

Eagles fail to stop champion Warriors

By Bill Palmer
Staff Writer

It was a Warriors' surprise. The Eagles' defense was supposed to be the best in the state. But on Thursday night, the Warriors' offense was too good for them. The Warriors defeated the Eagles 74-53 in the first round of the Class A district championship game.

The Warriors' offense was led by senior guard C.J. Grantham, who scored 36 points. Grantham was named the Most Valuable Player of the game. He was also named the Most Valuable Player of the district tournament.

The Eagles' defense was led by senior forward Brandon Edwards, who scored 19 points. Edwards was named the Most Valuable Player of the game. He was also named the Most Valuable Player of the district tournament.

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Lathrup avenges loss to Brother Rice

By MARTY BUDNER
Staff Writer

Mike Avery spent most of Thursday evening watching basketball on television. But it wasn't the NCAA tournament. It was a tape of last year's disappointing loss to Birmingham Brother Rice in the district championship game.

The Southfield-Lathrup coach was determined not to have a repeat when the Warriors defeated the Chargers in a Class A district final. The homework definitely paid off.

Lathrup rolled to its fourth district title in the last six years — but first under Avery — with a 67-41 triumph over Brother Rice Friday at Lathrup High School.

The Chargers (20-3) advance to the regional tournament hosted by Birmingham Groves and will play a first-round game 7:45 p.m. Tuesday against North Farmington (18-4).

Friday's triumph also capped a perfect home season in which the Chargers did not lose on their home court.

"We felt pretty confident; we did our homework on Brother Rice," said Avery, whose only other district championship was a few years ago while he was the Ann Arbor Huron girls coach.

"Our guys were very hungry, because this same Brother Rice team upset us last year. The focus was on my five seniors. I told them to bring us a championship home, and they did."

BASKETBALL

"They stuck to our game plan; the intensity was at the highest level," he said. "It hurt us last year to sit down and watch another team in our gym collect the trophy. We were undefeated all season at home, and it was a good way for my seniors to go out by winning the championship in their last home game."

That last home game turned into a surprisingly lopsided affair.

Rice entered the district final on a three-game winning streak, and the young Warriors seemed to come of age in the recent Catholic League championship, finishing as the runner-up to Orchard Lake St. Mary's.

But Lathrup's superior athleticism and senior expertise were too much for Rice to overcome. The Warriors couldn't stop the Chargers from slashing through the paint for easy baskets and were confounded by Lathrup's hounding man-to-man defense.

"They just outplayed us. They're a senior team, and they're stronger and quicker and more combative," said Rice coach Bill Norton, who started four underclassmen. "They just took our offense away. It was like they had us very well scouted."

Rice (10-13) managed to stay with Lathrup through the first quarter and half of the second. Lathrup forward Brandon

Edwards gave his team a 19-14 lead when he ended the first quarter with a thunderous one-handed slam dunk.

The Chargers started the second with an 8-2 blitz for a 27-16 lead, but the Warriors charged right back with 10 straight points that included a pair of long-distance treys by junior guard Kyle Lawrence.

The Chargers scored 11 of the next 14 points to take a 38-29 halftime lead. Lathrup continued that dominance by outscoring Rice 12-2 in the third quarter to complete a 23-5 onslaught over an 11-minute span that put the game out of reach.

"We talked at halftime that Brother Rice was a very strong third-quarter team," Avery said. "We've been watching the newspapers and read they were winning these games like that in the Catholic League championships. We talked at halftime about winning the third quarter."

"You can not win championships without playing strong defense. These guys came out very defensive-minded in the third quarter, and I think that broke the game open for us."

Brandon Edwards scored a game-high 20 points. Lightning-quick guard Antoine Johnson finished with 17 points, and guard Solomon Edwards had 13.

Rice's leading scorer was sophomore center Chris Agawa with 11 points. Lawrence and junior forward Ralph Sylvester

notted six points each.

Avery is hoping the Chargers can continue their strong play at the regional.

"Last year's team was still pretty much learning the system," Avery said. "These seniors have been with me three years, some four. They know how I like things done on and off the floor."

"We talked at the beginning of the season about winning one championship at a time. The first was our league championship, and we accomplished our second goal by winning the district. Now we're going to really concentrate for the regional final."

OLSH 78, RENAISSANCE 69: Detroit Renaissance stayed close to No. 2-ranked Orchard Lake St. Mary's for much of Friday's Class B district championship game at Bloomfield Hills Andover.

St. Mary's held a comfortable 40-29 lead at halftime but wasn't ready claim victory yet.

The Eagles (19-4) pulled away in the second half and led by as many as 23 points in the fourth quarter en route to a 78-59 victory.

Junior forward Jermine Gonzales led the Eagles with 20 points. Sophomore center Charles Davis had 18 points and 12 rebounds. Junior guard Maurice Swagert added 13 points.

Junior center Ricky Paulding led the Phoenix (14-9) with 23 points, including six three-pointers.

The district title is the 34th in St. Mary's history. The Eagles meet Warren Fitzgerald (19-3) in a regional game 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Warren Woods-Tower.

Belleville eliminates Glenn

Belleville's 5-foot-9 senior guard C.J. Grantham certainly has the bloodlines to be a good basketball player.

His dad, Cornell, played for Belleville, along with his uncle Reggie. His grandfather George Thompson was the longtime coach at Inkster High. A cousin, Robert Griffin, is a star at a junior college in Iowa.

And following a spectacular 19-point first-quarter effort en route to a game-high 36 points, Grantham had district championship opponent Westland John Glenn begging for a transfusion.

Grantham and the host Tigers (15-7) moved into the regional at Ypsilanti with a convincing 75-63 win Friday over the Rockets. Glenn (12-9) couldn't overcome

30-16 first-period deficit and Grantham's 8-for-10 shooting.

To start the game, Belleville hit its first seven shots, capped by a three-point square off the backboard by Kevin Harrison with 4:22 left in the quarter to give the Tigers a 17-8 lead.

Grantham scored in every conceivable way. He nailed three triples and added a dunk.

"The scenery, the environment just got me pumped up," Grantham said. "Once I got it going, whatever I was going to do I felt it would be positive."

Despite being smaller on the front-line, Belleville withstood Glenn's inside punch of 6-4 senior Ty Haygood, who finished with 14 points, and 6-3 junior Ben Harris, who added 12.

THE WEEK AHEAD

CLASS A
Tuesday, March 16: Westland John Glenn vs. Inkster High School, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, March 17: Inkster High School vs. Westland John Glenn, 7 p.m.
Thursday, March 18: Westland John Glenn vs. Inkster High School, 7 p.m.
Friday, March 19: Inkster High School vs. Westland John Glenn, 7 p.m.

CLASS B
Tuesday, March 16: Orchard Lake St. Mary's vs. Renaissance, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, March 17: Renaissance vs. Orchard Lake St. Mary's, 7 p.m.
Thursday, March 18: Orchard Lake St. Mary's vs. Renaissance, 7 p.m.
Friday, March 19: Renaissance vs. Orchard Lake St. Mary's, 7 p.m.

CLASS C
Tuesday, March 16: Detroit Renaissance vs. Detroit Renaissance, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, March 17: Detroit Renaissance vs. Detroit Renaissance, 7 p.m.
Thursday, March 18: Detroit Renaissance vs. Detroit Renaissance, 7 p.m.
Friday, March 19: Detroit Renaissance vs. Detroit Renaissance, 7 p.m.

CLASS D
Tuesday, March 16: Detroit Renaissance vs. Detroit Renaissance, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, March 17: Detroit Renaissance vs. Detroit Renaissance, 7 p.m.
Thursday, March 18: Detroit Renaissance vs. Detroit Renaissance, 7 p.m.
Friday, March 19: Detroit Renaissance vs. Detroit Renaissance, 7 p.m.

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