

Mercy, AQ help add to Buffalo's losing ways

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Buffalo's athletic woes weren't limited to the football field this past weekend, thanks to the efforts of Our Lady of Mercy and Aquinas Institute.

Two Buffalo-area high school basketball teams joined the Bills in the 'L' column. Newfane suffered a 67-44 defeat at the hands of the host Mercy girls, and City Honors dropped a 68-52 decision to the AQ boys in a game held at Nazareth College. Both contests were played Saturday, Jan. 30.

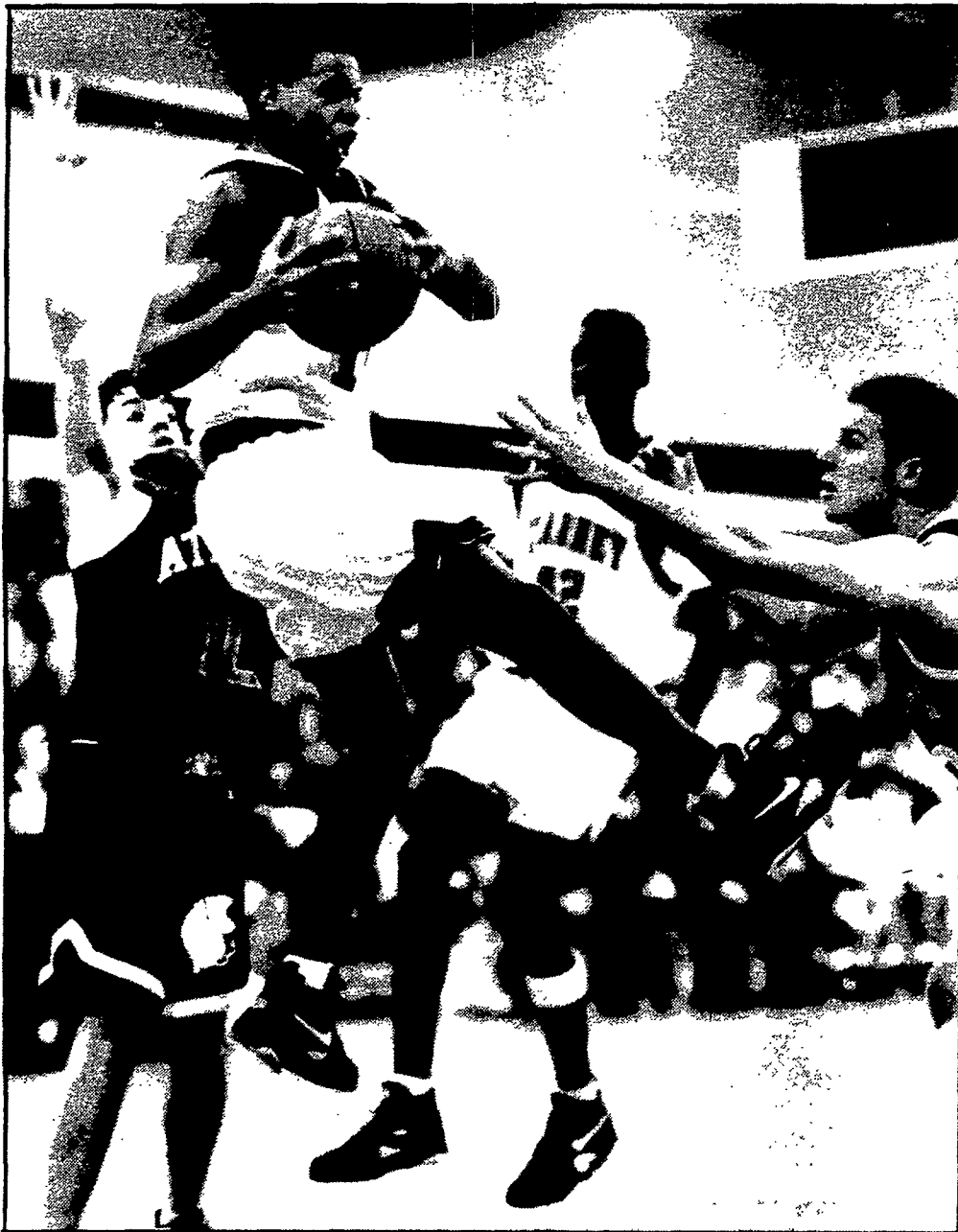
Mimi LaMagna and Kelly O'Neill led Mercy against Newfane with 17 and 16 points, respectively. The victory was the Monarchs' eighth straight, and it lifted their overall record to 10-2.

AQ (6-8) rolled to its win over City Honors behind Jeff Rice and Shawn Finein, who scored 14 points each; and Shaun Barnett, who added 12.

Jan. 30 was also a successful day for the Bishop Kearney girls (12-3), who scored just nine second-half points but still managed to hold on for a 34-30 win over host Webster. Janet D'Agostino and Terry Teo tied for team-high scoring honors with eight points each.

The BK boys, meanwhile, emerged victorious earlier in the week with a 66-44 rout over visiting Greece Athena on Jan. 26. BK (11-4) was led by a monstrous performance from Joe Raniewicz, who canned eight three-point baskets and finished with a season-high 33 points.

Also emerging triumphant on the hardwood were the McQuaid Jesuit boys, who snapped a three-game losing streak with a 72-60 win over host Marshall on Jan. 29. Jay Wandtke and Matt Podmenik topped the Knights



S. John Wilkin/Photo intern
Bishop Kearney's Pat Goode (center) keeps the ball away from Athena's Todd Hagreen (left) and Eric Shmidt during the host Kings' 66-44 win over the Trojans Jan. 26.

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(9-4) with 22 and 16 points, respectively.

In the Finger Lakes, the Geneva DeSales boys (4-10) came through with a 49-47 home win over Marcus Whitman on Jan. 29. The victory avenged a 60-48 loss to the Wildcats back on Dec. 16.

In other diocesan high school sports highlights from last week:

The Aquinas hockey team earned a 4-2 win over Monroe County Division I arch-rival Greece in a game played on Jan. 30 at Lakeshore Rinks. Chris Sischak scored two goals as the Little Irish (10-2, 12-2-2) remained in first place — by a half-game over McQuaid — in Division I.

McQuaid (9-2, 12-3) also won on Jan. 30, recording a 7-3 rout of Gates-Chili at Genesee Valley Ice Arena. Sean Ritchlin led his team with two goals.

The McQuaid boys' swim team (5-4) won 47-43 over Hilton on Jan. 26 as Doug Kazley (50-yard freestyle, 100 butterfly) and Chris Stirling (200 free, 100 backstroke) took two events each.

McQ gained added success in wrestling and skiing last week: the Knight grapplers (4-2-1) edged visiting Greece Arcadia, 34-30, on Jan. 26; and the skiers placed first among five schools in a Wayne County League meet at Bristol on Jan. 29.

In the Southern Tier, the Elmira Notre Dame wrestlers (6-4) rallied to defeat host Newark Valley, 38-30, on Jan. 30. The Crusaders trailed 30-20 entering that meet's final three matches, but won by forfeit at 167 and 215 pounds while Dan Wilson raised his season record to 22-3 with a pin in the 177-pound weight class.

Second language is second nature to Brockport youths

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

BROCKPORT — Little Johnny runs into the house, bursting with excitement. His mother, as is her custom, asks him, "What did you learn in school today, honey?"

She fully expects that her 7-year-old son's newly acquired information will be old hat to her, but she doesn't want to dampen his enthusiasm. So she prepares to feign surprise at his knowing, say, that Bill Clinton is the new president of the United States or that birds fly south for the winter.

But then Johnny throws her a big curve ball.

"I'll bet you didn't know what *las uvas* (grapes) or *las zanahorias* (carrots) or *las fresas* (strawberries) mean in English, did you, mommy?" he asks.

His mother, bewildered, stammers: "Well ... well ... actually I don't, Johnny. What do those words mean in English?"

By now this scene has probably been played out a number of times among families with children at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School, lo-



S. John Wilkin/Photo intern
Anthony Magovero, a second-grader at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School in Brockport, holds up plastic grapes for his classmates to identify during Spanish class Jan. 12.

cated at Holley and Utica streets in this western Monroe County village.

Nativity is unique among diocesan elementary schools in that Spanish is a required course for all of its grade levels — beginning in kindergarten and running through fifth grade.

And, by being equipped with these foreign-language skills, students find themselves in the unusual position of

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being able to educate their elders.

"The parents comment to me that the students do teach them," said Melaine Vickner, who conducts the weekly sessions each Tuesday. "They'll be so surprised — they take their children out for a car ride, and the children will pick out things that they see and say them in Spanish."

Vickner uses a number of innovative approaches to meet the challenge of teaching a foreign language to youngsters who may still be grappling with their own language as well.

For instance, she said, the Spanish pronunciation of the letter "e" resembles the English "a." So when she writes an "e" on the blackboard, she asks the class what Fonzie says on "Happy Days."

Or, in an attempt to get children to pronounce "a" in Spanish — which sounds like "ah" in English — Vickner asks her class what they say upon seeing chocolate-chip cookies.

In order to maintain enthusiasm while attempting to reinforce letters and words, Vickner conducts many types of games to reward youngsters for getting correct answers.

Seven-year-old Stacey Bartlett, a Nativity second-grader, said her favorite part of Spanish is "the way when we're playing, I jump up (to answer a question)."

Bartlett's classmate, 7-year-old Renee Catlin, added that she likes to "do 'Concentration' and reviewing all the vegetables."

According to Sister Margaret Man-

cusso, SSJ, school principal, Nativity began offering Spanish classes in 1984. Although only a small percentage of Nativity pupils come from Hispanic backgrounds, Sister Mancuso pointed out that the curriculum's chief focus is to help students relate with the large number of Hispanics who are — or were — members of the migrant-worker population at area farms.

"Now, when they meet someone of another culture, they'll be able to communicate — like if they someday get a part-time job at Wegmans and are working with someone of Hispanic descent," said Sister Mancuso.

Sister Mary Jane Mitchell, SSJ, director of the Brockport-based Western Monroe-Orleans Hispanic Ministry, shares Sister Mancuso's hope.

"The chance that the two communities will interact is a positive," said Sister Mitchell. She added that Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, 152 Main St., is the parish for many families in her ministry's coverage area.

Sister Mancuso and Vickner noted that a young age may actually be the best time to digest a foreign language.

"Their learning skills are ripe," said Sister Mancuso.

"It's like learning to ride a bicycle," added Vickner. "If you learn it while you're young, you'll never forget it."

Sister Mancuso also acknowledged that American children of the 1990s can approach the subject matter with more background knowledge than in previous generations.

"A lot of these kids grew up with Spanish on 'Sesame Street,'" the principal said.

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