

Raiders

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"But we rebounded well and handled their press with our quickness. I think our guys stepped up to the challenge and played well."

North (11-11) starting making threes in the second half. Jason Neal, who led the Raiders with 17 points, had four.

Consecutive threes by Brian Johns, Marcus McComb and Neal to start the third quarter quickly pulled North within four points, 29-25.

It was a ball game again when Neal converted a three-point play and Mike Leach made a layup to put the Raiders within two, 32-30.

"In the first half, we turned the ball over too much and were a little scared," North coach Tom Negoshian said. "At halftime we said, 'Hey, quit turning the ball over, play our game and we'll be fine.'"

"We didn't turn it over as much in the second half and took good shots. But we had two possessions when we were down one and didn't score."

The Lakers had a 7-0 run for a 39-30 lead, but the Raiders rallied again to cut it to 43-39 at the end of the third quarter.

Another triple by Neal made it

43-42 early in the fourth, but North was 5-of-16 from the floor and 3-of-7 at the line in the last period.

Conversely, West Bloomfield sank nine of 12 free throws down the stretch, including seven of eight by Woodruff, who was 8-of-11 overall.

Earle Higgins Jr. contributed nine points for the Raiders—all in the second half. McComb, Leach and Johns added seven apiece.

The Lakers played a tight, 2-3 zone that virtually closed the middle to the Raiders. West Bloomfield's strategy was to take that away and force North to shoot from outside.

"We wanted to make them shoot it," Moore said. "Get up on them, don't give them too much room and always have someone on the ball."

"I think we took Leach's game away. He's their leading scorer and he had one field goal and five free throws. I think we forced them entirely to the perimeter."

"I think they stopped looking to him. It was the same thing when we played Harrison. We made an effort to take the inside game away, and later they

stopped looking for it."

Despite the loss, Negoshian was happy with the effort by his team.

"We have a great group of seniors with an unbelievable work ethic," he said. "They don't have a lot of talent, just a lot of heart and they battle every game."

"We talked all season about playing hard, competing and doing the best we can. I think North Farmington can be very proud of the way they represented the school and community."

North made 17 of 49 field goals and was 6-of-22 from three-point range. West Bloomfield made three of nine triple tries. The Lakers were 15-of-27 at the line and the Raiders 11-of-18.

"We had a great effort for four quarters and gave 100 percent," Moore said. "We didn't let down at any time."

"Defense won it for us. I don't think we could have played it any better than we did."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL HENSLER

Time to talk:
North coach Tom Negoshian does some bench coaching Friday in the district final at West Bloomfield.

Novi quenches drought, wins district against Stevenson

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BOYS HOOP

Two schools starving for a district boys basketball championship fought down to the wire Friday night at Livonia Stevenson.

And Novi quenched a 23-year drought with a 52-49 Class A win over the host Spartans, capturing its first district title since 1978 when the Wildcats were a Class B school.

Stevenson, gunning for its first post-season crown since 1990, bowed out at 14-9 overall.

Novi, 15-8, moves into the regional semifinals to meet 11-11 Detroit Mumford, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at Northville High School.

"It feels awesome," said Novi ninth-year coach Pat Schluter said, whose Wildcats lost 55-51 Dec. 18 on Stevenson's home

floor. "Our first goal was to be the win the KVC (Kensington Valley Conference), which we fell short. But our second goal was to win the district and that takes care of that."

"Stevenson played with a lot of heart. It was a great win for us because we kept our composure."

Novi, which led by as many as 12 points early in the second half, withstood numerous Stevenson comeback charges in the second half.

Stevenson senior point-guard Matt Bartnick was primarily instrumental in the comeback, scoring 15 of his game-high 20 points in the second half. He hit of his four 3-pointers in the final period.

"Number 3 (Bartnick) hit some big shots, he kept them in the

game," Schluter said. "We were up by eight (24-16) at halftime, but we knew they would come out and put more pressure on us. We didn't take care of the ball the second half, but we hung in there."

Stevenson outscored Novi 20-16 in the third period as Bartnick began to heat up, scoring three field goals in a span of just 47 seconds.

The Spartans pulled to within two on a Bartnick triple with 6:08 remaining, 44-42. But Novi came back with five straight points to go back up by seven, 49-42 on a free throw 4:34 remaining by junior guard Matt Emmenecker, who led the Wildcats with 16 points.

A layup by 6-5 senior Jamie Schram (14 points) seemingly had Novi in the driver's seat, 52-47, with just 55 seconds to play.

But a Brady Crosby steal and

■ 'It was a great win for us because we kept our composure.'

Pat Schluter
—Novi coach

feed to Nick Ehlenst inside with 24 seconds to play cut the deficit to three.

Novi, ahead 52-49, then turned the ball over with 16 seconds left.

The Spartans had two cracks at scoring the game-tying three-pointer, including a good look off an inbound pass to the top of the key to 6-5 junior Brandon Chitwood (nine points).

But the shot bounced off the side of the rim as time expired.

"We subbed Brandon in and ran a flair out on top because

he's bigger than anyone," Stevenson second-year coach Bill Dyer said. "It just missed. It was a good look."

Novi, meanwhile, had one foul to give on the final play as Schluter burned his final timeout.

"I told them don't give up the 'three,'" the Novi coach said. "When he (Chitwood) shot it I thought it was in."

Stevenson's downfall may have come in the opening half as the Spartans made just 7 of 25 shots from the floor. In the second half

Stevenson

"We didn't have a lot of energy for some reason the first half," Dyer said. "After playing two tough games already this week, maybe that was the reason. In the second half we had to press and play up on them more. It just didn't work out in our favor."

This season, Stevenson improved seven games from a year ago (7-14).

"I hope they appreciate what they accomplished," Dyer said. "I told all the seniors that I appreciated their efforts, the way they competed every day in practice to get the program where it should be."

"Deep down I think they really competed this year, played hard, and had fun, too."

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