was the other 44 who made the difference.

"They're not as fast as our best guys, who were sick, but they did what they had to do. Don't get me wrong: Those (top six) guys had good meets. I'm not cutting them short. But the other 44 did it."

They had to. Individually, Ervin managed a fourth (100-yard freestyle) and a fifth (200 free), Seidelman had two sixths (in the 100 and 200 free) and McLenaghan tied for fifth (in the 50 free) and finished 10th (in the 100 back, two seconds off last week's state-qualifying time).

It helped that it wasn't the fastest WLAA meet. Only one league record fell, and that went to Canton's Jason Fowler in diving, who repeated as league champ on the one-meter board by scoring 502.15 points, more than 10 better than the previous mark (492.14 by Northville's Steve Lang in '91).

Salem, seeded first in all three relays prior to Thursday's preliminaries, won just one: the 200-yard freestyle relay, with David Bracht, Ervin, Patrick Morgan and Seidelman (1:30.52).

Bracht earned a league title all his own by winning the 50 free (22.43). Salem's other league title came from Rodolfo Palma in the 100 butterfly (55.63).

Several swimmers were close but came up short of state cuts, a problem Olson will try to remedy with a qualifying meet Thursday at Salem. Individuals will have one more shot at the state meet standards.

The state finals will be March 10-11 at Michigan State University.

Can Olson's squad match last year's sixth-place state finish? "This is probably one of the most versatile teams I've had," Olson said. "There are spots we could get faster, but this is a good team."

Shamrocks qualify six for state mat tourney

Redford Catholic Central will send six wrestlers to the Class A state individual tournament set for March 10-11 in Battle Creek.

Undefeated junior heavyweight John Spolsky (44-0) leads the contingent. Spolsky took first place with a 3-2 decision over Jason Ohrt of Fraser in the regional Saturday at Troy High.

Seniors Andy Short (37-8 at 215 pounds) and Bill Lamb (37-3 at 112), and juniors Dario Ianni (34-8 at 106) and Dave Gardner (38-11 at 134) all placed second. Sophomore Dave O'Hara (38-8 at 100), whom coach Mike Rodriguez called a "pleasant surprise," took third.

"We had seven wrestlers here and we got six through," the CC coach said. "It was a good day for us and I'm proud of the way they wrestled."

Cotant goes to state

The lone Brother Rice state qualifier was Joe Cotant at 126 pounds.

Cotant, a junior who has a 51-7 overall record, defeated Grosse Pointe North's Charlie Vasapolli 5-2 to take third place.

He will be making his first trip to Battle Creek.

"He's a very focused young man who has a great work ethic," Brother Rice coach Dave Schuele said. "He's one you can point to and tell the rest of the kids 'This is how it's done.' We figured he could be a state qualifier."

John Colombo (151), Tony Diluca (172), Juan Blythe (165) and John Kilby (215) are underclassmen who qualified for the regional but did not make it to state.

"There's nothing like a tournament like this to whet a kid's appetite and see what they can strive for," Schuele said.

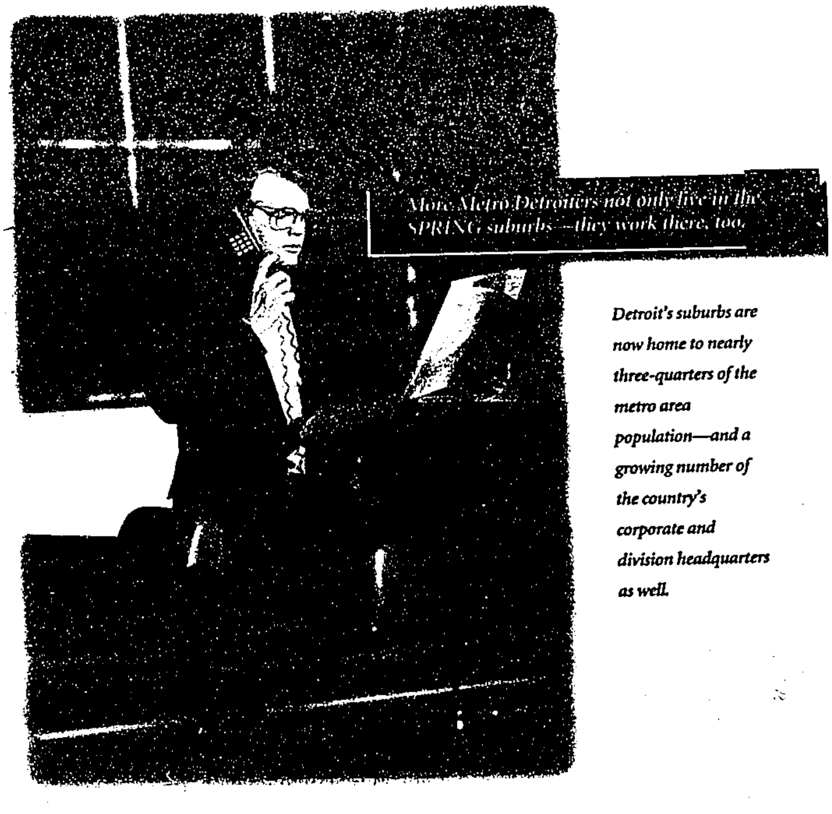
Michalski *from page 1C*

He was ahead 2-0 after two periods and remained in control throughout the third, riding Dias for most of the period.

"I went out with the right attitude and took it to him; I wrestled my match," Michalski said. As they untangled at the end of the bout, Dias took a swipe at Michalski in frustration.

"There's a lot of pressure on everybody right now, and everyone is trying to do their best," Michalski said.

"I'm just out there wrestling. There's no need to chance being DQ'd now. He just got caught up in the moment."



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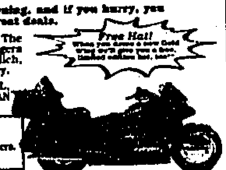

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