

## FEATURE

# State semifinals await for 3 basketball teams

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

Apparently, being the best in your local area isn't enough for the McQuaid Jesuit and Bishop Kearney boys' basketball teams, or the Nazareth Academy girls.

All three squads already have Section 5 titles in the bag. With two more victories each, all will be hoisting state-championship trophies.

McQuaid shook off a slow start to whip Buffalo Bennett of Section 6, 72-41, in a state Class A quarterfinal game played March 9 at State University of New York College at Buffalo. The Knights, with a record of 23-2, advance to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association semifinals. They will face Whitman of Section 11 on Saturday, March 16, in a 1:30 p.m. game at the Glens Falls Civic Center. The winner moves on to the state final March 17 at 3 p.m., also at the civic center.

Kearney (17-8) won a high-scoring battle with Williamsville East of Section 6, 74-67, on March 9 at Buffalo State. The Class B quarterfinal win puts the Kings into a Final Four matchup March 16 against Amityville of Section 11. That contest will take place at 10 a.m. at the Glens Falls Civic Center, with the title game to follow March 17 at 1 p.m. at the civic center.

Nazareth (21-3) held Fredonia of Section 6 to 14 second-half points, earning a 51-35 victory in Class B quarterfinal action March 9 at Erie Community College. The Lasers move on to a Final Four clash against Lourdes of Section 1. That game will take place March 15 at 2 p.m. at Hudson Valley Community College. The final is set for March 16 at 6:30 p.m., also at Hudson Valley. This marks the school's first trip ever to the state semifinals.

## McQuaid 72, Bennett 41

A 31-point victory — or any victory at all — seemed questionable after the Knights allowed Bennett to score the game's first seven points. But following a timeout, McQuaid outscored the Tigers 20-2 for the rest of the first quarter to establish a 20-9 edge. It was 32-16 at halftime and 55-28 after three quarters.

McQuaid was led by Ryan Pettinella, who netted 20 points on 8-for-12 shooting and also had eight rebounds. Other top Knight scorers were Marty O'Sullivan with 14 points, Alfonso Evans with 10 and Tyler Relph with nine.

The Knights are returning to Glens Falls for the first time since 1997, when they won the state championship.

McQuaid earned its way into the quarterfinals with a 73-57 win over Gates-Chili on March 6, in a state Class A qualifier contest at Rochester's Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial.

Four Knights enjoyed double-figure



McQuaid Jesuit guard Tyler Relph gets a shot off despite blocking attempts by Canandaigua's Ryan Chapman during the Section 5 Class A title game March 3.

scoring nights. Evans led the way with 19 points followed by Relph with 17, O'Sullivan with 16 and Pettinella with 13. The game pitted McQuaid, the Section 5 Class A champion, against the Spartans, who had won the sectional Class AA title.

## BK 74, Williamsville East 67

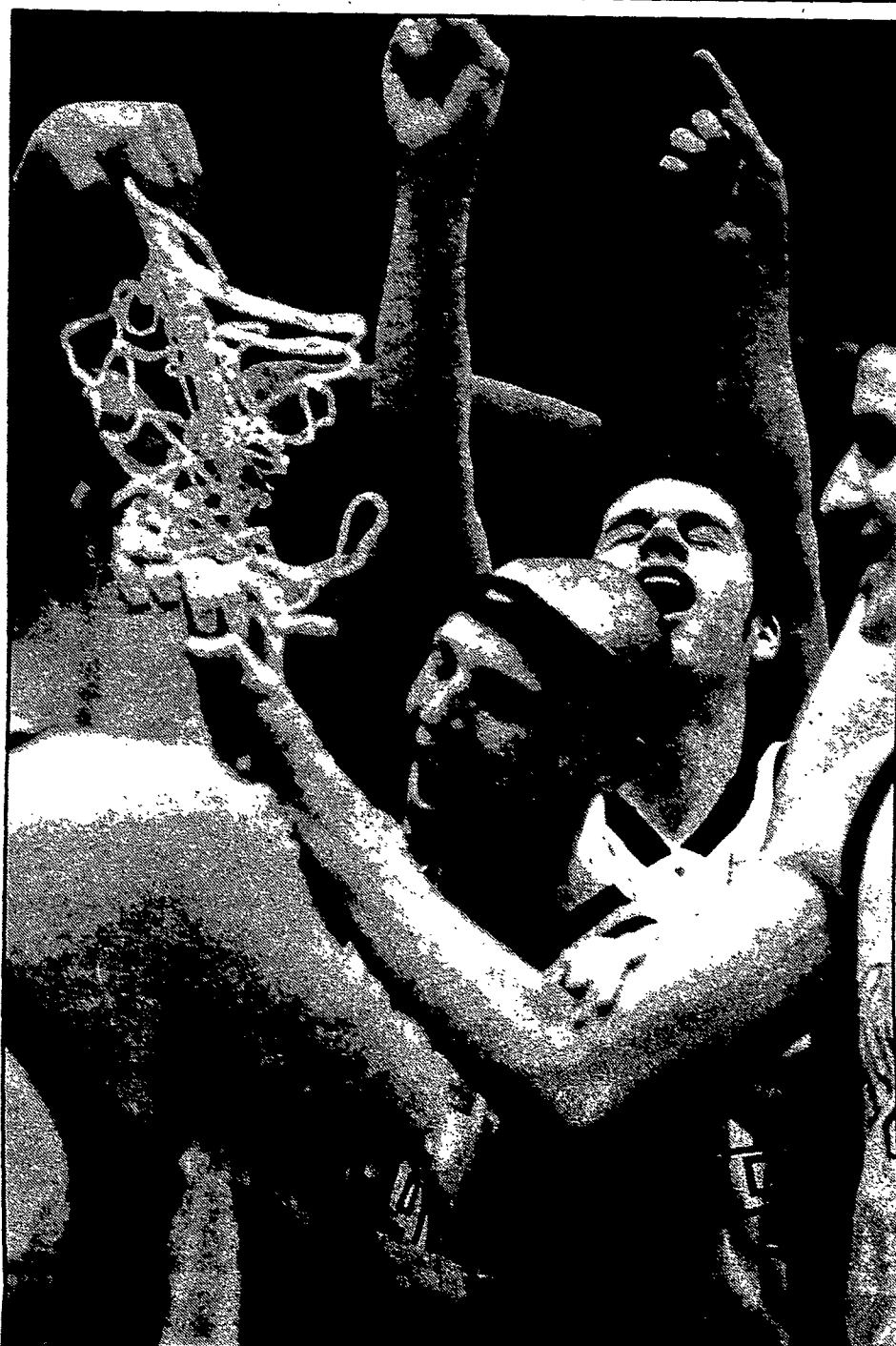
Bishop Kearney advanced past Williamsville East despite an incredible effort by the Flames' Dan Milbrand, who totaled 39 points and 22 rebounds. The Kings scored 13 consecutive points over a stretch that began late in the second quarter and extended into the third quarter. BK led 50-41 heading into the final period, and the Flames rallied late but never got closer than four points.

Leading the Kings were Jamal Gray with 19 points, followed by Shawn Hall with 13, Jesse Hooks with 12 and A.J. White with 11.

Preceding the triumph over Williamsville East was a 78-68 decision over Pittsford Sutherland in state Class B qualifier play on March 6 at Blue Cross Arena. The Kings faced a 36-29 halftime deficit in that contest, but stormed back with 49 second-half points, including 29 in the fourth quarter as they pulled away from a 49-46 lead. Huge efforts were turned in by Mike Williams, who scored 27 points, and Gray, who finished with 21. Also scoring in double figures were Hall with 13 points, and Hooks with 10. BK was this year's Section 5 Class B champ, and the Knights had won the Class BB title.

## Nazareth 51, Fredonia 35

The Lasers weren't fazed by their slow start against the Hillbillies, in which they trailed 11-6 after one quarter. They closed to 21-19 at the half and went up 31-26 after three quarters, then maintained their



Andreas Dixon/Staff photographer

Jon Matt (from left), Dan O'Dell and Ryan Pettinella of the McQuaid Jesuit boys' basketball team celebrate following their Section 5 Class A title victory over Canandaigua March 3 at Rochester's Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial.

lead as Meghan Dahlman scored 13 points in the final period.

Dahlman finished with 21 points and also totaled 12 rebounds and nine blocked shots. Nicole Lockhart added 12 points, and Brittany Hussong had nine.

Three nights prior to their win over Fredonia, the Lasers outlasted Newark, 57-54, in a state Class B qualifier game at Fairport High School. Dahlman came up

with a huge effort against the Reds, totaling 35 points to go with 12 boards and five blocks. And the Lasers needed just about every one of Dahlman's points, as they saw a 13-point third-quarter lead get sliced to two in the final minute. But Stephanie Herbst made a key steal in the closing seconds, and Nazareth held on. The Lasers had captured this year's Section 5 Class B title; Newark had won in Class BB.

## AQ hockey falls in state Final Four

The hockey program at Aquinas Institute has enjoyed incredible postseason success in recent years, winning six consecutive Section 5 championships and reaching four of the last five state semifinals — with state titles coming in 1998 and 1999.

But a state crown for the 2001-02 Little Irish wasn't in the cards, as they were halted in Division 2 semifinal play on Saturday, March 9. AQ was blanked by Clarkstown North, 4-0, in a game at the Utica Memorial Auditorium. The loss gave Aquinas a final record of 20-8-1.

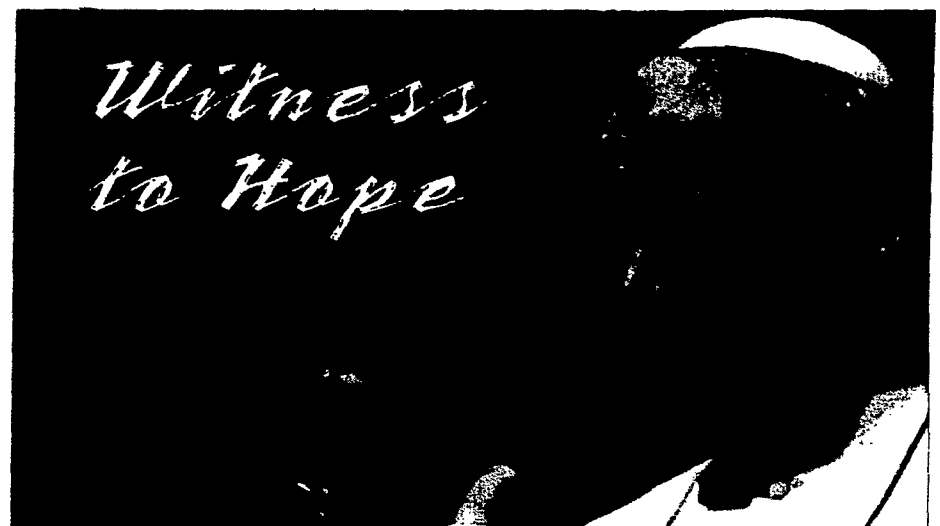
Although the Little Irish held a 34-21 edge in shots on goal, they could not slide anything past Clarkstown North goalie

K.J. McQuade. The game was scoreless after one period, but the Rams of Section 1 scored two goals in both the second and third periods to pull away.

The Rams went on to lose to Section 10's Salmon River, 10-0, in the title game played March 10. Salmon River was the defending state champ, having defeated Aquinas in last year's championship contest.

Aquinas' road to this year's state Final Four had begun with a 3-0 victory over Batavia in the Section 5 Class B final on Feb. 23. That was followed by a 6-5 victory win over Section 3's New Hartford in a state quarterfinal on March 2.

— Mike Latona



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