

Cold shooting plagues McQuaid in state loss

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — At this level of competition, it's nearly impossible to score 45 points in back-to-back games and still have a chance to win.

And while the McQuaid Jesuit boys' basketball team did manage to eke out a Section 5 Class A championship victory, the Knights' offensive woes finally caught up with them in the Western Region Class A playoffs.

McQuaid shot 30.4 percent from the field and 43.5 percent from the foul line en route to a 46-45 loss to Niagara Falls LaSalle. The state quarterfinal game was played this past Monday evening, March 15, at the Community War Memorial after being delayed two days due to last weekend's blizzard.

"It's hard to figure out," McQuaid Coach Joe Marchese lamented. "Our perimeter people got real tentative with their shots in the last two games of the season. I'm at a loss to understand it myself."

The LaSalle defeat ended a nine-game winning streak for the Knights and gave them a final 1992-93 record of 18-6. They had qualified for regional play by edging Fairport, 45-42, in the Section 5 finals on March 6.

In the first half, neither team led by more than four points. The score was 13-13 after one quarter, and McQuaid took a 19-18 edge at halftime.

LaSalle made an 11-4 run to start the third quarter before McQuaid ran off 11 consecutive points — the last eight coming from Jay Wandtke — to take its biggest lead at 34-29. The Knights led 34-30 entering the fourth period.

However, Wandtke picked up his fourth foul in the final quarter's open-

ing minute and was forced to the bench until less than four minutes remained. He fouled out with 1:05 to go; by that time, McQ trailed 46-42.

Antonio Porretta made a free throw with :48 left and Tim Whelehan hit a driving layup with :19 to go as the Knights narrowed the gap to 46-45. The Explorers' Carlos Bradberry then gave McQuaid a chance to win when he missed the front end of a one-and-one opportunity with :16 left.

However, the Knights' Matt Podmenik was unable to convert a shot from the baseline with :05 remaining. The Explorers' O'Neal Barnett rebounded the miss and was fouled, and although he missed his one-and-one with :02 to go, Porretta's desperation heave at the buzzer was off the mark.

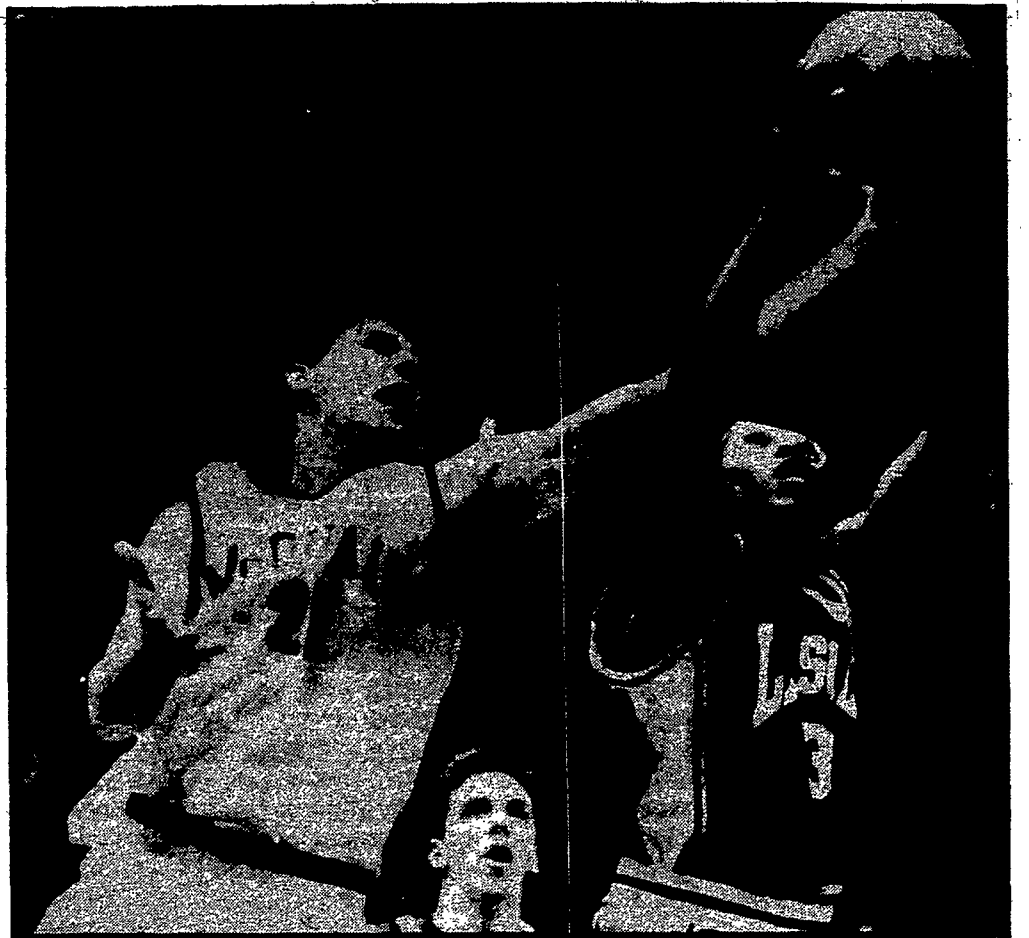
Despite LaSalle's 22-1 record and No. 3 state rank entering the game, Marchese felt that the Explorers were no powerhouse.

"I certainly wasn't in awe of them. I thought they were a good team, but no better than the teams we face during the season," Marchese observed.

The two clubs combined to shoot only 1-for-17 from three-point range and 16-for-44 from the foul line. McQuaid was 10-for-23 from the charity stripe after going 15-for-18 in the Fairport win.

Wandtke and Whelehan led McQuaid in scoring against LaSalle with 12 points each, with all of Wandtke's points coming in the third quarter. Bradberry led all scorers with 17.

"It's unfortunate that your season has to end with a loss. But we'll look back and feel good that we were Section 5 champs, especially since we weren't picked to win the sectionals," said Marchese.



McQuaid Jesuit's Ben Wandtke attempts to steal the ball from Curtis Ralands of Niagara Falls LaSalle March 15 in the Western Region Class A playoffs at the Rochester Community War Memorial. The Knights succumbed to the Explorers, 46-45, in the state quarterfinal basketball game.

Little Irish halted in hockey semis

UTICA — It may not be glaringly apparent in the final score, but Aquinas Institute's hockey team put on a performance worth remembering last weekend.

The Little Irish played near their peak in their state Division I semifinal battle against Massena. AQ, however, could not overcome the state's finest team and went down to a 4-2 loss to the Red Raiders in a game played on Saturday, March 13, at the Utica Memorial Auditorium.

"That might have been the best we've played all year," said Little Irish Coach Dave Montgomery.

To illustrate the kind of juggernaut Aquinas was up against, Massena went on to rack up a 10-0 victory over Saratoga in the next day's championship game.

Aquinas ended its superb 1992-93 season with a record of 20-3-2. The Little Irish won their second straight Section 5 championship, and third in four years under Montgomery. AQ also successfully defended its Monroe County Division I crown, edging McQuaid Jesuit out for both the league and sectional titles.

In the Massena game, Aquinas' chances looked pretty good after one period. Following a goal by the Red Raiders' Trevor Cameron 4:51 into the game, AQ's Jeremy Giordano recorded an unassisted goal with 3:55 remaining to create a 1-1 tie.

The second period's only goal came when Massena's Jason Chilton found the net 77 seconds into the stanza. Aquinas had an excellent chance to tie at period's end, but could not capitalize on a two-man advantage that lasted more than one minute.

Matt Reid provided Massena with an insurance goal 3:09 into the final period, and teammate Mark Tyo made it 4-1 just over three minutes later. Chris Sichak scored the Little Irish's final goal, on an assist from Joe Zabawa, with 5:11 left.

Aquinas was outshot 25-21 for the game. Freshman goalie Alex Vigneri had a "great game," according to his coach, making 21 saves. The offense was equally as impressive, Montgomery added.

"We really had them on their heels, but couldn't get the puck in the net," Montgomery said.

Massena finished its championship year with a 24-2-1 record. The Red Raiders had also eliminated AQ from the state semifinals last year, yet by a much more lopsided count of 8-3.

The March 13 loss was Aquinas' first in more than two months. The Little Irish had won 12 consecutive games over that stretch.

—Mike Latona

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