

Jan. 31 Boys Basketball

Township residents Maksimow and Harris helping to fuel Notre Dame

By Ken Weingartner

Fish4scores.com

Jan. 31: Notre Dame's boys' basketball team is flying high, with two Hamilton Township players providing plenty of lift.

Senior forward Mark Maksimow and junior center Steve Harris have been key performers for the Irish, who improved to 15-2 this season with a 55-40 win tonight at Steinert. Notre Dame is ranked No. 16 in the state according to the most recent Star-Ledger poll.

Maksimow is third on the team in scoring, averaging 12 points per game. He scored 19 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in the Irish's 73-69 victory at Trenton last week.

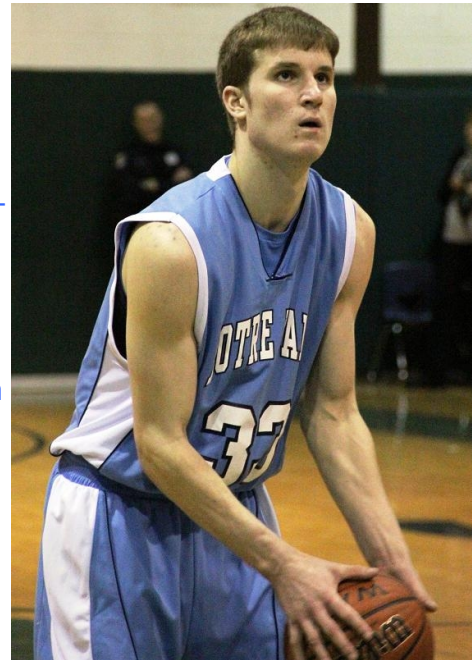
"Mark provides senior leadership," Notre Dame coach Bob Turco said. "People call this his second sport (to baseball), but he's pretty good at it. He creates mismatch nightmares outside because he can hit the three-ball.

"He hustles up the court as fast as anybody on our secondary break. And he knocks down free throws at the end of games to win games. He's just a tremendous asset. He's a leader. He's an absolute leader."

Harris, who is 6-foot-5, is the squad's top rebounder while contributing nearly 10 points per contest.



ND coach Bob Turco feels Steve Harris is one of the state's top rebounders (Photo by Ken Weingartner).



Mark Maksimow is third on the Irish with a 12-point scoring average (Photo by Ken Weingartner)

"Steve Harris has been the biggest and best surprise in my 18 years (of coaching)," Turco said. "Last year he was a JV kid. We knew he had the size, but we didn't know what kind of ability he had. He put in 10 months of work in the spring, summer and fall and it paid off. His first game he was 23 points, 17 rebounds, and from there he's just gotten better and better."

Notre Dame has one of Mercer County's top scorers in junior guard Isaiah Johnson and another threat in junior forward Josh Williams, who is 6-4 with the ball-handling skills of a guard. But it is Maksimow and Harris who make the Irish go with their abilities to rebound and run the floor in transition.

"They've meant the world to this team," Turco said. "They kick it out so well and run the floor so well, it helps us score in the 60s and 70s most nights, because of those two."

The Irish are happy with their position right now, but know it is no time to relax; not with the Mercer County Tournament two weeks away.

"We've been playing pretty well; it shows by our record," said Maksimow, who had 10 points against Steinert. "We've got some recognition now, but it seems to be going to our heads a little bit. We're not playing as well as we were at the beginning of the season to get us to this point. We need to keep working hard.

"I didn't know we would be in this position, but I knew we

had a good team coming into the season. Everyone is stepping up this year. We're all coming together as a team and playing well together. We're all good athletes out there, whoever you throw out there, which helps a lot."

Harris, who has been battling illness the past week but scored six points against Steinert, enjoys doing the dirty work under the basket.

"I'm a little bit of a garbage man; play defense, get boards," Harris said. "I just do what the team needs in each specific game."

Maksimow echoed the sentiment.

"I do whatever I can," he said. "Whatever the team needs, I'll do."

Harris, who in Turco's estimation is one of the top rebounders in the state, does not feel any need to seek glory beyond helping the team.

"We want to win the division, make a good run at MCTs; we want to win," he said. "That's what we came here to do.

"Get the 'W'; that's all the glory we need."