

# McQuaid, Nazareth rule once more

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Even the most extreme optimist may not have foreseen how easily Nazareth Academy's girls would win their Section 5 basketball title. On the other hand, such a person may well have predicted an easy time of it for McQuaid Jesuit's boys, based on their undefeated status and No. 2 national ranking.

Instead, McQuaid endured a mighty struggle, trailing by five points in the fourth quarter of their Class A boys' final against Marshall. But solid free-throw shooting and gritty defense down the stretch enabled the top-seeded Knights to rally past the seventh-seeded Jurists, 85-73, on March 1 at Rochester's Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial.

The victory gave the Knights their second-consecutive sectional title and kept their 2002-03 record perfect at 23-0. It also advanced them to a Class A state-qualifier game against East High on March 5. The winner goes on to state quarterfinal play on Saturday, March 8, at Blue Cross Arena at 8:45 p.m. against either Bennett or Niagara Falls of Section 6 (Buffalo area).

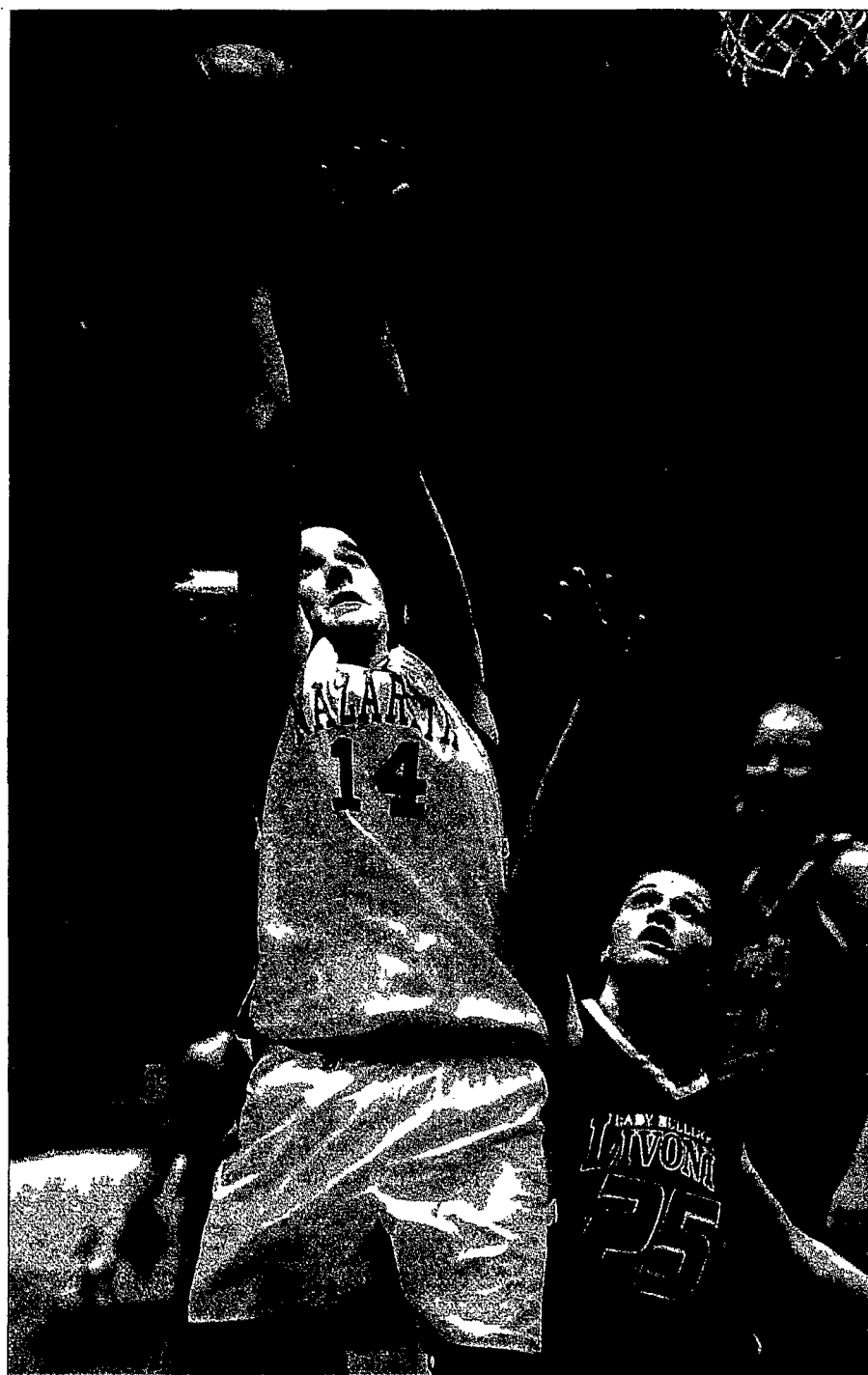
No fourth-quarter heroics were required by Nazareth. Led by star center Meghan Dahlman's school-record 42 points, the second-seeded Lasers coasted to a 43-14 halftime lead in capturing their third straight Class B crown, 70-41 over No. 4 Livonia. The title game, played March 3 at Blue Cross Arena, saw Nazareth improve its record to 18-5.

That victory earned the Lasers a trip to the Class B state qualifier against Honeoye Falls-Lima on March 5. The winner will play a quarterfinal game against Williamsville East of Section 6 on March 8, beginning at 5 p.m. at State University of New York College at Geneseo.

Whereas McQuaid and Nazareth brought home titles, the Geneva DeSales girls had to settle for runner-up status. The Saints, seeded No. 3 in Section 5 Class D, fell to top-seeded Prattsburgh, 63-44, in the final on March 3 at Wayland-Cohocton High School. DeSales ends up with a 17-7 record.

## MCQUAID VS. MARSHALL

The Jurists had fared better than any Rochester-area squad against the Knights this year, losing 79-73 on Jan. 31. This time Marshall seemed ready to pull off the upset, recovering from a 13-point deficit in the first half to take a 64-59 lead with less than a quarter to go.



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Nazareth senior Meghan Dahlman takes an easy lay-up over Livonia's Jill Brisbane at the Section 5 Class B championship game at the Blue Cross Arena in Rochester March 3.

McQuaid's Tyler Relph then showed the stuff that earned him the recent distinction as the state's top player in voting by the Basketball Coaches Association of New York. The senior guard scored several crucial points down the stretch, finishing with 26 for the evening, as the Knights scored the game's last 13 points and held Marshall scoreless for the final four minutes.

"Tyler is just an extraordinary competitor, a kid who just wants the ball when the game's on the line," said Joe Marchese, McQuaid's head coach.

High-scoring honors belonged to

McQuaid senior forward Marty O'Sullivan, who hit for 30 points. His huge night — combined with a 27-point, 13-rebound outing in a 76-46 blowout of Irondequoit in Class A semifinal play five nights earlier — earned him tournament Most Valuable Player honors.

"Marty O'Sullivan played like a champ. He was just extraordinary," Marchese said. The coach also lauded the efforts of junior guard Jack Leasure, who scored 16 points against Marshall.

The quartet of Relph, O'Sullivan, Leasure and senior center Ryan Pettinella (10 points) combined for

82 of McQuaid's 85 points in the title game. Much of the Knights' success came on free throws; they converted 34 of 38 attempts.

McQuaid's sectional title win came in front of nearly 10,000 onlookers, many of whom were drawn to Blue Cross Arena by the Knights' No. 2 national ranking in a *USA Today* poll. Based on the struggle with Marshall, Marchese was content to savor the victory rather than look too far ahead in the state tournament.

"I can't speak for the kids. But for me, winning the sectional tournament is the most important piece of the puzzle," he said.

## NAZARETH VS. LIVONIA

How's this for a statistical line? For starters, the 6-foot-3-inch Dahlman outscored the entire Bulldog team by one point. The senior center's school-record 42 points were achieved with a 15-for-23 performance from the field, and a perfect 10-for-10 from the foul line. She eclipsed her previous personal best of 36. And she had 10 rebounds and six blocked shots.

Chris Belmont, Nazareth's head coach, said Livonia's defensive plan made Dahlman a consistently inviting option. "In the beginning I don't even think they were double-teaming her. If they're going to do that, then we'll keep going to her," Belmont said. He added that Nazareth's first-half performance, which included a 26-5 scoring edge in the second quarter, "was probably the best half we've played all year."

Though she scored at will inside, Dahlman couldn't resist launching a three-point attempt late in the second quarter and her team already up by 34-14. "I've never shot a '3' in the War Memorial before," she explained later.

The result? All net, naturally — prompting a big grin from Dahlman.

Nazareth had gained entrance into the title game with a 67-54 victory over third-seeded School of the Arts on Feb. 27. Dahlman totaled 19 points and 23 rebounds that night, with Brittany Hussong adding 11.

The Livonia game marked the fifth year running that the Lasers and Bulldogs have met in the finals, with Nazareth winning in 1999, 2001 and 2002 — and now 2003, thanks to the amazing effort by Dahlman, who is heading to Holy Cross next year on a full scholarship.

As she came out of the championship game with a minute remaining, Dahlman first hugged Belmont

Nazar  
Blue C

and th  
ging e  
hadn'  
plays  
wheel  
receiv  
"I f  
MVP  
do thi

DeS

The  
8-0 de  
going  
at 10.

er big  
points  
DeSal  
time.  
unabl  
ond-h

Lau  
score  
with 1

ers w  
Rebec  
Melis

DeS  
game  
Troup  
play o  
away  
tage v  
outsco  
third  
period

Lea  
Jaspe  
DiNie  
Evang  
and K