

GEORGE BEAHON
"In This Corner"



New York, N.Y. — The Knicks had the bad manners on this weekend to blow a pair, back to back, and this prompted people to ask, "What's wrong with the Knicks?" The immediate answer to that is nothing. There's nothing wrong with any group that can go to the post 75 times and maintain a .700-plus, won-lost average.

Lennie Lewin has been covering the Knicks for the New York Daily News and now for the New York Post. He goes back to Joe Lapchick days in the old Garden when the Knicks were losing championships to old franchises like the Rochester Royals.

"The weekend the Knicks lost two straight to Baltimore proved only one thing," said Lewin over a bottle of red pop at Shor's. "It proved that Baltimore is an improved club. A club that is coming on."

But Baltimore would be the Knicks first round playoff opponent, in the tournament that offers more prize money per combatant than any other team sport extant.

"The injury factor is unknown now, with weeks left before the playoffs. But we know about the

pressure. This puts the Knicks and the Lakers in the championship. Because they have been there. They have the playoff experience. They can handle the pressure. The others haven't done it. It's that simple."

But what about any Knicks problems?

"Injuries have contributed some," conceded Lewin. "But Red (coach Red Holzman) isn't the least bit concerned. Not yet anyway. This is a team that needs its rhythm, its consistency of performance. It is a team in every sense, a unit that must put it together. The Knicks, they can win on cohesion. Milwaukee, for example, can't do it unless both Jabbar and Oscar Robertson do their things. Boston can't make it work either, unless both John Havlicek and Dave Cowens, who should be Most Valuable Player, have it going the same time."

"With the Knicks, it's not a matter of depending on super efforts from any two men. It's team performance, and it figures to be there in the playoffs."

"Willis Reed? Look at Reed's situation this way. Nobody expected to get the same Reed as in the past. He is older and he is hurt. Couldn't come back all the way. So Jerry Lucas picks up what isn't left of Reed. Lucas picks it up and more."

Lewin has collaborated with Holzman on a book, "Winning Strategy and Tactics" (MacMillan \$6.95) that may set a record. It may go into a second printing without sale of the first printing. That's because of a computer error which found duplicate freebie copies going to every one of Lewin's sports writing cohorts within the continental confines of the U.S. Seems the computer addressed not one to each press box slave, but they were dispensed in twos, threes and even fours.

A regular in the Knicks dressing room is Phil Foster, the comedian, and a buddy of Lewin's and

Holzman's. He told Lewin about leaving Rochester after the Press-Radio Club's Professional Athlete of the Year Dinner last month. Washington Redskins superstar Larry Brown won a Lincoln Continental Mark IV.

"They gave him the keys," recalled Foster, who was a hit at the same dinner dais. "I suggested they better give Larry the registration, because he was a cinch to be picked up driving that wagon. They laughed. The dinner broke up and some of us were headed for Jamestown for another dinner. Pete Rose, Mercury Morris, Terry Bradshaw and me. Larry Brown drove, of course. In his new wheels."

They were tooling toward Jamestown when the black and white (State Police) drove alongside and signaled Brown to pullup. Foster began to giggle. He remembered his word to the Rochester audience. The policeman asked Brown for his registration.

"We got hysterical," says Foster. "Rose, Bradshaw, Mercury and I broke up. Even Larry was laughing. It'd happened just like I said. The cop didn't think it was funny, though. The more we laughed, the hotter he got."

The car was searched top to bottom, end to end. "The cop was really mad," said Foster. "He must've thought we were a bad bunch of characters, so he tried to get something." The cop succeeded, to the extent that Brown could not produce the registration. They had forgotten to give it to him in Rochester. The whole group was hustled to the stationhouse. The cop had no idea whom he had corralled.

Their identity finally was established at the State Police Station, and everyone permitted to leave. "Too bad," said Foster. "It would have been funnier if we had to spend some time in the can." Lewin says Foster has a super sense of humor.

JOHN DOSER
Scholastic Notebook



Next year may be the year.

If public school administrators are speaking truthfully, Rochester's four Catholic high schools may be permitted to join Section 5 athletic tournaments next year on a two year trial basis.

Recent newspaper stories, mostly prompted by the diligence of Cardinal Mooney students Tom O'Neill and Bob Pauly, have indicated a change of attitude at possibly enough Monroe County public schools to make a difference in voting the next time a vote is held.

Last year public schools in Section 5 voted 59-30 to keep the Catholic schools out of the tournaments. At least three other sections in New York State permit Catholic schools to compete in their public school tournaments. There are 11 sections statewide.

While another vote is impending, it's possible that schools outside of Monroe County, ironically not affected by the proposed Catholic participation, may again doom the movement.

Section 5 president Carl Palumbo of Victor, an advocate of Catholic participation in tournaments, said there are schools in some areas which are not oriented to the situation and that they are the ones with whom the situation must be discussed.

Not all outside-the-county schools are opposed. Romulus Central is definitely in favor of Catholic participation in tournaments as the Courier-Journal revealed last week.

O'Neill and Pauly, who should receive A-pluses for their efforts, came up with these comments from area school people:

Lou Basile, Greece Olympia athletic director — "They should try to make the Catholic schools' problems less focal. County schools are concerned because they're losing talent that would have been on their teams. If we have a democratic society, why can't a kid go where he wants to go?"

Don Laughlin, Rush-Henrietta principal — "Recruiting has to

be one of the concerns... yet, if a kid comes up through their (Catholic) system, he should be able to play."

Henry O'Mara, Brockport superintendent — "The lack of boundaries gives Catholic schools an edge. I don't think however that Catholic schools recruit players. But the fact that they have no limits enables them to enroll students from a larger area than the county schools can."

Earl Helmer, Irondequoit superintendent — "Although non-public schools have no boundaries as such, they enroll students primarily from the town in which they are located. I think any accusations that Catholic schools recruit ballplayers is foolish. The days of recruiting like Aquinas did years ago are gone. I believe Catholic schools should be admitted to Section 5 as soon as possible."

Brighton superintendent Dr. John Bennion voted no last year and said he would vote no again, unless the possibility of recruiting is removed.

Greece superintendent David Robinson, who casts three votes for each Greece public high

school, voted no, no, no last year. He said he doesn't know if his votes will change should another vote be held.

O'Neill and Pauly said that all the superintendents interviewed agreed that the possibility of Catholic schools' recruiting does exist, but none of the school officials interviewed could offer a single example where an athlete had been enrolled by a Catholic school primarily for his athletic talent.

Many public school athletic directors and coaches feel that recruiting still exists but they also are unable or unwilling to prove it.

Ed Nietopski, Mooney athletic director, said he has never recruited any athletes, nor will he ever. No athletic scholarships are given out at Mooney, he said.

The tuitions of some of Nietopski's basketball players who do not live in Greece are paid for by donations from private citizens.

Even Nietopski did not know whether some of his players who live in the city would be back this season. He said he understood from one of them that at least once downtown coach wanted him to register at a city high school last fall.

Did Columnist George Beahon let the cat out of the bag by suggesting Catholic schools might go to court to get into the sectional playoffs?

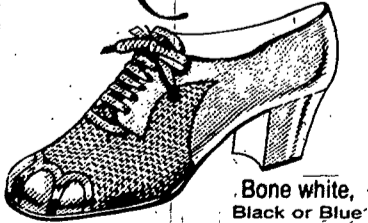
He dismissed the possibility as a rumor, but added that may well be the only way.

Is it?

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