

# Another white-knuckler for Dianetti as Aquinas wins, 60-55

By Richard A. Kiley

It seems as if the Aquinas boys' varsity basketball team prefers close finishes.

That preference may age 25-year-old head coach Mike Dianetti very quickly.

The latest nail-biter involving the Little Irish happened at Marshall last Friday afternoon, when Aquinas edged its Division 2 opponent, 60-55. AQ's Mike Whitfield led all scorers with 19 points.

All kidding aside, this one could have been a little easier on the first-year coach. Dianetti's squad had a seemingly comfortable nine-point lead with less than two minutes remaining in the game, but had to hang on during the closing minutes.

With 2:04 remaining on the clock, Brian Mackey's final basket ended an 8-0 Aquinas spurt and gave the Little Irish a 58-49 lead. Marshall had pulled within two, 51-49, with three minutes left.

AQ's opponent failed to go down easy, however, as two consecutive buckets by James West — the latter coming with :22 left — pulled his team to within three, 58-55.

The Little Irish then turned the ball back over to Marshall after a five-second violation, giving their hosts yet another chance to pull even closer. But Rodney Harmon's missed jump shot was rebounded by Paul Mayer of Aquinas with :15. After the senior guard was intentionally fouled, he coolly sank two free throws to seal the victory for the Little Irish.

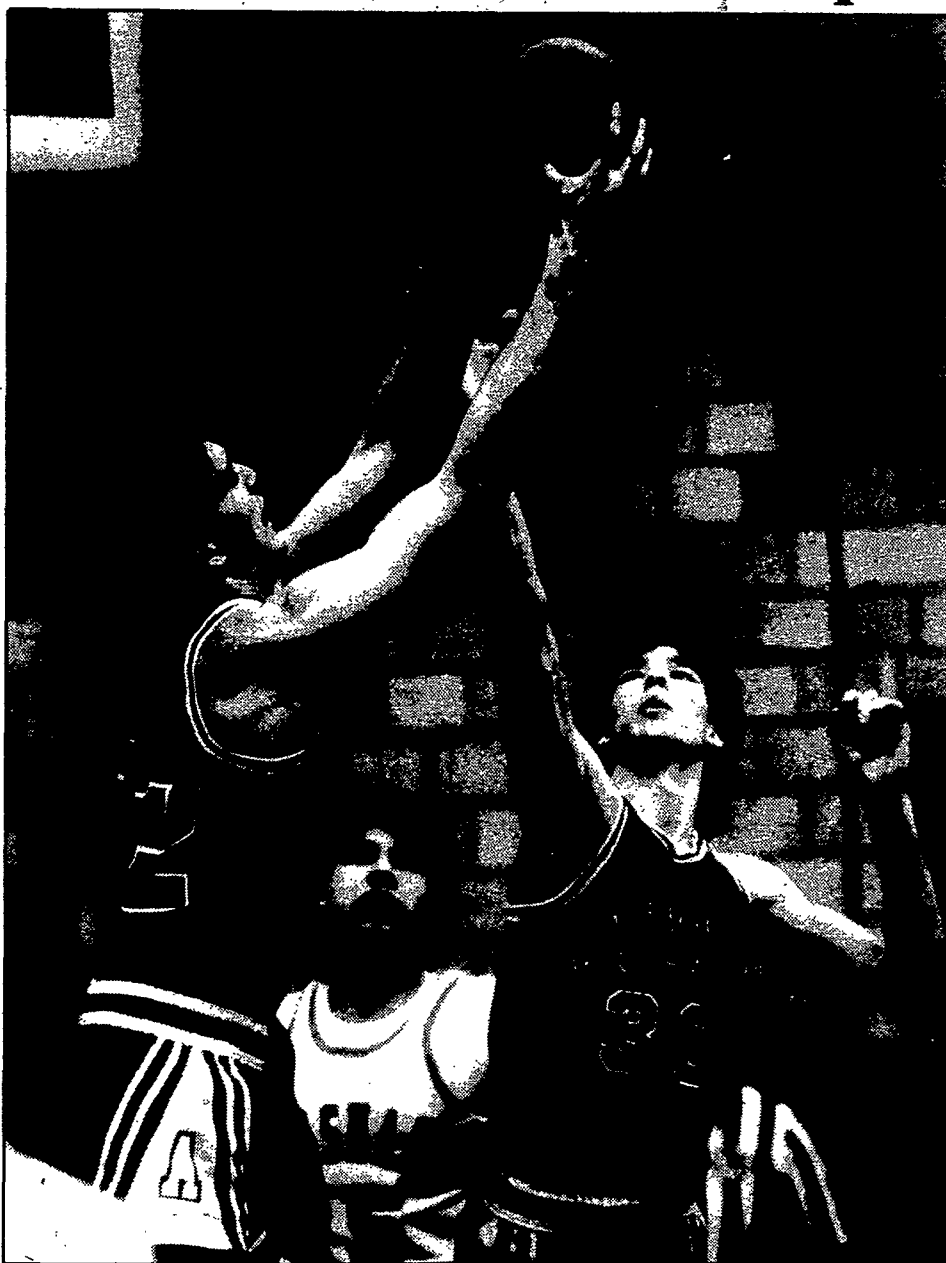
AQ's record now stands at 3-4 overall, 2-3 league.

Although the win was anything but easy, Dianetti understood its importance to a relatively inexperienced team.

"We're not a great team, no game is going to be easy," said a drained Dianetti after the game. "We're not loaded with Division 1 talent; no team is going to lie down and die for us."

Aquinas' successful transition game in the first quarter enabled the team to jump to a 20-14 lead.

That margin increased to 11 in the second period, after Sean Schiano's two free throws put his team up 33-22 with 1:57 remaining in the half. With his team at 35-24 and just



Aquinas' Brian Mackey and Jim Livecchi go up for a rebound during second quarter action against Marshall. The Little Irish prevailed in a squeaker, 60-55.

under one minute remaining in the first half, Dianetti opted for the last shot. Marshall had other ideas, however, as a steal and two subsequent foul shots by Aaron Merrill and a basket by Michael Anderson cut the margin to seven, 35-28.

"We made some mistakes near the end of the first half that really hurt us. We were hoping to go in the locker room up by 13, but instead we were only up by seven," Dianetti said.

The Little Irish lead continued to dwindle in the third quarter, with Marshall at one point climbing to within one, 39-38, after a Harmon field goal. Aquinas led just 47-44 after the third quarter.

"We didn't shoot well in the third quarter. I was disappointed with our shot selection," Dianetti said. "I try to stress the importance of shot selection to them (his players). But we made some adjustments and got it (the momentum) back. We went into the triangle offense and played more in control."

"They (Marshall) got us in their up-tempo game; I like us to run, but only when we run in control."

The Aquinas lead fluctuated between one and nine points in the final quarter; Marshall was never able to pull ahead. Dianetti credited his team's defense for its second consecutive win.

"I switched things up defensively more than I usually do," Dianetti said. "I thought Brian Mackey played very well on defense, and our two-three defense did the job."

"We played about 70 percent man (in the win) against Irondequoit, but I used more people and changed things up a bit more today."

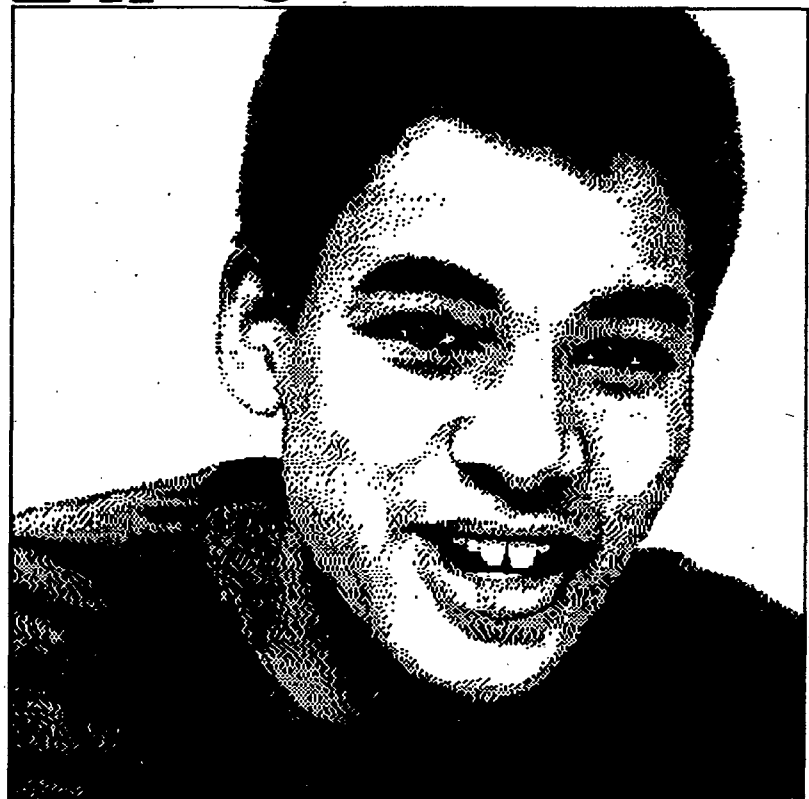
With seven games under his belt, Dianetti hopes his team will play more consistently in the coming weeks. His squad could have had several more wins if it hadn't been for some lapses against Wilson and, most recently, Hilton in the Cadets' Christmas Tournament.

But Dianetti knows that inconsistency comes with the territory, when coaching players with little game experience.

He just hopes he can enjoy more wins while he is still young.

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