

Lakers avenge loss to Marlins

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

After what happened last year, West Bloomfield's girls basketball team knew it faced a formidable opponent Monday and was equal to the challenge this time.

The Lakers took a 19-1 record into post-season play a year ago but lost their first game to perennial district champion Farmington Hills Mercy.

West Bloomfield was ready for the Marlins in their rematch Monday and departed the Bloomfield Hills Lahser gym with a 42-37 victory.

"If we got down and had any adversity coming our way, we wanted to remind ourselves of what we accomplished the last two years, look to the positive and not let that rattle us," West Bloomfield coach Lance Davis said. "It was great to see the girls come through in that way."

The Lakers, who equaled their record of last season, faced some early adversity when the Marlins raced to an 8-0 lead.

But West Bloomfield recovered from the slow start to take a 19-15 halftime lead and gradually increased the margin in the second half.

Four players did all the scoring for a young Lakers team that starts two juniors, two sophomores and a freshman.

Sophomore Crystal Andrews scored 14 of her 18 points in the second half. Junior Heather Pedersen gave the Lakers a jump-start with three three-point baskets in the first half and finished with 12.

Six-foot-2 junior center Kim Kipela tossed in 10 points but had a bigger impact with her defense, blocking several shots and not giving the Marlins any easy looks in the post.

Juniors Susie Roble and Jessie Brennan scored eight points apiece for Mercy (9-11). Seniors Kelly Moug and Ashley Schumacher added seven and five, respectively.

The Marlins shot 29 percent (14-of-48) and were slightly better than their season average of 28 but were never out of the game until the final minute.

"We just haven't shot the ball very well this year," Mercy coach Dave Collins said. "We have to rely on our perimeter game a lot, because we're a small team."

"We try to get some good looks; we try to penetrate and take the ball to basket, dribble-drive and score."

The Marlins did that early, spreading the floor against West Bloomfield's man defense and gaining access to the post for scoring chances.

But the Lakers went to a 2-1-2 zone and took away the inside lanes, making it more difficult for Mercy to score, especially when the outside shots weren't falling.

The Marlins stayed in the game by avoiding a pitfall that has plagued them all season — turnovers. Mercy had just seven while West Bloomfield committed 16.

The Lakers, who were 13-of-36 from the floor, scored 11 unanswered points to take the lead, 16-



STAFF PHOTO BY JEFF KIESEL

District tournament: Mercy senior Kelly Moug aims for the basket Monday night.

10. Pedersen's third trey made it 19-13.

"All season (Pedersen) has sacrificed her game to get the ball inside," Davis said. "She's been running the point and making sure we do the things we need to do to win."

"We always knew she could shoot; this game called for it, and she got us going."

The Lakers stretched their lead to 15 late in the fourth, 40-25. Mercy outscored West Bloomfield 10-1 in the next two minutes to get within six, 41-35, following a three-point play by Natalie Grondin with 35 seconds remaining.

HARRISON 81, LAHSER 24: Harrison raced to a 10-0 lead in the first quarter and led 31-7 at halftime Monday at Lahser. Kerstin Andrzewski scored 12 points and Manogay Fletcher 10 to lead the Hawks, who made 20 of 31 free throws. Harrison's Kelly Taylor tossed in nine points, Cassie Jamison seven and Kristine Knutson six; Karolyn Knutson, Amy Roble and Charlotte Blasfield added four points each. Jessica McDonald and Beth Landry scored six points apiece for Lahser (6-15), which was 5-of-15 at the line.

Raiders upset Hawks, 48-42

BY DAN O'MEARA
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BASKETBALL

North Farmington's girls basketball team emerged from the shadow of crosstown rival Farmington Harrison to have its day in the sun Wednesday.

The third time was indeed the charm for the Raiders, who lost twice in the regular season to Harrison but earned a 48-42 win in a district tournament game.

North plays West Bloomfield for the championship at 7 p.m. Friday at Lahser High School.

"Harrison has always been our rival and has always come out on top," North senior Melissa Gratz said. "We had to take it to them in this game."

(Senior Kellee) Fournier said to me before the game "We can't make this the last game we play together." This is the memory that will stay with me forever."

Junior Katie Vihtelic scored 15 points for the Raiders, Fournier 13 (including three triples), senior Kate Devereux eight, freshman Samantha McComb and Gratz six apiece.

Senior Manogay Fletcher scored 14 points for the Hawks, senior Kristine Knutson 12 (four threes) and senior Amy Roble 10. The Raiders (12-9) took charge

in the first half, building a 26-14 lead at halftime. Fournier (nine points) had three triples and Devereux two in the first half.

North shot 60 percent in the first quarter and 47 for the half, Harrison 12.6 and 17 percent.

Despite being pressed the entire game and having 28 turnovers, the Raiders held their own in the first half. But the pressure affected them in the third quarter when they made 11 turnovers and the Hawks rallied to tie the score at 30-30.

Knutson started the quarter with two threes, Fletcher scored the next seven and Kerstin Andrzewski's free throws with 37 seconds left capped a run of 10 unanswered points that tied it for Harrison (16-6).

"It was a little shaky there, but we had to win it; we weren't going to back down," Vihtelic said. "We brought it back and we won it."

"We lost to them so many times; this was the time. All we wanted this year was to beat Harrison — and we did it. I can't describe the feeling right now." The Raiders capitalized at the

free-throw line in the fourth quarter, sinking their first nine and making 16 of 20.

Devereux had North's only field goal in the last quarter, banking a shot off the glass to put the Raiders ahead to stay with 1:40 remaining, 43-41.

McComb, who left the game with three minutes left after hurting an ankle, returned to nail the clinching free throws with 11 seconds on the clock.

Vihtelic, who was 8-of-8 at the line in the fourth quarter, sank two more free throws and Fournier one to finish the win.

The Raiders made 12 of 33 field goals for 36 percent, the Hawks 13 of 56 for 23 percent. North was 19-of-26 at the line, Harrison 8-of-12.

"We have a strong senior group this year, and I had faith in them all year long," North coach Linda Perkins said. "And this is a sweet, sweet victory for the seniors. It's wonderful that we can come back here Friday night and play for the district championship."

W. BLOOMFIELD 83, FARMINGTON 32: Kim Kipela scored 13 points and Crystal Andrews 12 for the Lakers, who led 31-6 at halftime Wednesday. Beth Jager scored six points and Jamie Jaschki four for Farmington (10-21).

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