

Sports

# Sectional semis rude to Mooney, Mercy, DeSales

By Richard A. Kiley

The second season came to an end last weekend for three diocesan girls' basketball teams that survived until the semifinal round of the 16th-annual Section 5 tournament.

Cardinal Mooney and Our Lady of Mercy — two Class AA schools — and Geneva DeSales from Class D all succumbed in semifinal games played last Saturday, March 5.

**IN THE FIRST** of two Class AA semifinal games played at Webster High last Saturday, second-seeded Fairport (21-1) moved into the championship game by holding off gutsy Cardinal Mooney, 60-48.

Sarah Bouley led the Red Raiders with 20 points and gathered in 10 rebounds to propel her teammates past third-seeded Mooney (21-2), which was without star sophomore Marisa Shackelford for much of the game because of a bout with the flu.

"It's tough when your leading scorer and rebounder is on the bench; she didn't play at all in the second quarter," said Scott Morrison, whose last two Mooney teams have combined for a 40-4 record while reaching the Class AA semis two consecutive years.

The Mooney coach was careful not to peg the loss on Shackelford's absence alone. "We wanted to shoot it up from the outside early to get them to spread out their defense," he said. "We continued to do that in the second half, but the shots just wouldn't fall for us. We got the opportunities we wanted."

Mooney led 14-12 after one quarter, and even without Shackelford was able to hang tough. Mooney trailed 22-19 at intermission.

The much bigger Red Raiders began to assert themselves in the third quarter, outscoring the Lady Cards 17-10. Monique Thomas, a reserve player, came off the bench to score 11 points for coach Jodi Schmelk in the pivotal period. "(Fairport's) bench really came through for them, especially in the third quarter," Morrison said.

Mooney's defense did hold Niki Speigel, one of Cheryl's giants, to five points for the game.

Fairport's Lennox led the Lady Cards with 17 points. Shannon Barry finished with a season-high 16.

Shackelford's importance to Mooney was typified by a 47-41 win over visiting Rush-Henrietta (17-7) in the quarterfinals on Wednesday, March 9.

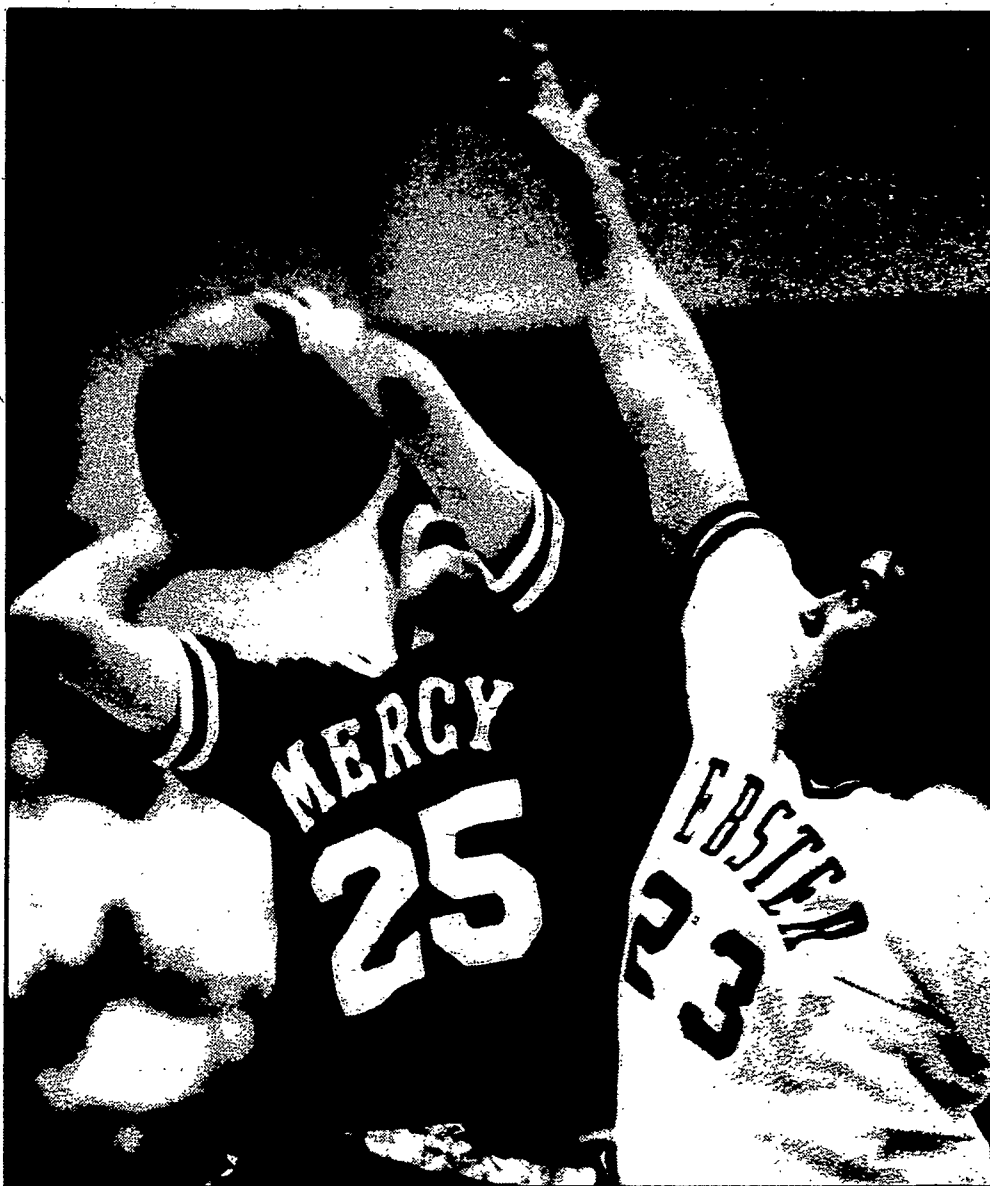
The sophomore forward tallied eight of her team's 15 points in the fourth quarter as Mooney held off Tom Dulmage's Royal Comets, who always seem to peak at tourney time.

The Lady Cards trailed 14-4 after one quarter when, according to Morrison, "the shots just weren't falling."

Morrison's club went on an 11-0 run to forge a 15-14 lead in the second quarter, but still trailed at halftime by two, 22-20.

Shackelford got in foul trouble in the third quarter, but key baskets by Margie McGuire (13 points), Lennox (12 points) and Barry (six points) enabled Mooney to tie the game, 32-32, after three quarters.

Lennox and Shackelford were the heroines in the fourth quarter. Lennox iced a clutch free throw, and Shackelford scored off a missed



Bonnie Traflet/Courier-Journal

**Mercy's Julie Buntich** drives past Rita LaForce during second-quarter action of the Monarchs' 53-48 upset win over the Warriors.

IN THE SECOND game at Webster High, Mercy (18-4) fell to top-seeded and undefeated Pittsford Mendon (23-0) for the second time in a little more than two weeks. The two perennial powers of Section 5 basketball met in the Brockport Tournament on February 18, when the Vikings — principally Kari Knapp — eked out a come-from-behind 57-52 win.

Last Saturday, Knapp (19 points) played an integral part in Mendon's 59-48 Class AA semifinal round win over the Monarchs, but this one was decided at the foul line. Mendon, which played second-seeded Fairport at Geneseo State on Wednesday, March 9, converted 15 of 22 free throws; Mercy went to the line just four times and made two.

Julie Buntich, who had performed so brilliantly in Mercy's quarterfinal win over fourth-seeded Webster just three nights earlier, watched a lot of the Mendon game from the bench. The 5-foot-7 junior picked up three fouls in the first quarter, forcing Mercy coach Kathy Boughton to sit down her most prolific scorer early.

"(Buntich) didn't have any points in the first half and we just aren't the same team when we don't have her quickness on the floor," Boughton said.

That became evident as Knapp and teammate Kris Carpin (15 points) catapulted the Vikings to a 31-18 halftime lead. Mercy was able to pull within five points, 38-33, after three quarters, but Buntich wouldn't let the Monarchs get any closer.

Besides Buntich, several other Monarchs were inhibited by foul trouble. Bernadette Fagan, who seemed to play better as this year's tournament progressed, fouled out with 16 points and 12 rebounds. It marked the first time Fagan had fouled out all year. Jenni Baxter was also plagued by foul trouble much of the game.

Buntich finished the game with 15 points — all in the second half. Included in the junior's offensive showing were three three-point baskets.

Although Boughton was disappointed by her team's loss, she was pleased by her team's defense on Knapp. "We did a great job on her,



Mercy's fans were on their feet after the Monarchs rallied to a win over Webster.

six of her points came from the foul line," she said.

**AGAINST HOST** Webster on Wednesday, March 9, Buntich played a phenomenal game, as Mercy upset the fourth-seeded Warriors, 53-48.

The junior combined 23 points and 12 rebounds with four assists and five steals, as Mercy came back from big deficits in the first quarter (12-2) and at halftime (27-20).

Mercy rallied from its inauspicious start by scoring 15 unanswered points in the first quarter to lead 17-12 after eight minutes, but the Warriors returned the favor by outscoring Mercy 17-3 in the second quarter, taking a seven-point halftime advantage.

All season long, however, Mercy has had strong third quarters. Combine that with Webster's somewhat lethargic third-quarter play, and Mercy had a 41-35 lead heading into the fourth quarter. Buntich scored the last 15 points in a 29-10 scoring surge in the second half, with many of the points coming off the transition game.

Fagan turned in another solid performance by scoring 11 points and grabbing nine rebounds.

The game featured a much-anticipated showdown between Buntich (formerly of Rush-Henrietta fame) and senior Rita LaForce, who transferred from Mercy to Webster after a game against Fairport early last season. LaForce finished with 14 points for the night.

Boughton played down the ballyhoo surrounding the Buntich-LaForce situation. "There shouldn't be any comparison between her and Rita; Julie has never been a point guard before," Boughton said.

Mercy's full-court pressure neutralized LaForce and forced the Warrior offense to look anemic at times.

**OVER IN CLASS D**, an upstart Geneva DeSales team fell to third-seeded Whitesville, 54-33, in a semifinal game at Hornell on Saturday, March 5.

Seventh-seeded DeSales, which upset No. 2 Avoca by one point earlier in the week, lost the game on the foul line as Whitesville (18-3) made 20 of 28 free throws. DeSales (11-11) converted on three of eight from the stripe.

Ellen Easton was Whitesville's main weapon, scoring eight of her 13 points in the second quarter. The Saints were outscored 20-5 in the pivotal second quarter.

## Experienced, determined Rome ices Aquinas in Division 1 hockey playoff

By Richard A. Kiley

Aquinas Institute's dream of winning its first-ever state championship in hockey melted on the ice at Brockport State Saturday, March 5, as a senior-laden Rome Free Academy team knocked off the Little Irish, 8-2.

The Black Knights (23-0) came in as the state's top-ranked high school hockey team and didn't disappoint the more than 500 hometown fans who traveled to Brockport. Rome forechecked the Little Irish into the ice and took advantage of some key mistakes by the young Aquinas defense.

"Defensively we had some breakdowns and physically (Rome) was just the bigger team," said Aquinas hockey coach Rich Gamble, who this season led AQ to its first sectional hockey championship in 12 years. "I'm not disappointed; this was a good learning experience for our team. The effort was there, we just needed a little more discipline on defense."

Last year, the Black Knights held the state's No. 1 ranking into the quarterfinals of the Division 1 playoffs, but were upset by Batavia. The loss ended RFA's quest for back-to-back state championships.

The way the Black Knights played last weekend, there was no way they were going to lose. Rome, which has outscored opponents by an average of 9-2 this season, was led by senior Steve Zanon's four goals and one assist. Two

of his goals came in the first period, when RFA skated to a 4-1 lead.

Jeff Mucha put third-ranked AQ on the scoreboard at 2:48 of the period when he knocked in a rebound past Rome goalie Rob Gallupi, who just seconds earlier had made a tough save on a shot from in close by Chris Fess.

The Little Irish made the score 4-2 on a power-play goal by Fess at 1:49 of the second period, but they couldn't pull any closer.

Five of Rome's goals on sophomore Bob Carello, who stopped 33 shots, were scored on rebounds and three came on the power play.

Partly based on his team's results against RFA, Gamble will look to schedule more games out of the section in the future.

"We have quality players here, we just have to get used to the competition in other parts of the state," said Gamble, whose team participated in a tournament in Section 6 this season. "We have to keep developing the talent in youth programs."

Gamble sees a bright future for some Section 5 hockey teams, and predicted that one of this year's inexperienced teams could become a state champion in the next few seasons.

AQ was among those youthful teams, but will lose four starters — Rick Alloco, Dave Hemmerick, Mark Raban and Jeff Mucha — to graduation in June.



Bonnie Traflet/Courier-Journal

As Little Irish defenseman Paul Colucci looks on, Rome Free Academy players celebrate one of eight goals they were able to get past Aquinas goalie Bob Carello.