

DIOCESAN NEWS

Catholic high schools capture flurry of titles

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

The winter snowstorms this month failed to chill sports teams from Catholic high schools in the Rochester Diocese.

Three squads walked away with championships: Aquinas hockey, which won the state Class B title for the second straight year; Nazareth Academy girls' basketball, which netted its first-ever Section 5 Class B championship; and Bishop Kearney boys' basketball, which also earned a Section 5 Class B trophy.

In addition, Geneva DeSales girls' basketball finished as runner-up in the Section 5 Class D tournament.

Aquinas 6, Cortland-Homer 4

Aquinas hockey, which ended the year with an 18-game unbeaten streak, topped Cortland-Homer of Section 3 in the state final held March 7 at the Utica War Memorial. Cortland-Homer had entered the game ranked No. 1 in the state with a 25-0-4 record. The Little Irish had reached the title game with a 5-3 semifinal win over Troy LaSalle Institute two days earlier.

Aquinas was led in the championship contest by two goals from tournament Most Valuable Player Steve Gionta: He scored in each of the first two periods as the second-ranked Little Irish went up 3-1 and 5-2 at the breaks.

Aquinas finished its season with a 20-3-4 record despite having lost a number of seniors and its head coach, Dave Montgomery, from last year's state championship squad. Montgomery, who retired, was replaced by Grady Monks, a 1992 Aquinas graduate who obviously hit the ground running.

So did Gionta, the team's leading scorer this season. Though only a freshman, he was already experienced in big-game situations. He noted that his 1997-98 travel hockey team won a state title and reached the national semifinals, equipping him well for the pressures of this month's games.

"Actually it excites me. I get up for those games," Gionta said. His brother,



Greg Francis/Staff photographer
Above, DeSales' Jennifer DiNieri, right, fights for a loose ball against Andover's Molly Jackson during the Section 5 Class D title game March 5 at Wayland-Cohocton High School. Below, DeSales Sue Osborne (12) unsuccessfully battles two Andover players for a rebound. Andover won 40-35.

Brian, is a former AQ player who helped Boston College to the NCAA Division I finals last year.

Gionta admitted that it wasn't an easy path to the state title.

"We had a younger team and had trouble with ineligibility and injuries," Gionta said. "We were just focusing on sectionals when the season began."

Nazareth 56, Livonia 51 (OT)

A phenomenal fourth-quarter comeback enabled Nazareth to claim its first Section 5 championship in any sport in school history.

The top-seeded Lasers were down 11 points to No. 3 Livonia with only five minutes remaining in the March 8 title game at Rochester's Blue Cross Arena. But they went 7-for-7 from the foul line in the final period, and got a big basket from Meredith Craig with 19 seconds left in regulation to tie the score at 46-46 and force



overtime.

"On the bench, Meredith was the leader. She was the one saying, 'Don't give up; it's our game; we can do it,'" Nazareth Coach Chris Belmont said. "It was ironic she hit the shot to put us into OT."

There was another deciding factor as well, Belmont pointed out.

"We had more nuns than Livonia," he quipped.

Bianca Watson tallied 22 points and 17 rebounds to grab tourney MVP honors, while Rochelle Cherry had 16 points and Craig added 11.

Nazareth hiked its record to 22-1 and was scheduled to face Class BB champ Pittsford Mendon in a state qualifier game March 10.

Bishop Kearney 42, Palmyra-Macedon 36

Snow forced postponement of all but two scheduled title games March 6 at Blue Cross Arena. By halftime fourth-seeded BK, playing at 8:30 a.m., might have wished its game had been scratched also, against No. 3 Palmyra-Macedon.

"We're not really used to playing that early," said Marcus Young, who only scored three first-half points as his Kings faced a 23-18 deficit.

However, Kearney avoided a repeat of last year's Section 5 playoffs, when the Kings finished as Class B runners-up. Young scored 13 second-half points while tournament MVP Brandon Andrews finished with a game-high 22 points as the Kings outscored Pal-Mac 17-7 in the final quarter.

Young attributed the Kings' rally to the calming influence of veteran coach Ed Nietopski at halftime.

"Everyone's thinking, 'No, not again.' Probably another coach would come in and scream at you," Young said. "But Coach Nietopski knows what you're doing wrong, and he just tells you what you can do to fix it."

Kearney, which upped its record to 14-7 with the win, was slated to take on Class BB champion Geneva in a state qualifier game March 10.

Andover 40, DeSales 35

In a game of momentum swings, second-seeded DeSales was outscored 16-8 in the final quarter of its Section 5 Class D title game against No. 1 Andover. The contest was held March 5 at Wayland-Cohocton High School.

The Saints led 10-5 after one quarter but fell behind 17-13 at halftime. DeSales surged back forward after three quarters, 27-24, before faltering at the end.

DeSales was led by Erin Hannan, who scored 10 points. The Saints finished the year with a 14-9 record.

Brighton church to host play on St. Thérèse

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Maggie H. Marht, a Catholic from Portland, Ore., has become the classic case of life imitating art. She so likes her role as St. Thérèse of Lisieux in a one-woman play that it has inspired her to enter a contemplative women's religious order — the Sisters of St. John — when she finishes performing the play in 2000.

"As soon as God lets me know, I'll go," she said of leaving the play "Thérèse: The Story of a Soul." "My whole life is oriented to spreading the story of her life."

Marht, 21, talked about her role in the play during a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier* from Beaverton, Ore., where the play's company, St. Luke's Productions, is located. The play was written by Leonardo DeFillippis, the founder of St. Luke's Productions, who has produced several religious dramas for both stage and video.

Marht will perform at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 150 Varinna Dr., Brighton, on Monday, March 15, at 7:30 p.m. Admission to the 90-minute play is \$5 per person, and the drama is suitable for ages 10 and up. Further information is available by calling 716/473-9656.

"Thérèse" is the story of a middle-class French woman who lived from 1873 to 1897, and was a famed Carmelite nun whose *Autobiography of a Soul* inspired great interest among readers for its simplicity, clarity, humor and insight. Declared



St. Thérèse of Lisieux

a saint in 1927, St. Thérèse was also only the third woman in history to be declared a doctor of the church, a declaration issued by Pope John Paul II in 1997.

St. Thérèse's story moved Marht deeply, she said.

"She was really down to earth, and I could relate to her," Marht said. "She tackles the same things the big theologians tackle, but in a way that's easy to understand."

In "Thérèse," Marht essentially performs a monologue on the saint's life, accompanied by a taped musical score that also contains recorded voices of actors playing various people in the saint's life.

"It's been a very big growing experience for me," Marht said of the role. "Prior to this, I never thought of doing monologues. I now have enough confidence to be on stage for 90 minutes straight."

As for her longer commitment — to a life of monastic contemplation — the young Marht said, like her heroine, St. Thérèse, she is sure it's what God wants her to do.

"When I think about my finality, which is to heaven with God, it's worth it," she said. "It's worth it to bring other souls to God."

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