

C-J Sports

Little Irish rally falls short; DeSales, ND hoop teams in semis

By Richard A. Kiley

In order to have any chance of beating No. 1-seeded Rush-Henrietta Roth on Friday, February 27, Aquinas Coach Mike Dianetti figured his team would have to keep the game's score in the 50s or 60s.

But in order for that to have happened, officials would have had to stop the Class AA quarterfinal game midway through the third quarter.

The Royals established an up-tempo game early and survived a late Little-Irish rally to win, 94-81, in the game at Pittsford Mendon High School.

Coach Jim Cox's Roth squad (20-0) was led by center Todd Lane who contributed 28 points, as well as Kevin O'Connell (19), Alan Garner (17) and Willie Watts (16).

Roth, which after this season may rename itself the Runnin' Royals (after the No. 1 college team in the country, the Runnin' Rebels of UNLV) appeared to have things well in hand from the start. The top team in Class AA jumped out to a 23-10 first-quarter advantage, and swelled the margin to 27-12 early in the second quarter.

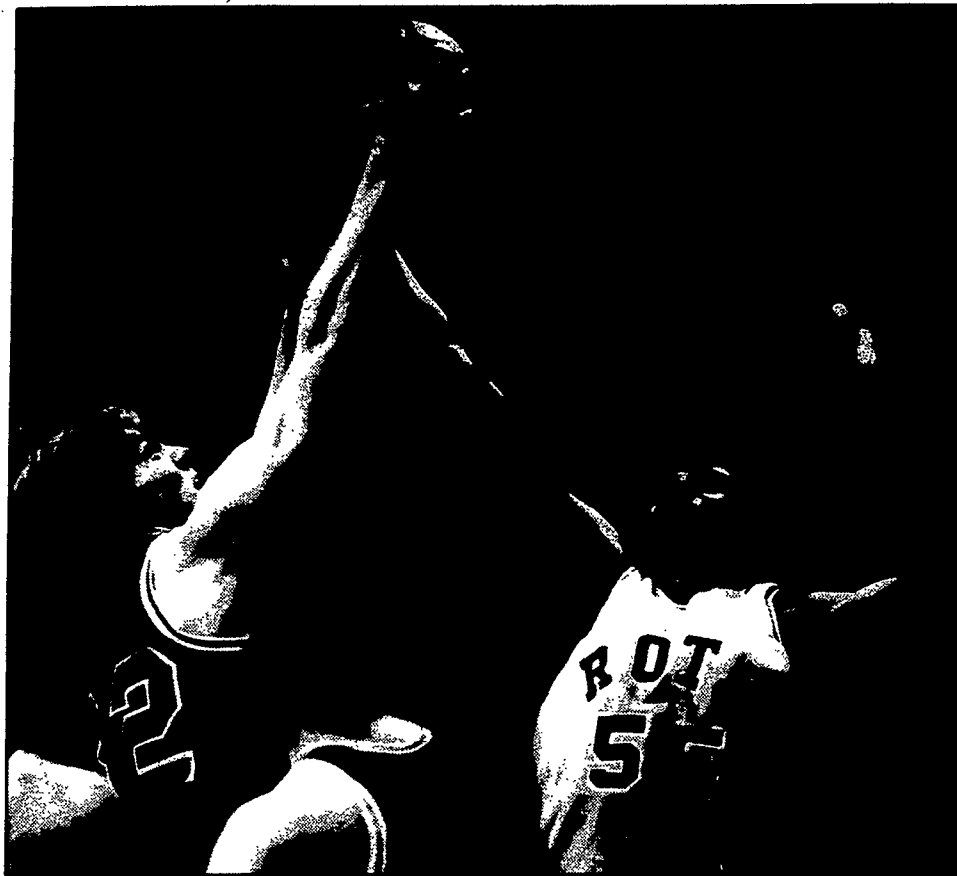
The Royals' ability to penetrate the Aquinas defensive zone and to pressure the Little Irish into making offensive mistakes gave this one all the makings of an early blowout.

But Dianetti's squad (11-9, No. 8 seed), which came into the game riding a six-game winning streak, had other ideas. Junior Mike Whitfield scored eight of his team-high 26 points in the second stanza to keep Roth from running away with the game. With the help of Jim Livecchi (who finished the contest with 20 points) and center Sean Schiano (22), the Little Irish were able to trim a 39-27 deficit to eight points at halftime.

Schiano's hook shot over Lane cut the margin to 10, and Whitfield's steal and subsequent bucket with :05 remaining in the half sent Dianetti and his team into the locker room down 39-31.

"That was a big confidence builder," Dianetti said of Whitfield's steal from Garner right before the half. "To have it (the lead) under 10, the kids really started believing in themselves."

But Roth was able to withstand the mini-rally and forced Aquinas into numerous turnovers in the third quarter, as the Little



Aquinas' Mark Chapman goes up for a rebound with Willie Watts of Roth.

Irish kept trying to run with their opponent.

Roth's 30-point third quarter — which included 11 points from Lane — seemingly ended any hopes of an AQ comeback.

An 11-2 run by the Little Irish in the early moments of the fourth quarter changed the complexion of the game completely. With 5:50 remaining, Roth looked beleaguered when Whitfield's jump-shot over Keith Jenkins cut the lead to six, 71-65. The shot sent the AQ faithful into an uproar, and undoubtedly caused them to think of the 1986 Class AAA tourney, when Aquinas upset then top-seeded East.

Once again, however, the Royals were able to weather the storm — with a little help from the officials. A key turn of events came with 5:15 remaining and the Little Irish still within six. As Lane went up through a maze

of players to attempt a dunk, he appeared to intentionally hang on the rim (a technical foul) on his way down after missing the shot. No call was made.

Roth's Watts came up with the rebound, and his subsequent layup upped the lead to eight, seeming to take the wind out of Dianetti's squad. The AQ comeback was dealt a more serious blow when Schiano was lost to fouls with 3:45 remaining. Clutch free-throw shooting by Roth closed out the win.

Dianetti was careful not to pin the loss on the officials for the critical no-call, although he said it was a crucial turn of events.

"That particular part of the game was (important); I'm not criticizing them (the officials), but that's a technical foul,"

Dianetti said. "You can do it (hang on the rim), but only if you're saving yourself (from getting hurt)."

Yet, the coach pointed out, "Todd Lane scored some points tonight; they (the officials) didn't. That's the first team that put 90 points on us. We just got into an up-tempo game with them ... and they're super at it."

"We had to play an excellent ball game (to win)," Dianetti said. "We played a good game, but not an excellent game."

In Class C, Coach Tony Alvaro's Saints of DeSales have put together two consecutive sectional wins after an up-and-down regular season. DeSales' latest win came against Avoca, 73-69.

The No. 7-seeded Saints (13-7) were scheduled to play No. 3-seeded Batavia Notre Dame at Geneseo on Wednesday night, March 4.

The winner of that semifinal game will play the winner of No. 1-seeded Cuba (20-0) and No. 5-seeded Campbell.

The Class C championship will be played at the War Memorial at 1 p.m. on Saturday, March 7.

The Notre Dame boys' and girls' basketball teams are each seeded No. 1 in Section 4 Class C, and (as of Courier-Journal press time) were just a game away from the sectional finals.

Coach Mike Johnston's Crusaders, who were runners-up in the Sullivan Trail Conference, inched closer to the Section 4 Class C final last Friday night, February 27, with a 69-56 win over No. 8-seed Lansing.

Notre Dame, which was paced by Dave Ferris' 32 points, upped a five-point lead after one quarter to nine at halftime.

The Crusaders led 55-46 going into the fourth quarter, and were able to pull away in the final eight minutes.

Coach Pat Quinn's Lady Crusaders rolled to a 53-39 over No. 8-seeded Moravia.

According to Quinn, the key to the game was a fast start by her club, which finished third in the Sullivan Trail Conference this season behind Elmira Free Academy and Southside.

Notre Dame led 17-3 after one quarter, and 31-12 at intermission, then coasted to the win.

Batavia thwarts McQuaid icemen, 8-4

4-0 first period spurs Ice Devils to victory

By Richard A. Kiley

The more than 2,500 fans on hand for the Section 5 High School Hockey League championship game between McQuaid and Batavia were treated to three games in one on Sunday, March 1.

In the first period (or game, if you will) played at the War Memorial, the Ice Devils soared out to a 4-0 lead on the Knights, and seemed as if they could do nothing wrong.

The undaunted Knights then carried the action over the next period and a half, and, after falling behind by as much as 6-0, climbed to within 6-4 with more than 10 minutes of hockey remaining.

Batavia was able to finish the game strong, however, winning its first Section 5 hockey championship ever, 8-4. McQuaid had won the title during four of the past nine years.

The game's turning point came at the 6:19 mark of the third period, when McQuaid was awarded a penalty shot and was unable to capitalize.

The Knights had come back from six goals down and appeared to have the Ice Devils' number, after they trimmed the lead to 6-4. Adding to the importance of the free shot was the fact that it came while the Knights were on the power play. Coach Al Vyverberg's squad had already iced three goals while a man up.

McQuaid was swarming all over the goal and netminder Daryle Luplow, when defenseman Scott Schrader gathered in a loose puck in the crease, an infraction that calls for an automatic penalty shot.

Chip Golembeski, McQuaid's leading scorer with 29 goals and 22 assists this season, took the shot. The only obstacle that stood in his

way was Luplow, who, after looking extremely sharp earlier in the game, had allowed four of the last six shots to get by him.

The McQuaid forward elected not to do anything fancy against the Batavia goalie, trying to beat him to his stick side from about 12 feet out with a wrist shot. But the Monroe County League's leading netminder was up to the task, and he whisked the shot away with his right pad.

Big save, big momentum swing. The Ice Devils carried the play from there on in to capture the title.

"Obviously that was a big play," said Vyverberg after the loss. "It would have been 6-5, and the way we were playing, it (the game's outcome) might have been different."

Early on, there was no indication that the penalty shot would have any real importance to the game.

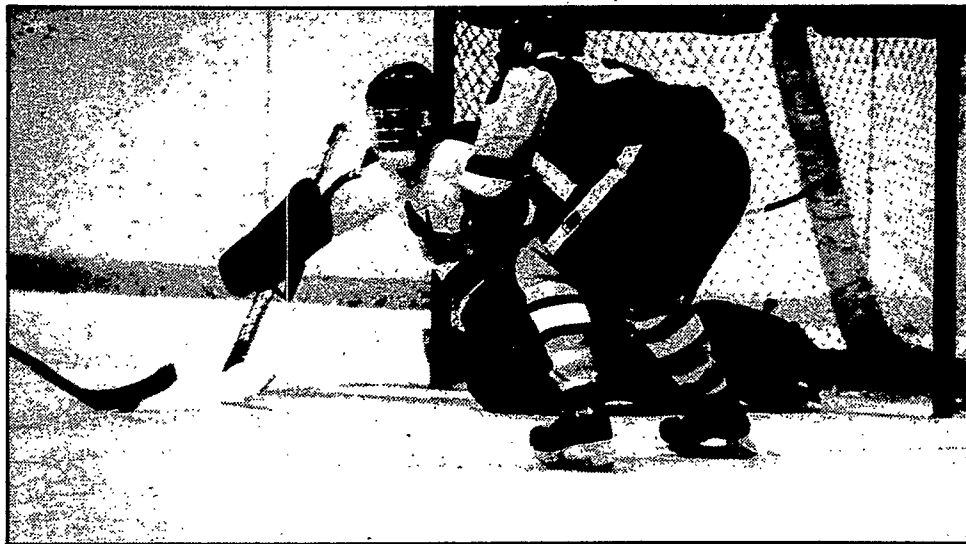
Batavia outplayed McQuaid in the first period, jumping out to a 4-0 lead after the first 15 minutes.

Teal Fowler, the leading scorer in the Monroe County League with 32 goals and 30 assists, led the onslaught in the opening period. Fowler, who was named the game's Most Valuable Player, finished the game with four goals and an assist.

His lone assist came on the first goal of the game at 8:52 of the opening period. Fowler was just trying to keep the puck in the zone when his shot along the boards came right out front to teammate Steve Lakins. Lakins then shot the puck by a surprised Matt Rizzo to make the score 1-0.

Fowler notched his first goal of the game with 5:50 left, when he beat Rizzo to the upper-left hand side of the net on a breakaway.

The Ice Devils scored twice in the last 1:11 in the first period to bust the game wide open. Dave Cray's slap shot in front of the goal af-



McQuaid's Pat Downing awaits a teammate's shot just moments before the Knights' first goal.

ter an errant clear made the score 3-0, and was followed by another goal by Brian Wormley with :35 remaining.

"We didn't play them quite tight enough in the first period," said Vyverberg, whose team was to play last year's state runner-up, Skaneateles, on Wednesday night in Geneseo. "We just gave their forwards too much room to work."

After Batavia upped the lead to 6-0, the Knights began to outscore and out hustle the Ice Devils.

McQuaid's Pat Downing put his team on the board with 3:26 left, when he converted Charlie Fitzsimmon's rebound. Just 21 seconds later, Fitzsimmon's scored after a scramble in front to make it 6-2 after two periods.

McQuaid continued to outplay Batavia in the early moments of the final period, scoring two goals in the first three and a half minutes. Once again, it was the teamwork of

Downing and Fitzsimmons, who beat Luplow on a rebound to make it 6-3 with just 1:14 gone. Downing scored McQuaid's fourth goal at the 3:21 mark to make it 6-4.

After Golembeski's failed penalty shot, Joe Fiannaca and Fowler closed out the scoring for Batavia.

Vyverberg said it was yet another time this season that his never-say-die club impressed him with its persistence.

"My kids didn't want to lose; they never gave up," said Vyverberg, who added that several of McQuaid's wins were on pure emotion this season. "This is the most enthusiastic group I've had in my three years here."

The 1972 graduate of Pittsford High School hopes that emotion will be there for the game against Skaneateles, a perennial powerhouse from Section 3.