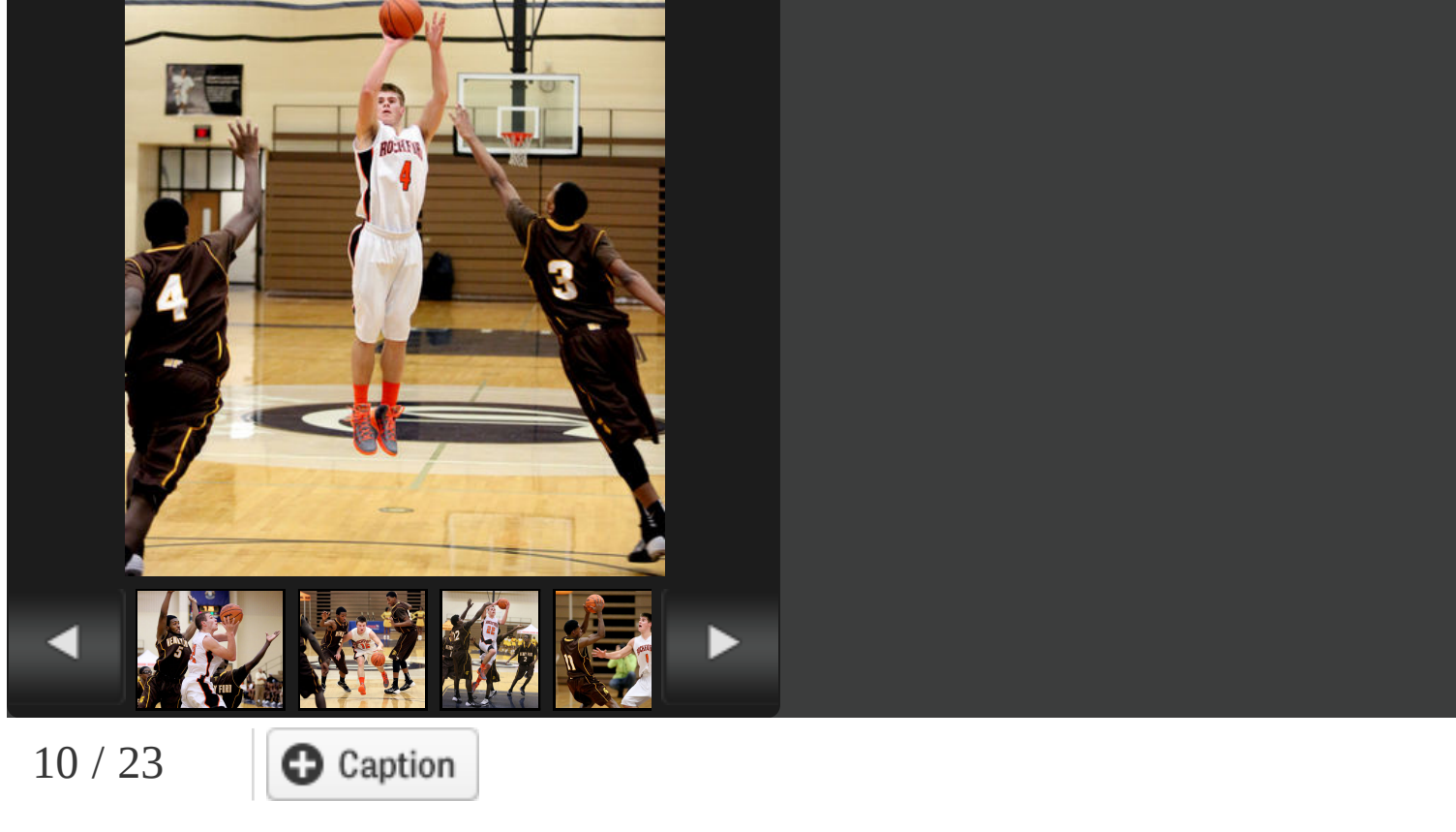


Boys basketball scoreboard

Boys Basketball

Detroit Henry Ford's clutch free throws ends Rockford's big comeback bid

10 / 23

Caption

Detroit Henry Ford beats Rockford Saturday afternoon in the Battle of I-96 East-West Classic. (Rex Larsen | MLive)

By Steve Kaminski | skaminsk@mlive.com
on December 21, 2013 9:38 p.m.

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12/21 - 4:00 PM Boys Basketball	Final
Rockford	53
Detroit Henry Ford	61

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GRAND RAPIDS – No one on the Detroit Henry Ford boys basketball team leaves the gym each day until everyone on the squad makes 50 free throws.

That turned out to be bad news for Rockford because it was the Trojans' clutch free throw shooting in the fourth quarter that helped Henry Ford stave off the Rams, 61-53, Saturday afternoon at City High School.

The Rams came roaring back from a 14-point first-half deficit to close the gap to 43-41 with 4:36 left in the fourth quarter. But Henry Ford's James Towns, who led all scorers with 26 points, made 10-of-12 fourth-quarter free throws, enabling the Trojans to pull away down the stretch. The Trojans made 12-of-16 free throws in the fourth and 22-of-29 in the game.

"We were having some trouble with free throws earlier in the season. We were terrible the second game of the season when we lost to Canton, so now everyone has to make 50 every day at the end of practice,' Henry Ford coach Kenneth Flowers said. "Sometimes, we are there until 9:30, 10 o'clock at night, but everyone makes 50."

The Grand Rapids Public Schools hosted its annual East vs. West Battle of I-96 Holiday Classic Saturday at the old Creston High School gymnasium, and the Rockford/Henry Ford game was one of five. The Trojans, 4-1, beat Ann Arbor Huron in a tournament Friday in Romulus, then scooted over to Grand Rapids Saturday, and they struck quickly against Rockford, building up a 25-11 second-quarter lead.

But Rockford, 1-2, scored the final nine points of the first half to trail 25-20 at halftime. The Rams made nine of their 10 3-pointers in the final three quarters, and that helped them pull to within two points on three different second-half occasions. But the Rams could get no closer.

"Early on, (Henry Ford's) defense gave us some trouble, and our guys made some adjustments on offense, but offense wasn't our problem tonight," Rockford coach Nick Allen said. "We saw (defensively) that we have some things that we need to work on."

Rockford's Casey Watters scored 19 points to lead the Rams, while teammate Reid Kelley added 11. Watters netted five of the Rams' 3-pointers, while Nick Woznick sank three to finish with nine points.

"Our guys are getting better," Allen said. "The improvements we have had the last two, three weeks have been great. You want to experience success, and it's a little disappointing when you don't, but we will keep working at it."

Towns finished 14-of-17 from the free throw line, and he scored 12 of his points in the fourth. Anthony Carter added 11 points for the Trojans.

"This is a real good win for our program," Flowers said. "We are a real young team, but we are playing well right now and the guys are buying into our system. To be able to come over from Detroit and beat a team like Rockford, which always does well in the state tournament and always has good players and great coaches, we are really proud of the win."

Also Saturday at City, **Union defeated Lansing Sexton 65-56**. The Red Hawks, 3-1, overall, jumped out to a 15-6 first-quarter lead and played even with Sexton the rest of the way. Curtis Davison led Union with 16 points, while Paul Brown added 15.

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