

It's all over

Rocks last area team to exit tournament

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In its four previous state tournament games, Plymouth Salem had managed to assert itself well enough to take control of the game by halftime. Against Pontiac Northern Tuesday, that didn't happen.

The end result was a 70-64 loss to the Huskies in a Class A quarterfinal played at University of Detroit Mercy's Calihan Hall. The Rocks finish at 20-5; Northern, now 18-7, advances to Friday's Class A semifinals in East Lansing against the Saginaw Arthur Hill-Muskegon winner.

"We had told them about (Northern's) quickness and shot-blocking, but early in the game they didn't react too well," said Salem coach Bob Brodie. "And I don't think we shot the ball particularly well."

Both were key factors in the first-half hole the Rocks dug for themselves, one they kept trying to claw themselves out of. They almost made it in the second half, but fell short.

After trailing by as many as 13, Salem was within eight in the closing seconds of the opening half and had the ball. But an errant pass resulted in a breakaway layup by Northern's Nucleus Smith and a foul against Salem's Tony Jancovski — his third of the game. Smith converted the free throw, and the Rocks trailed 40-29 at the break.

BASKETBALL

After a third-quarter standstill, with neither team able to sustain a scoring run, the Rocks broke through in the fourth as the Huskies backed off.

"I told our kids we still wanted to be aggressive," said Northern coach Robert Rogers. "But some kids are hard-headed. We needed to be more obedient and stick to the game plan."

"We got a little careless. But we were glad to have that cushion."

Most of their 12-point cushion melted away as Salem mounted an 11-2 surge in the first 4 1/2 minutes of the period. Mike Koruhua, who came off the bench and spent a lot of time filling in for Jancovski at center, had seven of the 11 points.

But that was as close as Salem could come. Smith responded with a lightning charge down the court, resulting in a layup; the Huskies added another six consecutive points, their 8-0 run making it 62-51 with two minutes left.

Three-straight three-pointers by Adam Wilson — his first, and only, points of the game — helped the Rocks get to within four (68-64) in the closing seconds, but the deficit proved too big, their shooting too erratic, and ultimately the opposition too good.

Rob Jones was the offensive star for a Salem team that struggled

against the shot-awarding Huskies. Jones, who had three of his four first-quarter shots blocked, hung in there to score 20 points; Korduba finished with 16 and Aaron Rypkowski had 11. Wilson scored nine and Jancovski had seven.

Smith, a 6-foot-3 senior guard who's being recruited by Toledo, Dayton, Villanova and Canisius, led all scorers with 22 points — 16 coming in the first half. Willie Jones added 13, Ricky Morgan had 12, Lester Abrams scored 10 and Norbert Mosley totaled nine.

"It was a combination of a lot of little things," said Brodie. "We gave up too many offensive rebounds and too many fast-break baskets."

Both enabled the Huskies to establish themselves in the first half. The Rocks led just once in the game — at 4-2. And that didn't last long; Northern outscored them 17-3 over the next six minutes and never again trailed.

The Huskies were a blistering 8-of-10 from the floor in the first quarter (80 percent) and 13-of-19 for the half (68.4 percent). Salem managed to make just 5-of-16 first-quarter floor shots (31 percent) and 13-of-31 for the half (42 percent).

For the game, the Rocks were 24-of-63 (38 percent); Northern was 22-of-39 (56.4 percent).

Northern was also near-perfect from the stripe in the first half, making 12-of-13 (92 percent); the Huskies were 24-of-30 for the

game (80 percent). The Rocks were 1-of-4 in the first half (25 percent) and 11-of-17 for the game (65 percent).

Northern's fast start allowed them to lead 21-11 after one quarter, with Smith accounting for 11 first-quarter points.

"They were getting good shots," said Brodie. "Their dog-gone penetration, they were getting by us."

Said Rogers: "Our offense feeds off our defense. When we get turnovers, we're looking to run and score."

"We've been shooting around 62 to 64 percent lately. We've shot the ball pretty well all year. That's because of good ball movement and because we have guys who can attack."

Jones helped Salem make it a single-digit deficit with 10 second-quarter points, but the late turnover led to Smith's quick basket and an 11-point halftime lead for the Huskies.

The Rocks' best chance at a turnaround came in the opening moments of the second half, when Northern missed its first seven shots (three of them dunk attempts). But Salem managed just two baskets in the first three minutes of the half, suffering two turnovers.

"The kids never gave up," concluded Brodie. "We had a good season."

A few breaks, a few makes, and it might have been even better, it's true. But it was still a darn good one.



Playoff action: Salem's Aaron Rypkowski tries for two of his 11 points in a state quarterfinal game Tuesday.

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goals and 15 assists. "Emilie is a very skilled player and is going to be very valuable for us," Neff said. "However, she cannot do it alone."

"The whole offense is aimed at how we attack in a variety of ways, because we cannot just depend on Emilie to carry us all season long. It has to be a team effort."

Villemonte, who has 39 goals and 22 assists in three varsity seasons, isn't the only player who can score for Farmington.

The Falcons also return senior

forward Jamie Jakacki, their second-leading scorer last season with 15 goals and eight assists.

Sophomore forward Beth Kolacki has a season of varsity soccer behind her, contributing two goals and three assists last season, and junior forward Melissa Nino was among the leading scorers on the JV.

"Our method of play is different from last year and, because of that, the forwards have different roles than in the past," Neff said, adding he has changed the offense. "There's the potential for

them to have large numbers, but there's also the potential for them to have a lot of assists, also."

The strength of the team could be its midfield, that despite the loss of second-team all-star Angela DeDomenico, who is on the soccer and ski teams at Western Michigan University.

The Falcons have plenty of players ready to pick up the slack, according to Neff. They are sophomores Lorienne DeDomenico and Beth Leffingwell, senior Brynn Maki and

junior Kara Tweadey. All are varsity veterans. Junior Melissa Smart and freshman Stephanie Arnold will lend support in the midfield.

"We have a very experienced midfield," Neff said. "We're trying to give a lot of options to the attack. I want all of them to be threats. We are absolutely not going to be a one-person attack, because that just won't work."

The Falcons have a first-rate goalkeeper in junior Dana Wantin, who played superbly in the district final against Groves. Wantin became the starter last season when Kate Adams was injured and played in 12 1/2 games for a total of 1,002 minutes. She had 3.7 shutouts and allowed 1.4 goals per game.

"Dana stepped up and we didn't lose a step because of how well she filled in, and she took us all the way to that very dramatic game at Groves," Neff said. "It was quite a season, and Dana was important to that. We need her to be as good or better this year."

Farmington returns senior

Claire Lockhart at sweeper and senior Olivia Nellums at outside defender.

Freshmen Julie Gottlicher, who played for the under-14 Michigan Hawks, and Shanna Barkume are expected to start at outside defender and stopper, respectively.

Sophomore Catherine Breuille and senior Michelle Martin can play a marking back position or stopper.

"We started with a lot of confidence (defensively) and decided after the scrimmage (last week at South Lyon) we had a lot of work to do," Neff said.

"The other thing is we had try-outs Monday and, by the time we had cuts and a little practice, it was time to play the scrimmage. Some things that needed to be done we didn't have done."

"Hopefully, it will be better this weekend and even better by the first game."

The Falcons will attend a mega scrimmage Saturday at the Light Guard Armory on Eight Mile Road between Ryan and Mound roads. Farmington

will play Pinckney, East Kentwood and Farmington Hills Mercy.

Following the Easter break, the Falcons play at Farmington Harrison on Monday, April 12.

Farmington, which was 5-5-2 in the Western Lakes Activities Association, will toughen up against WLAAC competition in hopes of doing well in the state tournament.

But Neff points out perennial power Bishop Foley has moved up to Division II this year and Groves didn't lose anyone to graduation.

"Playing in the toughest league in the state, against the very top teams in Division I, we can't say, 'Yeah, we're going to go out and blow away (Plymouth) Canton.' Yet, the score with Canton last year was 4-2. (Livonia) Stevenson and Canton were the only teams to beat us by more than one goal."

"We lost seven seniors, too. We have good returners, and we're trying to put together the best season we can. We're hopeful we can do better than last year."

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Hawks from page C1

"I had a good crew of freshman last year. She was one of them, obviously," he said.

The others were defender Emily Houser, her midfielder twin sister Abbey and midfielder Lauren Liebowitz.

Harrison also got a transfer from Farmington Hills Mercy sophomore Abby Adams. She'll play midfield and will get significant minutes, whether she starts or not.

Another key team member is midfielder Patty Moloney. The team's goalkeeper is junior Melina Morel, a second-year starter.

"She was much improved during the indoor season," Breuhan said. "Playing indoors really

improved her skills a lot." Senior striker Oksana Petrova and senior defender Sarah Greene will also play key roles.

Juniors Angie Graves and Amber Kocis will play midfield. Kocis joined the varsity midway through last season after injuries took a toll on Breuhan's 17-player squad.

Joining Adams as newcomers are sophomore midfielder Marina DeMeyer, sophomore midfielder Taylor Goad, sophomore forward Arly Golombek, junior defender Katherine Leik and freshman forward Gail Pupillo.

Harrison opens its season at 5:30 p.m. Monday, April 12, when it hosts Farmington.

Playing in the WLAAC isn't good for your record, considering three or four teams are capable of winning a regional or more.

"We take the approach we're going to test ourselves," Breuhan said. "Hopefully, we'll play a decent game to the best of our abilities."

"If we do that, we feel we're successful whether we win or lose. Yet, we try to win every game we play."

Realistic against two-time defending state champion Livonia Stevenson isn't the same as realistic against most schools outside the WLAAC.

"We try to set realistic goals for each team that we play," Breuhan said. "Realistic for one team isn't the same as for another."

"We're trying to keep up. Everybody gets better and better."

Including, Breuhan hopes, his Harrison Hawks.

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City Clerk

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