

# C-J Sports

## McQuaid keeps composure, wins title; Batavia ND ousts DeSales

### Marchese's Knights (21-1) rally from early deficit to beat Fairport, 69-64

By Richard A. Kiley

The blackboard used by McQuaid basketball Coach Joe Marchese proved more like a crystal ball than just a surface to write on, before the Section 5 Class AAA championship game last Saturday night, March 7.

The first-year coach of the Knights prophetically listed three things his players would have to do to defeat unbeaten and No. 1-seeded Fairport.

"Keep your composure" headed the list. Those three words proved vital in the early moments of the game for No. 2-seeded McQuaid, which captured its first sectional title ever with a 69-64 triumph over the Red Raiders (21-1), before a crowd of 4,705 at the War Memorial.

The Knights showed nothing but composure after Jeff Fitch's squad jumped out to a stunning 11-0 lead in the game's first four and a half minutes.

McQuaid's response to the early run, led mainly by Brian Keenan and Todd Hallett with two baskets each, was a 19-3 spurt of its own to close out the first quarter.

Greg Woodard, who was named tournament MVP after his 21-point, 13-rebound, 10-assist performance, and Glenn Taggart, who poured in a game-high 26 points, fueled the McQuaid comeback with 17 of their team's 19 points in the opening quarter.

And for Marchese, who lost out on coach-of-the-year honors to Fitch in Class AAA, it was an eerily prophetic beginning.

"There are so many distractions in a game like this, with television cameras and media people everywhere, I just told them to keep calm and get (their) composure back," said Marchese, referring to the game's shocking start. "Once we did that, I told them everything else would fall into place."

The Knights continued their tear in the

second quarter and opened up a 30-20 lead with 1:25 remaining in the half.

But Fairport showed some composure of its own, pulling to within eight at halftime, 32-34, after Kyle Reed (19 points) scored right before the buzzer. The Red Raiders were able to stay close to McQuaid, despite the fact that Brian Keenan (22 points) sat out most of the second quarter with three fouls.

"They're tough even without him (Keenan)," said Marchese, about to make a comparison between Fairport and some of the city teams that he and his players faced this year. "Some of the city teams tend to self-destruct; that's what happened to East."

Marchese was referring to the Orientals' having come apart at the seams in their 72-51 loss to McQuaid just three nights earlier. East had played without star point-guard Dave Rizzo.

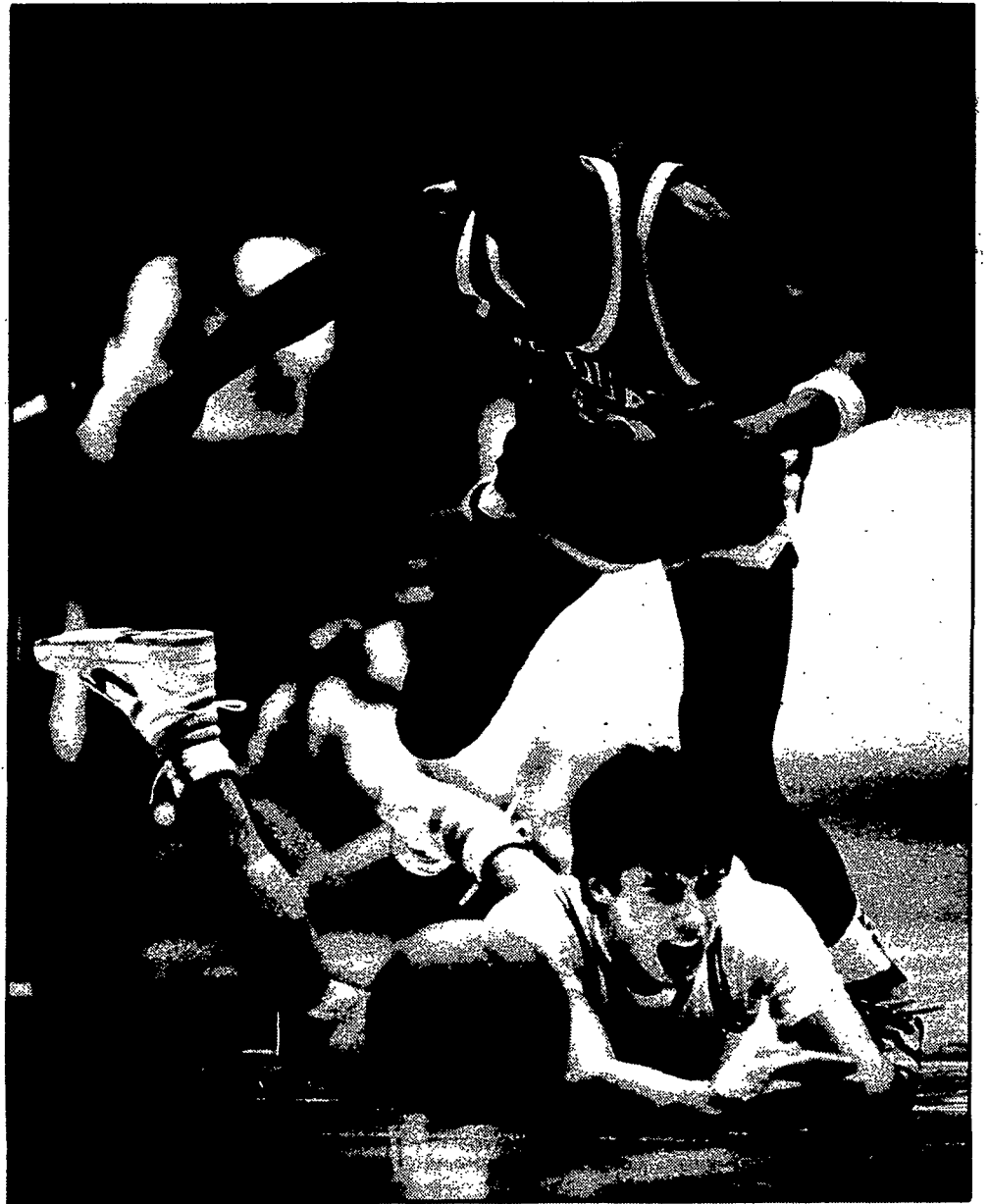
"Fairport is too well-coached and too well-disciplined for that to happen to them," Marchese said. "You've got to take them apart."

McQuaid began to temporarily pull away in the third quarter, building a 47-38 lead with 1:10 remaining. But Keenan rallied his teammates with some aerial bombs from the outside, to bring the Red Raiders to within five, 47-42, heading into the final eight minutes.

In the last quarter, McQuaid was able to withstand a furious Fairport rally, which at one point pulled the Red Raiders to within one, 59-58. Down the stretch, the Knights showed that they, like their opponents, were more than capable at the charity stripe, by shooting a perfect 11-for-11. Marchese's club was an impressive 16-for-22 from the foul line overall.

After the game, McQuaid point-guard Michael Holton, who dished out 12 assists to complement his eight points, was quick to discard any suggestion that his teammates might have taken Fairport lightly.

"We knew they were going to be tough; you don't go the entire season in triple A



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Fairport's Brian Keenan dives to the floor for a loose ball as Glenn Taggart straddles him.

undefeated unless you have a great team," said Holton, referring to repeated claims that Fairport had steamrolled through its season without playing bona fide hoop programs.

The senior point-guard attributed McQuaid's slow start to errors in judgment on the part of himself and his teammates.

"It was just (a matter of) mental mistakes on our part. I didn't block Keenan out on his first basket, and I also took a bad foul," Holton said. "It wasn't that we weren't ready (to play), we were just making mental mistakes."

Holton and Taggart joined Woodard on the all-tournament team for McQuaid. Rounding out the tourney's best players were Keenan, Tim McGinnis (Gates-Chili) and Tony Scott (East).

McQuaid (21-1) takes on Section 6 (Buffalo area) Class A champion Nichols in the Western Regionals at SUNY Geneseo at 8 p.m. this Saturday. Nichols disposed of

South Park, 68-49, to win the Class A crown in the Queen City.

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The Knights gained the final with a surprisingly easy 72-51 win over East before 7,154 fans at the War Memorial on Wednesday, March 4.

Forget claims that East lost the semifinal game because it lacked Rizzo, who sprained ligaments in his left foot at an afternoon pep rally. On this night it wouldn't have mattered much. For McQuaid could do no wrong, and at times, the Knights didn't even have to be on their feet to score points.

McQuaid senior forward Tom Veltz bagged two of his 10 points (to accompany 12 rebounds) on his backside. The amazing shot came with 1:10 remaining in the first quarter, when the ball somehow made it to

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