

McQuaid routs LaSalle, heads to Glens Falls

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — While dealing with a swirl of emotions stemming from the sudden death of a fellow schoolmate, the McQuaid Jesuit Knights went out and clobbered Niagara Falls LaSalle, 86-57, in the Class A Western Regional game on Saturday, March 9, at the Rochester Community War Memorial.

The win sends the Knights (20-2) to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Class A semifinals at the Glens Falls Civic Center, where they will face Syracuse-Henninger (Section 3) on Saturday, March 16 at 4 p.m.

Henninger (24-0) is ranked No. 5 in the latest state poll for Class A teams while the Knights are No. 6.

Players and coaches from McQuaid dedicated the win in the regional game to fellow schoolmate Thomas Christopher Rodenhouse, who died suddenly on March 8. The Knights wore black ribbons on their jerseys in honor of Rodenhouse.

Senior Mike Montesano said he had mixed emotions about playing the game after learning that his friend had died so suddenly.

"But the moment we stepped onto the court, we knew we were going to win," Montesano said.

The highly emotional Knights tried to rattle the Explorers early on in the game played before 3,243 fans at the War Memorial, but LaSalle (21-1) stayed close. The game was close throughout much of the opening quarter. In fact, the score was deadlocked, 11-11, with just one minute left.

McQuaid's "Lethal Weapon III" then cocked its trigger and fired in the waning moments as Jason McKinney scored two baskets off of offensive rebounds, Montesano scored a layup and Ted Naylon hit both ends of a one-and-one situation to give the Knights a 19-13 lead at the buzzer.

McQuaid began to pull away in the second quarter after Montesano nailed his first three-pointer with 5:59 left in the second quarter to balloon McQuaid's lead to 24-16. Montesano finished with three treys for the game.

The Knights unleashed another scoring

binge with three minutes in the half as Montesano converted one foul shot at the line with 3:14 remaining and sank a field goal with 2:51 left. Naylon then hit both ends of a one-and-one with 2:03 to go in the half and scored inside the paint with 1:40 remaining.

Montesano then contributed to McQuaid's 16-point lead at the half as he nailed another three-pointer and converted two more shots from the charity stripe. The McQ forward/guard registered 12 of his team's 22 points in the second quarter as the Knights headed to the locker room at halftime with a comfortable 41-25 margin.

When the Explorers came out for the third quarter, they switched to a stringent man-to-man defense in an attempt to shut down the Knights' scoring machine.

The change didn't work.

After Jeff Reese and Montesano each hit two foul shots with 5:50 left in the third quarter, the Knights' lead had bulged to 49-29.

McKinney got into the act once again as he slam-dunked two baskets in less than one minute, putting the unstoppable Knights ahead 55-31 with 4:10 to play in the third quarter.

Naylon stole the ball with 4:07 left for a layup, and then notched another basket with 2:24 remaining to keep the onslaught going. The McQuaid senior collected a point at the line with a little more than two minutes left, before Montesano stormed inside the paint for another basket. The Knights were cruising by the end of the third quarter, which ended 62-34 in favor of McQuaid.

Although LaSalle boasted quick hands, the Explorers were plagued by scoring trouble from everywhere on the court. To make matters worse for the Section 6 champion, McQuaid held a huge size advantage. The tallest starter for the Explorers was 6-1 Cazzie Bradberry.

The Explorers trimmed the Knights' lead to 20 points with five minutes to play in the final quarter, but McQuaid poured it on at the end.

The Knights scored the final six points of the game as Naylon scored on an assist from Montesano, then Montesano stole the

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Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
McQuaid Jesuit's Mike Montesano snags a rebound as LaSalle's Scotty Rose and Knights' center Jason McKinney look on during the third quarter of McQ's 86-57 win over LaSalle March 9 in the Class A Western Regional game at the Rochester War Memorial.

Buzzer-beater boosts AQ

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — As Aquinas' Amy Reynders released a shot from beyond three-point range in the final seconds of the state qualifying basketball game against Angola Lake Shore, her Little Irish teammates began to pray.

Their prayers were answered.

Reynders' basket propelled Aquinas (19-6) to a 36-35 victory over Lake Shore (Section 6) after a gruelling game in the State University College at Geneseo gym on March 9.

Aquinas will take on Amityville High School (Long Island) at Queensbury High School in the girls' public high school Class B semifinals in Glens Falls on Saturday, March 16, at 9 p.m.

The state Class B championship game will be played on Sunday, March 17, at 2:30 p.m.

Although Aquinas grabbed an 18-14 advantage at intermission, the Little Irish didn't lead again until the end of the third quarter. AQ led 27-25 entering the final stanza.

With three minutes to go in the game, however, Lake Shore (20-3) pulled ahead by five points, 32-27. But the Irish regained their composure, outscoring Lake Shore 9-3 down the stretch.

Lake Shore led 34-31 before missing a layup with 2:27 left in the game. Aquinas took advantage of the opportunity to cut the

margin to 34-33 with 1:27 remaining. Lake Shore led by two points, 35-33, after Kelly Connors made one of two free throws with 16 seconds remaining in the game.

Reynders was fouled with nine seconds to play, sending the Aquinas junior to the line to shoot one-and-one. The Irish's unimpressive performance at the charity stripe in the second half — AQ was a mediocre 3-for-8 from the line — made Reynders feel a little more pressure, she said after the game.

After Reynders missed the front end of the one-and-one, teammate Mary Radford hustled to save the loose ball before it went out of bounds off of a Lake Shore player. After getting the in-bounds pass, Radford then dribbled a little before passing the ball to Reynders. The junior guard subsequently lofted the ball toward the net.

Fortunately for Aquinas, the shot found the basket.

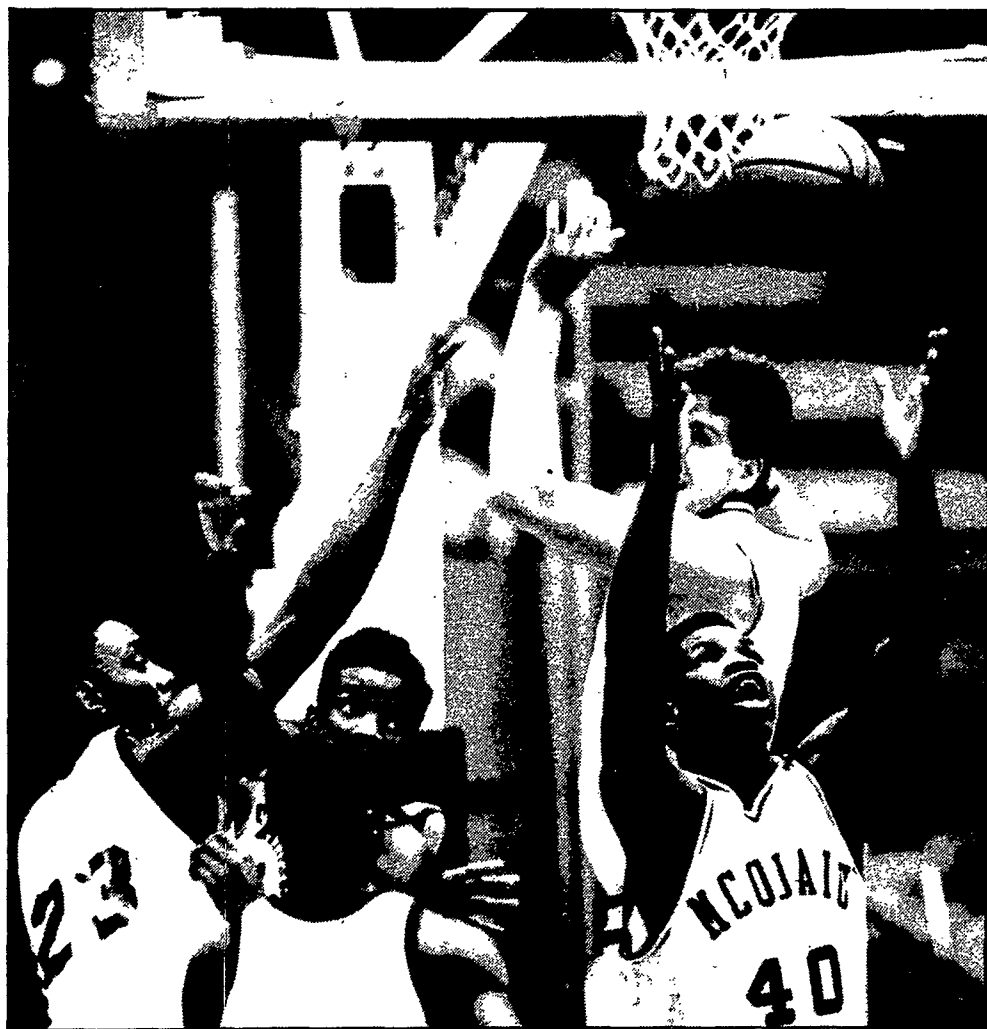
"I don't remember anything, I just shot it," said Reynders, who finished the game with 10 points. "It wasn't like a heave, but it felt like it when I shot it."

The junior guard added, "God was helping us or something on that one."

Despite Reynders' knack for coming through in the clutch this season, senior guard Jill Banaszewski said she and her teammates were surprised when the ball went through the basket.

"We came out confident, but we were

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McQuaid's Jeff Reese and Jason McKinney attempt to intercept a pass from LaSalle's Modie Cox (center) as the Explorers' Scotty Rose (far left) and Anthony Wallace (left) go up for a rebound during the fourth quarter of the western regional.