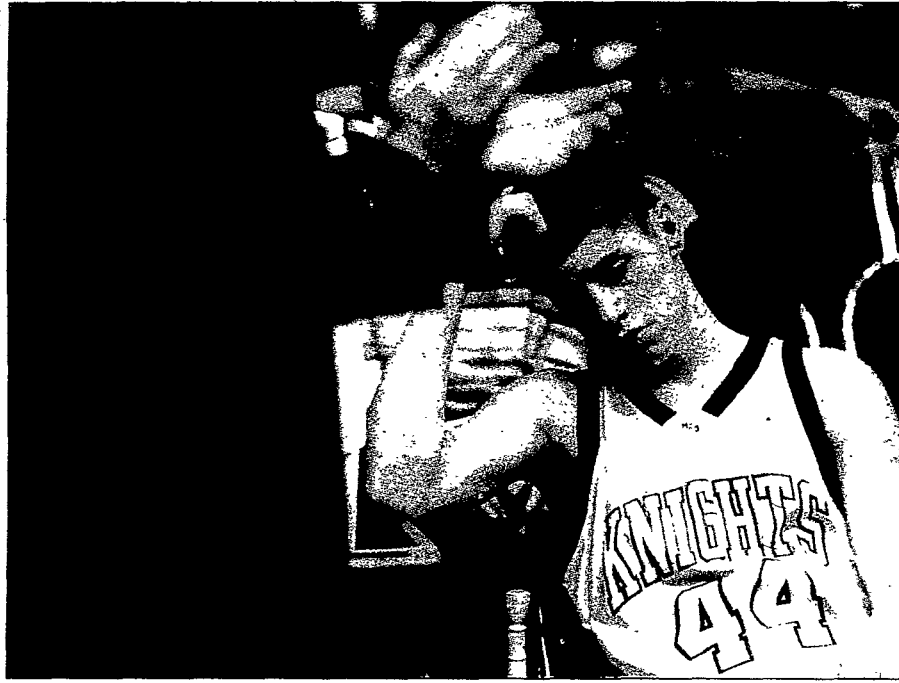


Heartbreaking end to stellar season



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Jack Leasure holds his head in his hand after McQuaid was defeated by Brooklyn's Abraham Lincoln High School.

McQuaid loses to Lincoln 57-44

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

There's an old saying among basketball coaches, according to McQuaid's Joe Marchese: You live by the jump shot, you die by the jump shot.

"We died by it Friday night," Marchese remarked of the Knights' performance March 21 in the New York Federation Tournament of Champions. His dream team hit only 1-for-18 from the three-point line at Glens Falls Civic Center.

Poor shooting ended the Knights' fantastic 27-win season with a 57-44 loss to New York City's public high-school champion Abraham Lincoln High School during the Class A semifinal. The Lincoln Railsplitters of Brooklyn went on to claim the federation title Saturday night, defeating Christ the King High School of Queens in overtime, 75-73.

For Rochester's McQuaid, ranked No. 2 in the nation by *USA Today* prior to the loss, the semifinal debacle ended one of the greatest and most dramatic seasons of any team in the school's history. And that's something of which his players should be proud, Marchese said he told the teary-eyed Knights after they fell to Lincoln.

"When the dust settles, and you look back, this is a team that recorded more wins than any other team in the history of the school," he said. He added that numerous fans, young and old alike, came up to him after the game and told him how much fun it was to follow this year's team.

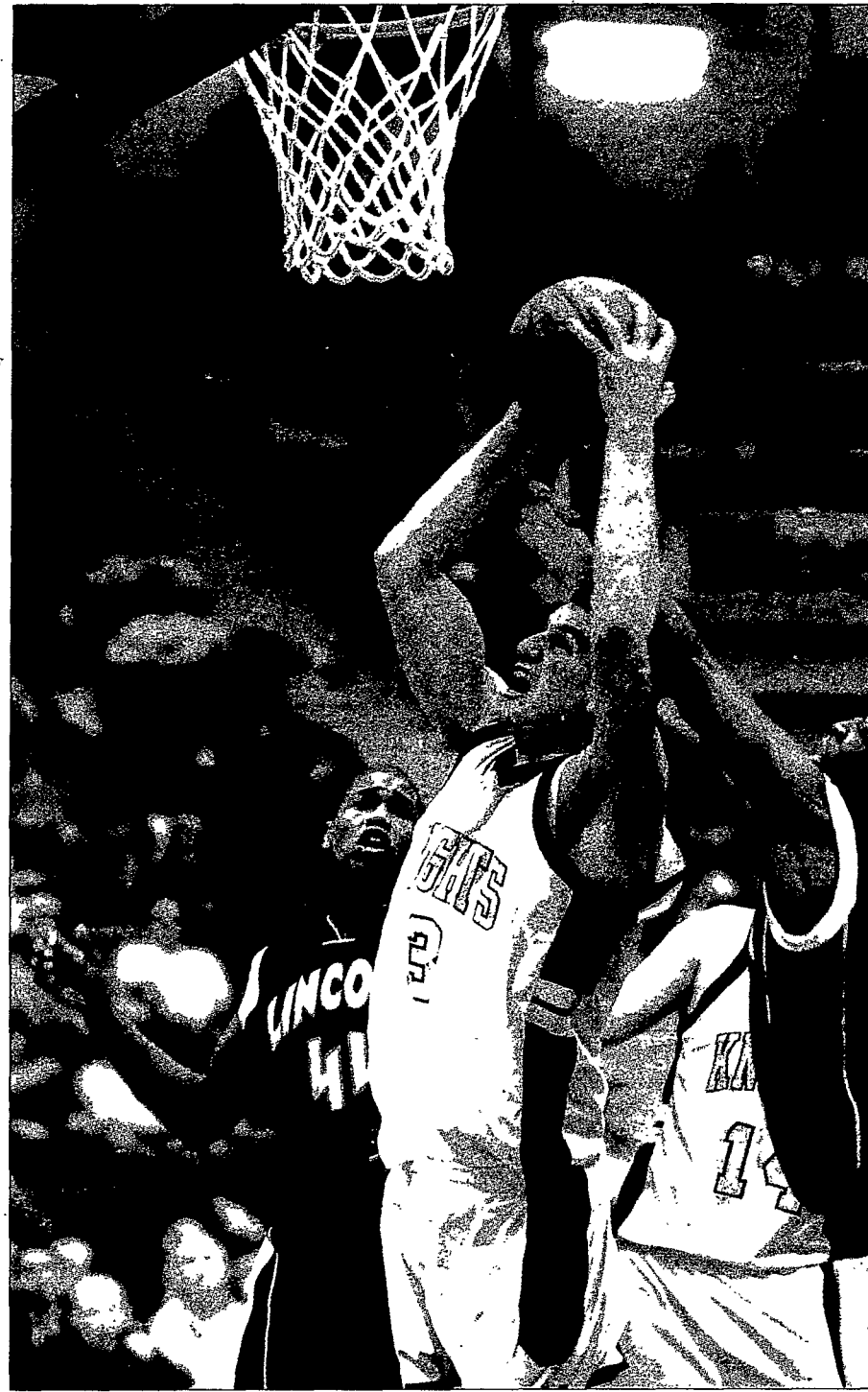
"What an incredible ride!" Marchese said.

Indeed, coming into the tournament, the team had won both the Section 5 title and the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Class A title, and had beaten a number of nationally ranked schools.

Meanwhile, senior guard Tyler Relph had been named Mr. Basketball — the top player in the state — by the Basketball Coaches Association of New York.

But Lincoln apparently wasn't fazed by McQuaid, and came armed with its own basketball star in junior Sebastian Telfair, who averaged 24 points per game during the regular season. Telfair also made a number of key plays against McQuaid, including stealing a McQuaid inbound pass after the Knights scored five unanswered points late in the game. Telfair made a layup and put the Railsplitters ahead 50-38 with less than five minutes remaining in the game.

It's not as if McQuaid failed to play tough defense against Lincoln.



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

McQuaid Knight Ryan Pettinella struggles to make a shot during the New York Federation Tournament of Champions semifinal game at Glens Falls Civic Center March 21.

In fact, the Knights held Telfair to 15 points. It's just that on a night when McQuaid played good defense, it never caught fire on offense, said senior Marty O'Sullivan, who had 12 points.

"If you'd said before the game we'd hold Sebastian Telfair to 15 points, I would've said we'd win by 20 points," he said. "A lot of our shots didn't fall. Nobody wanted to lose that game, but whenever they needed to make shots, they did."

Marchese added that the Railsplitters set the game's pace from the outset.

"They had three three-pointers in the first four minutes or so, and it was just playing catch-up from that point on," he said.

While the season is finally over for McQuaid, O'Sullivan, Relph and fellow senior Ryan Pettinella still have all-star games to play, including the Ronald McDonald Exceptional Senior All-Star Basketball Game at the Rochester Institute of Technology on Saturday, March 29, at 3 p.m.

"It's a nice tribute," O'Sullivan said of the all-star game. "Having three guys from one team is great."

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