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Rockford (14-7-0) 55	3/4/2013 6 p.m.	Grand Rapids Forest Hills Northern (15-6-0) 58
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Lowell High School, Lowell, MI

Forest Hills Northern uses its size to beat Rockford in first round action Monday night

Jeff Chaney, March 04, 2013 9:32 p.m.



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Chase Fairchild drives the ball during the class A district game between Forest Hills Northern and Rockford, on Monday, March 4, 2013, at Lowell High School, in Lowell. - (Latara Appleby | MLive.com)

LOWELL, MI – Forest Hills Northern boys basketball coach Joe Soules says it's a simple formula if a team is to make a deep run in the state tournament – play defense and rebound.

That's exactly what Soules' Huskies did, especially in the pivotal third quarter, against Rockford Monday night at Lowell High School in the first round of the Class A district action.

Trailing by four points coming out of halftime, Forest Hills Northern played inspired defense, and out-rebounded the Rams 8-2 in the third, which helped turn that four-point deficit into a five-point lead heading into the final quarter.

From there, the Huskies kept Rockford at bay, beating the Rams, who were the

state runner-ups last year, 58-55.

Forest Hills Northern (15-6) will now play the host Red Arrows in one of Wednesday night's semifinals.

The Rams end their season with a 14-6 record.

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"They are a tough team, well-coached with tough players," Soules said. "They really get after it. They are a tough team to play, because they force you to do things that you don't want to do."

That's what happened in the first half, when the game took on the feel of a track meet which had a lot of 3-point shots being fired.

But in that pivotal third quarter, Forest Hills Northern started to get the ball into the paint to its post players, which turned the game around.

In a huge 12-3 run to close out the third quarter, forwards Jayvon Bennett, Jamal White and Trey Moore scored all but two of the points. And the trio collected five of the team's rebounds in the quarter.

The Huskies out-scored Rockford in the quarter 17-8.

"Early on we tried getting the ball into our bigs, but they are 17-year-old kids, and sometimes they don't listen like you want them to," Soules said. "We spend so much time in practice boxing. In the first half I think they were a little better on the boards, but in the second half I think we controlled the boards."

That was the case, as Rockford out-rebounded the Huskies 16-11 in the first half, while Forest Hills Northern out-rebounded the Rams 15-9 in the second half.

"Their size created problems. They executed on offense and capitalized on our mistakes," Rockford coach Nick Allen said. "They did a nice job."

Aside from the rebounding advantage, Forest Hills Northern held Rockford to 35% shooting from the field, including 26% from behind the 3-point arch.

"Shooting is what got us to where we are now," Allen said. "Tonight we came up short there."

Forest Hills Northern was led in scoring by senior point guard Michael McLaughlin's 13 points, while White chipped in with 10.

The Rams were paced by Chase Fairchild's game-high 18 points.

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By Steve Bell

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