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Grand Rapids Christian High School 48 Grand Rapids, MI

### Steve Majerle wears new colors, but success is the same

Peter J. Wallner | pwallner@mlive.com, December 12, 2012 7 a.m.



View full size (http://hssn-media.advance.net/MLive.com, Grand Rapids Christian coach Steve Majerle, left, shakes hands with Rockford coach Nick Allen before the start of Tuesday's game.

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Steve Majerle walked on the court Tuesday and it was as if someone had run a bad Photoshop program.

Majerle was home but he wasn't in Rockford; he wore blue, not orange, and he was cheered on by Eagles, not Rams.

"I even have a reminder," he said with a smile, showing off his phone's background with the "C" logo of Grand Rapids Christian.

After 14 seasons as basketball coach of Rockford High School, Majerle's first win with Grand Rapids Christian came against his former team, 48-39, in a game he

really didn't want to play beforehand but wasn't going to argue about the result afterward.

Related: Check out a photo gallery from the game (http://photos.mlive.com/4469/gallery/grand\_rapids\_christian\_takes\_on\_rockford\_in\_mens\_high\_school\_basketball\_1211201)

The Eagles needed the win after an 0-2 start that was more a result of the school football team's deep run to a state championship and a lack of practice time under their new coach. Majerle had his full team for five practices before the season began.

"We've made great improvements because we've had a lot of work to do," said forward Drake Harris, who was one of nine players who also played football. "We know that with coach Majerle we're going to be successful."

Before a full gym divided by blue and orange, Majerle welcomed the shoulder taps and handshakes from Rockford well-wishers during pregame warm ups. And with good reason. He took the Rams to the 2003 state championship and won seven OK Red Conference titles before retiring after the 2011 season due to health issues caused by Parkinson's disease. After successful deep brain stimulation surgery last spring, Majerle returned to coaching, this time with Grand Rapids Christian.

And wouldn't you know it, Game 3 of the season was Rockford at Grand Rapids Christian.

"I really didn't want to play the game, but I was talked to it and that it would be good for us," Majerle said. "I'm glad we won, but at the same time I respect the heck out of Nick (Allen) and (assistant coach) Ryan DeKuiper. They do a great job. Last year, I couldn't have done that. They took a team to a state final, and that was all them."

As Grand Rapids Christian players were introduced, Allen, who played for Majerle and was a junior varsity coach before taking over for him last season,

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MLive.com Game of the Week statewide poll: Which Friday night basketball game is the best matchup? (Poll Closed)

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Lansing Eastern at Grand Ledge boys 18.6% (90 votes)

Bay City Central at Pinconning boys 16.53% (80 votes)

Wyoming at Coopersville girls 16.32% (79 votes)

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Clarkston at Southfield-Lathrup girls 9% (42 votes)

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greeted the Eagles but often looked at his mentor seated with the Eagles until the two met eyes and smiled. Moments before tipoff, they shook hands at midcourt and briefly embraced.

"It's no secret what he's done for the Rockford basketball team," Allen said. "... he'll always be coach to me."

As for the game, Majerle figured experience was on his side.

"I didn't have to scout them, I knew what they were going to do and they knew what we were going to do," he said. "I probably had the advantage because I knew their players - I coached some of them - and I did radio broadcasts of their games last year so I knew exactly what they were going to do and what was going to happen."

Afterward, as the teams lined up and exchanged handshakes, Majerle remained stoic through them all, including his longtime assistant and best friend Ryan DeKuiper, except for a second embrace of Allen.

"It was just nice to know we took the next step and beat a good team like them," Majerle said. "But it was tough to be on the other end of the bench watching them."

Email Pete at [pwallner@mlive.com](mailto:pwallner@mlive.com) and follow him on **Twitter** (<http://twitter.com/petewallner>) for coverage of Grand Rapids sports.

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### High School Basketball Bulletin

#### By Steve Bell

- Bank Hoops' Class A team, players of the week (<http://blog.mlive.com/highschoolbasketball/2013/01/ba>)
- Bank Hoops' Class B team, players of the week (<http://blog.mlive.com/highschoolbasketball/2013/01/ba>)
- Bank Hoops' Class C team, players of the week (<http://blog.mlive.com/highschoolbasketball/2013/01/ba>)