

Stifling defense enables Monarchs to reign

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

The last thing Brockport needed was to face an Our Lady of Mercy team more fired up than normal.

"I think when you get into sectionals you have to upgrade your emotions, and we certainly did that," said Monarch Coach Kathy Boughton.

"We got so pumped up; our emotions were really high," added Gina Montesano, a freshman point guard.

The result was a 53-36 victory last Thursday night, March 5, in the Section 5 Class A title game at the Rochester Community War Memorial.

The victory over third-seeded Brockport enabled Mercy, the No. 1 seed, to extend its perfect season mark to 21-0. The Monarchs now face Amherst Sweet Home of Section 6 in a state quarterfinal matchup this Saturday, March 14, at 6 p.m. at SUNY College at Buffalo. The winner will advance to the state Final Four the following weekend in Glens Falls.

Mercy was one of three girls' basketball teams at Catholic schools in the diocese involved in sectionals last week. In the game played prior to Mercy-Brockport, Aquinas Institute



Mercy's Sheila Doyle (right) attempts to steal the ball away from Blue Devil Shostal Messmer.

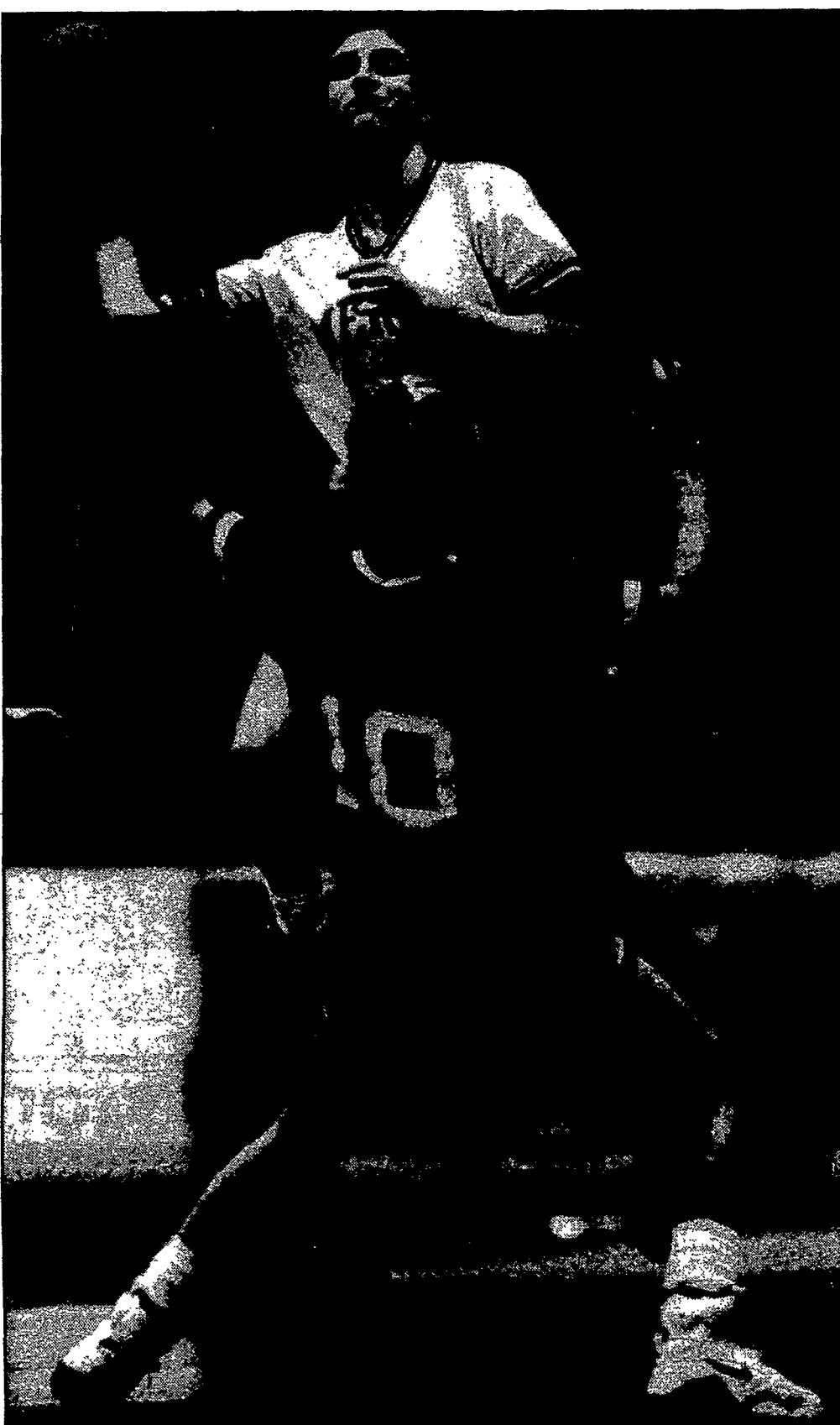
(19-4), seeded No. 3 in Section 5 Class BB, lost in the finals to No. 1 Pittsford Mendon, 45-36, at the War Memorial.

And Geneva DeSales (6-15), the 14th seed in Class D, saw its dark horse sectional title bid end with a 47-36 semifinal loss to No. 6 Greenwood on March 3 at Alfred State College.

Mercy got off to a 16-11 lead after one quarter against Brockport, but the Blue Devils rallied to go ahead 21-20 on Shostal Messmer's basket with 3:37 to go in the second period.

The Monarch defense held Brockport scoreless the rest of the half, and two baskets by Kelly O'Neill enabled her team to take a 24-21 advantage into the locker room.

Despite Brockport's second-quarter run, senior guard Sheila Doyle said her



Monarch Gina Montesano soars up and over Brockport's Shostal Messmer to get a pass off.



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor
Gina Montesano (left), Kelly O'Neill (center) and Sheila Doyle embrace after the Monarchs took the Section 5 Class A title at the Rochester Community War Memorial March 5.

team felt poised for a win as the Monarchs rested during intermission.

"Our team usually doesn't get down. We feel very confident and feel like we're going to win every game," said Doyle, who netted tourney MVP honors with a game-high 28 points.

The Monarchs jumped all over Brockport to begin the second half. Mercy's patented swarming, full-court press forced the Blue Devils into a series of turnovers and held them scoreless for the first three minutes of the third quarter.

Meanwhile, Mercy reeled off seven points to go ahead 31-21 and Brockport never got closer than eight points the rest of the way.

Mercy gained its spot in the finals with a 60-50 win over No. 5 Greece Athena in a March 3 semifinal contest at Edison Tech. Doyle was the Monarchs' top scorer with 21 points.

Aquinas, in its championship game against Pittsford Mendon, received its usual scoring explosion from guard-forward Amy Reynders. The Rutgers University-bound senior scored all eight of her team's first-quarter points as the Little Irish took an 8-4 lead, and she added 10 more in the second period as AQ led 22-21 at the break.

But the Vikings employed a smothering defense on Reynders after half-time, limiting the AQ star to four points the rest of the way.

Continued on next page

AQ advances with penalty-filled victory

Never has a six-goal victory been this painful.

The good news is that the Aquinas Institute hockey team has reached the state Class A semifinals for the second time in three years, thanks to 6-0 quarterfinal victory over Williamsville North this past Saturday, March 7, at the State University of New York College at Brockport.

But it was a very ugly game, with Williamsville North holding a 2-1 margin in penalties assessed.

"In the third period they (Williams-

ville North) weren't even trying to play anymore. The last three minutes were complete hell," said AQ Coach Dave Montgomery. "They were waiting for our players to come to the puck, and then they just buried us."

Three Williamsville North players were ejected from the game for misconduct penalties. According to Montgomery, the Buffalo-area school was not even allowed to compete in the Section 6 playoffs because it had been assessed too many misconducts during the regular season.

Yet it was Aquinas which came out of Saturday's game with the most severe sanction: senior forward Chris Schultz, AQ's third-leading scorer, was

ejected early in the third period when he was charged with a spearing major.

Any ejection of a high school player in New York state forces that person to sit out the next two games, so AQ will be without Schultz for the entire state Final Four this weekend in Utica.

AQ is scheduled to face Massena this Saturday, March 14, in a 2:30 p.m. semifinal game at the Utica War Memorial.

"Massena is a great team. I'm not going to say that we can't win without him (Schultz), but our chances would be that much better with him," Montgomery commented.

Should the Little Irish advance past Massena, they will play for the championship on Sunday at 3:30 p.m.

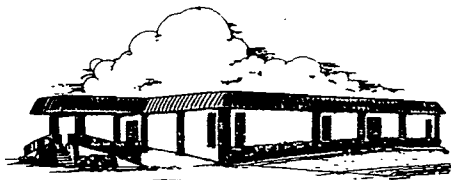
AQ, ranked No. 1 in the state, improved its record to 21-2 with last Saturday's triumph.

Aquinas led 1-0 after one period on a goal by Grady Monks. Brook Lefler and Schultz scored in the second period to make it 3-0.

Jeremy Giordano, a junior forward, accounted for all three of the Irish's final goals, getting two in the second period and one in the third.

—Mike Latona

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