

# Second-half rally lifts Mercy over Lockport

By Richard A. Kiley  
Staff writer

Three years ago when Our Lady of Mercy won the Section 5 girls' large-school basketball title with a romp over previously undefeated Rush-Henrietta, the Monarchs traveled to the Far Western Regionals where they were humbled by Lockport, 51-36.

History looked like it was repeating itself last Saturday, March 4, as the same two teams met in a state Class A game at Erie Community College-North. Lockport raced out to a 29-17 halftime lead and looked well in control of the game after building an 18-point cushion early in the third quarter.

But Mercy staged a remarkable comeback in the second half and scored a 59-57 victory, when Julie Buntich's short jumper with :07 left on the clock was perfect.

The Monarchs (24-1) will leave school later this week for the New York state Public High School Athletic Association tournament at Glens Falls this weekend. Mercy will battle unbeaten Troy (24-0) of Section 2 in a semifinal game scheduled for 5 p.m. on Friday, March 10. Union Endicott of Section 4 and Freeport of Section 8 begin the girls' Class A doubleheader at 3 p.m. The two winners will meet for the state championship at 3 p.m. on Saturday.

Lockport finished its season at 23-3, with two of its losses coming at the hands

of Mercy.

The Lions seemed to be the team destined for Glens Falls, roaring to a 17-7 lead after one quarter and increasing the margin to 12 at halftime. Lockport senior guard Lori Pasceri frustrated Buntich throughout the first half, holding the Mercy star to three first-half points — all from the free-throw line.

"Julie was 0-for-7 in the first half, but she wasn't down on herself," said Mercy coach Kathy Boughton. "Athletes like her don't get down on themselves."

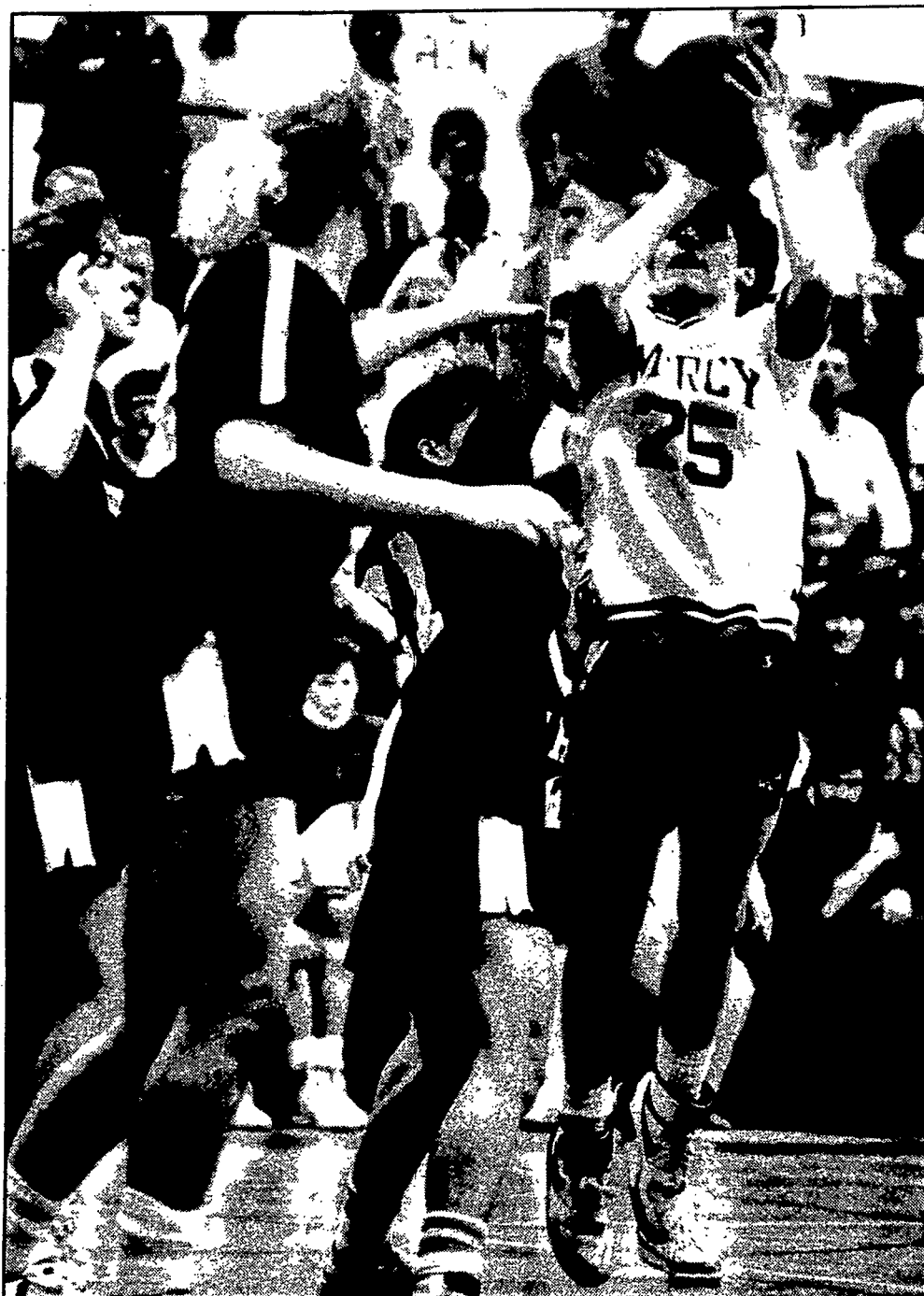
Mercy switched from a zone defense to full-court pressure after intermission, but Lockport's Pasceri was able to burn the press several times, enabling the Lions to increase their lead to 18.

Time out Mercy.

"I told them that it was now or never," Boughton said.

Mercy's press began to take its toll after the time out and Buntich caught fire. The Mercy guard scored 11 of her team's 22 points in the period to pull the Monarchs to within one point, 40-39, after three quarters. Buntich scored 10 more points in the fourth quarter — despite playing with four fouls — to finish with 24 for the game.

Freshman Sheila Doyle was also a catalyst in the comeback, collecting five steals in the second half. And when Lockport did beat Mercy's press, the Lions usually



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier  
Surrounded by Lockport defenders, Julie Buntich (25) puts up the game-winning shot.



Kathy Boughton and her players celebrate their last-second win over Lockport. The Monarchs rallied from an 18-point deficit in the second half.



Mercy's Mary Beth Cleary (22) looks to get the ball inside during last Friday night's State Class A game against Lockport.

failed to make their shots.

"They were trying to get the ball down court so quickly, and then they would rush their shots," Boughton said.

Lockport regained its touch early in the fourth quarter to take a seven-point lead, only to have Mercy come back yet again, taking a 59-57 lead on Buntich's shot. Lockport attempted a desperation shot at the buzzer, but missed.

Junior forward Catherine Robinson asserted herself in the second half, finishing with 19 points and 15 rebounds. Sophomore Natalie White finished with nine rebounds.

Gretchen Goehle paced Lockport with 18 points. Pasceri finished with 12.

Boughton and her players are now setting their sights on a Troy team that is ranked No. 2 in the state and has a big front line.

CARDINAL MOONEY COACH Scott Morrison has seen enough Finger Lakes girls' basketball teams to last him a long time, after watching his Cards lose to Section 5 Class B champion Penn Yan, 59-43, in a state Class B qualifier at Geneseo State last Tuesday, Feb. 28.

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