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Battle

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Boys Basketball

Detroit Loyola vs. Rockford - Game Preview & News

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(/boysbasketball/)
Back to
HS Sports Home »
(/)

Detroit Loyola
(/school/detroit-detroit-loyola/boysbasketball/)
(2-2-0)

40

12/22/2012
6 p.m.

Rockford (/school/rockford-rockford/boysbasketball/)
(4-3-0)

55

Creston High School, Grand Rapids, MI

Rockford boys struggle with shooting, elevate defense to easily beat Detroit Loyola

Cory Olsen | colsen@mlive.com, December 22, 2012 9:04 p.m.



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Rockford senior Chase Fairchild shoots Saturday, Dec. 22, 2012 at Creston High School in Grand Rapids Mich. Rockford beat Detroit Loyola 55-40. - (Sally Finneran | MLive.com)

GRAND RAPIDS, MI -- The Rockford boys basketball team likes their three-point shots, and senior Chad Carlson showed that off with the Ram's first shot of the game, swishing it in to start the game three points ahead in their matchup versus Detroit Loyola in the Battle of I-96 East vs. West Holiday Classic hosted by the Grand Rapids Public Schools.

Carlson hit one more three-pointer in that first quarter but he and the team struggled overall in the first half from that distance, making just 4 of 13 attempts. Making a smooth transition, Rockford (2-3) leaned on a different part of their game instead, applying a tremendously quick defensive pressure to dominate Loyola (1-1) 55-40.

Rockford's Chase Fairchild, a senior forward, said the Rams needed to step up their game and take Loyola's center, 6'7" Malik McDowell, out of the equation early.

"They're a quick team and they have that really big guy in the post," Fairchild said. "He started off getting at us early then we started doubling him and that made them kick it out to their wings and we were able to play them pretty well."

The Rams pressured Loyola's wing players, frustrating them into committing turnovers which led to Rockford's fast breaks.

"We're a three-point shooting team, it's kind of what we do," Fairchild said. "We certainly don't live and die by it, but that's why our defense is so important to us. We know if our shots aren't falling, we have to have something to fall back on and that's our defense."

Rockford coach Nick Allen said playing against teams from the east side of the state will help his team better themselves for later in the season.

"It's great to play a team of that caliber from that side of the state," Allen said. "It's great to expose our team to different styles of play because you never know what you're going to get in February and March."

"They pressed us and our guards and wing players did a nice job of breaking that press," Allen said. "Shots weren't falling in the first half, but in the second maybe we got a little more patient and worked it around a little bit more and got the lead."

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Loyola coach John Buscemi said his team is still getting used to playing together with five of his guys coming late to the team after a high school football playoff run.

"We're trying to play an up-tempo game this year and we were definitely

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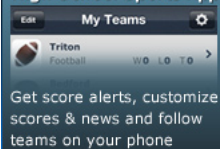
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tired," Buscemi said. "The guys are motivated mentally but not too motivated physically yet. In order to play this way we're going to have to play 10 or 11 deep and I think we have the talent, we just don't have the experience yet."

Loyola surged in the third quarter, shortening Rockford's lead to just three points, but the Rams responded as Fairchild made a three-point shot and added two more points on the Rams' next possession to stretch the lead out of reach.

"He's a smart player and he plays hard," Allen said. "He definitely plays within himself and the framework of what we do and he's having a great year."

Fairchild said his team hasn't been happy with their season thus far and are looking for a new path.

"We were 1-3 and we weren't very happy about that so we came out firing and that's how we're going to be the rest of the season," Fairchild said.

Follow Cory Olsen on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/coryolsen>) or email him atcolsen@mlive.com (<mailto:colsen@mlive.com>)

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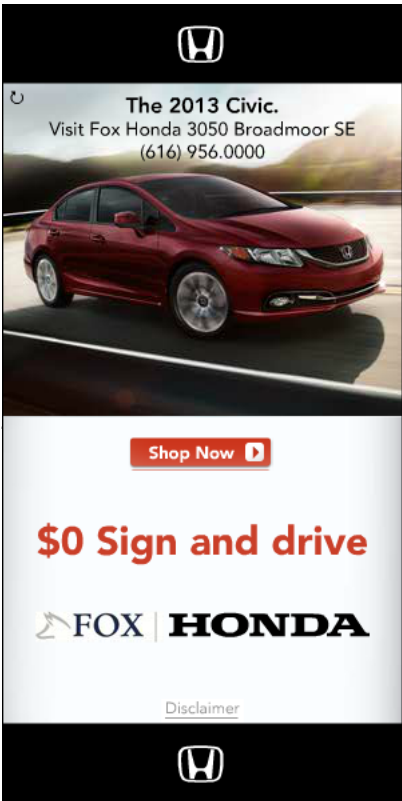
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By Steve Bell

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