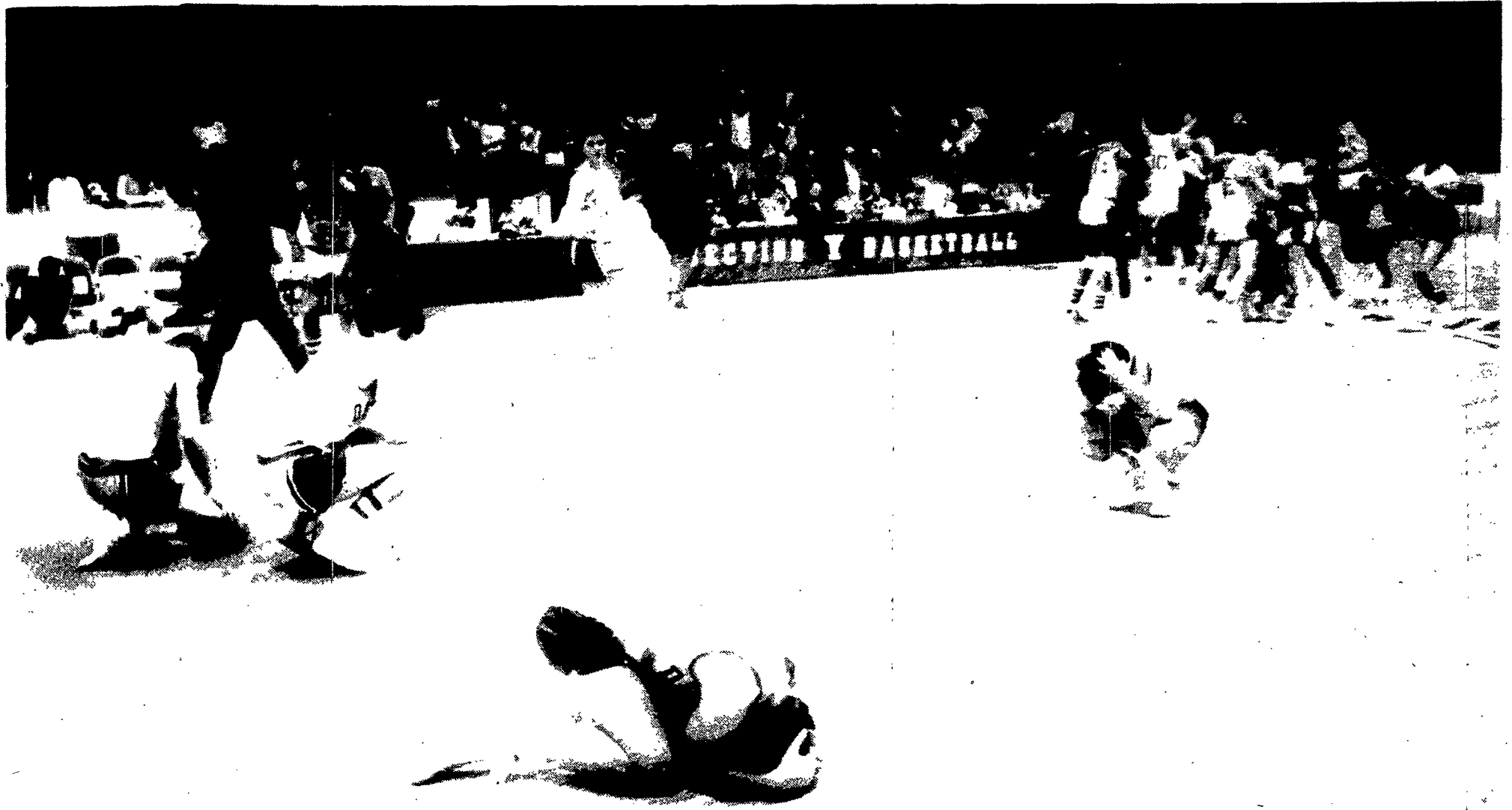


DeSales' rally falls short to H-A-C in Class C thriller



Sam DeMetro (50) and teammates break down on the floor after losing to Harley-Allendale Columbia during the Section 5 Class C championship game held at the War Memorial on Saturday. DeSales lost by one point. Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

First-half nightmare dooms Alvaro's Saints

By Richard A. Kiley
Chaotic finishes are all too familiar to the Saints of Geneva DeSales. After all, in getting to the championship game last Saturday against Harley-Allendale-Columbia, they beat three opponents by a mere nine points. One of those wins was an overtime thriller against Arkport in the semifinals.

So Tony Alvaro's squad must have felt it had the Braves right where it wanted them with :05 remaining and a chance for the last shot, trailing by one point, right?

Wrong. Mike Donahue's forced jumper with no time remaining on the clock was too strong and the Braves captured the Class C crown in a heartbreaking 49-48 loss for the Saints.

Donahue, who was Alvaro's second choice to take the shot, looked very hesitant when he threw it up. That feeling of doubt and indecision seemed to loom over DeSales the entire game.

Alvaro agreed.

"We were very tentative on offense all day," Alvaro said at the game's conclusion. "We were reluctant to go at them."

Looking back to the shot that missed, Alvaro was very matter of fact.

"We were hoping Sam DeMetro would be able to take the shot but we didn't get the ball to him," Alvaro said. "I'll have to see the game film before I can tell whether or not we had a chance to get it in to him."

The game marked the first time in eight years that a DeSales team was playing for a sectional crown in the War Memorial, and based on their first half performance, the

Saints might have wished the team bus had gotten lost on the way to the arena.

It was sloppy basketball on both sides during the first eight minutes, with the Braves holding a 12-9 lead after one quarter.

But the much larger H-A-C squad began to wear down the Saints in the second quarter as 6'5" center Rick Richardson, 6'3" Chris Wray and 6'5" freshman Drew Henderson held DeSales to one field goal and one free-throw in building a 24-12 halftime lead.

Alvaro's squad settled down in the third quarter and began to take the play away from fifth-seeded H-A-C and climbed right back in it by outscoring the Braves 18-10 in the quarter, thanks mostly to nifty shooting by Donahue and two defensive gems by Joe Giorgianni.

DeSales appeared primed for one of its patented come-from-behind wins when Donahue tied the game at 37 with more than four minutes to go. But a Richardson tip-in and two consecutive baskets by Wray gave the Braves some breathing room.

The Saints managed to pull back to within three with :06 to go and Giorgianni at the foul line. After converting one free throw to cut the margin to two, Alvaro called timeout.

He wanted Giorgianni to intentionally miss the second shot so DeSales might get a rebound and score to send the game into overtime. That plan backfired when Giorgianni's foul shot went in.

When the Braves were called for traveling on the ensuing in-bounds play, the call set up Donahue's unsuccessful shot.

IN DESALES' OVERTIME WIN over



Sam DeMetro, center, has a lot of competition for a loose ball.

Arkport, Pedro Rojas notched one free-throw and DeMetro added a lay-up with :08 left on the clock to squeak out a 48-45 win.

DeSales was plagued by five turnovers in the opening four minutes of the first quarter and was down by as many as six points, before cutting Arkport's lead to 13-10 after one.

The Saints played almost flawlessly in the second period to grab a 27-26 halftime lead.

DeSales led 37-35 after three and appeared to have things in control with three minutes left in regulation and a six-point lead. But Arkport forced the extra period when Joel Rovito converted two free throws in the final moments.

Alvaro attributed the win to Rojas' de-

fensive mastery against Arkport's scoring machine, 6-3 James Chubon, as well as his team's ability to deal with pressure down the stretch.

"Pedro did an excellent job holding him (Chubon) to nine points. He had been scoring over 20 a game," Alvaro said. "But the real key to the win was that anytime we faced adversity, our kids kept their composure."

DeMetro paced the Saints with 20 points while Brent Holdridge added 11. Rovito led Arkport with 15 points.

Both teams were strong from the foul line. DeSales hit 12-of-15 free-throws, and Arkport notched 11-of-15 from the stripe.

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