

Raiders defeat Marlins, will see Lakers again in final

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Samantha McComb doesn't lack confidence in her basketball game, and that's why North Farmington will play for a girls district tournament championship again Friday.

The sophomore guard was not discouraged by a poor first half Wednesday and came back to lead the Raiders to a 46-43 win over Farmington Hills Mercy.

North (9-12) will play West Bloomfield in the final game of the Class A district at Bloomfield Hills Lahser for the second year in a row. Tipoff is at 7 p.m. West Bloomfield (18-4) defeated Farmington Harrison in the first game of a doubleheader, 52-42.

McComb scored 21 of her game-high 28 points in the second half and all 14 of North's fourth-quarter points, which included 7-of-7 shooting at the free-throw line.

"Basically, she went wherever she wanted to go on the floor," Mercy coach Katie Vokal said. "We knew she was going to handle the ball every possession. We did as good a job as we could, but she picked up her game."

"After missing her first 10 shots

BASKETBALL

of the game and going 2-of-13 in the first half, McComb made six of nine second-half shots and finished the night shooting 36-4.

"I was off in the first half, but my teammates stepped up," McComb said. "It just changed in the second half and the shots started going in, and (senior) Katie (Vihitelic) kept playing hard through the whole game."

Vihitelic supported McComb's effort with 16 points, including nine in the third quarter to keep North in pursuit of Mercy, which led 21-16 at halftime.

Senior Jessie Brennan led Mercy (10-11) with 13 points. Junior Jackie Connolly made four triples for 12 points, and junior Susie Roble added nine.

"I used to go to Mercy my freshman year, and I'd been waiting for this game all year," Vihitelic said. "Jessie and I are good friends, and I knew it was either going to be her last game or mine. I wanted to beat them so badly."

Vihitelic scored four baskets on low-post moves to keep North within a point, 33-32, in the

third quarter. But Brennan converted a steal and Connolly made her fourth triple for a six-point Mercy lead.

McComb scored the first 10 points of the fourth quarter to put the Raiders ahead to stay, 42-38. Mercy was 1-of-15 from the floor in the last period and missed an open layup when it was down 44-41. McComb rejected a putback attempt, rebounded a missed Mercy three and made two free throws with 13.5 seconds left for a 46-41 score.

North lost to West Bloomfield in last year's district final, 44-26.

"We know what we're getting into," Vihitelic said. "If we play like we did in the second half tonight and have that much intensity, it will be a pretty good game."

"The last time we played it was a pretty good first half and fatigue set in," McComb said. "We have to make them play our game. They like a fast, running game. We have to slow it down and keep it at our pace."

West Bloomfield senior center Kim Kilpela scored 27 points in the win over Harrison. Heather Pedersen and Lisa Copeland added 11 points apiece. Cassie

Jemison scored nine points, Ali Ault eight and Emily Jackson seven for the Hawks (14-7).

"Kilpela was unbelievable," Harrison coach Pete Mantyla said. "She scored in every imaginable way inside. When we fronted her, they lobbed it over the top. When we played behind her, she sealed and buried us back to the basket. A couple times she put the ball on the floor and split people in traffic."

Harrison trailed 32-22 at half-time and the deficit grew to 44-

24 late in the third quarter. But the Hawks made a run and narrowed the gap to 46-34 early in the final period.

Kelly Taylor's basket would have cut it to 10, but she was called for charging. On the next possession, Copeland made a three-point play and soon the game got away from Harrison.

"We think we're getting a three-point play and they get one," Mantyla said. "I thought that was the swing point right there, because we weren't out of

it. We had some momentum going and we were cutting the deficit down. When you're a pressing team, 10 points is really not a lot."

MERCY 33, LAHSER 43: Brennan scored 21 points Monday to lead the Marlins to a first-round victory over tournament host Lahser. Roble added 12 and Carrie Blankewicz 11. Mercy outscored Lahser 12-4 in the last quarter. The Marlins led 27-25 at halftime and 43-37 after three quarters.

W. BLOOMFIELD 64, FARMINGTON 28: Jen Kustensen and Copeland led the Lakers with 10 points apiece Monday. Megan O'Reilly scored 10 points for the Falcons (1-20).

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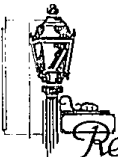
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