

Sports

# BK 'putting it together'; Mercy, Mooney to battle

By Richard A. Kiley

Coming into the 1988-89 girls basketball season, second-year Bishop Kearney coach Donna Sortino looked at the loss of Kelly Curcio — the Fighting Kings' leading scorer during the previous season — as sort of a blessing.

The Kearney mentor admitted that she would sorely miss Curcio's outstanding offensive capabilities (15.3 points per game), but she thought her players had become a bit too dependent on the now-graduated Fighting King.

"We relied a little too much on Kelly; the offense centered on her," Sortino said in a pre-season interview. "The scoring should be spread out a lot more this year."

Unfortunately for Sortino, relentless man-to-man pressure by such Private-Parochial League opponents as Our Lady of Mercy, Cardinal Mooney and Aquinas have been giving her team fits this year. The Kings, who have been seeing man-to-man defenses in their sleep, have failed to break the 40-point barrier in more than half of their games and have even scored below 30 points on several occasions.

"The problem with the offense is that it takes five players to really get it going, and we haven't had that," Sortino said.

Until last weekend, Bishop Kearney, which came into the Greece Athena tournament having lost five out of its last six games, scored 50 points in a first-round win over Gates-Chili and then 54 in the championship game against Horseheads (Section 4) to win the tournament title.

For Sortino, the wins — and the rejuvenated offense — were just what the doctor ordered.

"Everything really came into place during this tournament. I think winning the tournament has really given us our confidence back," Sortino said. "We have to keep it up so we go into the sectionals with even more confidence."

In the championship game of the tournament, the Kings simply overpowered a traditionally strong Horseheads team en route to a 54-35 win on Saturday, Jan. 28. Senior forward Rachel Brink (17 points) and junior Kathy Pero (13 points) combined for 30 of Kearney's points.

Sortino believes the emergence of Brink (12 ppg) and Pero, along with senior point guard Pam Buddendeck and forward Sally Gillespie, could make the Kings a tough opponent come sectionals.

"This helps our confidence, not just because

we won the tournament, but because we beat a team with a reputation like Horseheads," Sortino said.

Kearney looked impressive in its first-round win over Gates Chili as well. Three BK players reached double figures — Brink, Pero and Eileen Jensen all scored 10 points — as the Kings thwarted the Spartans, 50-36, on Friday, Jan. 27.

The tourney also provided the Kings a break from relentless man-to-man pressure — a la Mercy and Mooney.

"Losing five out of six games is never easy, but we were coming off the toughest part of our schedule," said Sortino, pointing to two resounding defeats at the hands of Mercy in addition to losses against Aquinas, Mooney and Marshall. "In practice, we did a lot to motivate the team and get the offense back on track."

It worked. Taking nothing for granted, Sortino believes her team has a chance to keep its winning ways with upcoming games against Franklin, Nazareth and Aquinas. AQ beat Kearney 27-24 back on Jan. 12, but the Kings were without Brink (flu). The Kings then close out the regular season with the Eastridge Tournament, which they won last year.

In other games involving Private-Parochial League teams, Our Lady of Mercy (13-0) continued its unblemished season with a 65-44 non-league win over host East on Friday, Jan. 27.

Julie Buntich led the Monarchs with 28 points. Kathy Robinson scored 17 points and collected seven steals for Mercy.

Mercy upended Marshall, 72-48, in a non-league game played the day before.

The Monarchs were scheduled to play at Cardinal Mooney (14-2) this Thursday, Feb. 2. Mercy has dealt Mooney its only two losses of the season, with one coming in double overtime at the Mercy Invitational at Nazareth College back on Jan. 7. Mercy (7-0 league) handled Mooney (5-1 league) again on Jan. 12, beating the Cards 54-45 in a Private-Parochial League game played at Mercy.

Kathy Boughjon's club closes out the regular season with games against Franklin (Feb. 4) and Fairport (Feb. 8) before competing in the Brockport tournament on Feb. 10 and 11.

Cardinal Mooney ran its winning streak to five with wins over Franklin and Kearney last week. The Cards routed the Quakers, 57-35, in



Rachel Brink (45) of Bishop Kearney dribbles past Horseheads defender Melissa Mortimer (13) in the championship game of the Greece Athena Basketball Tournament.

Linda Dow Hayes/Courier-Journal

a non-league game played at Franklin on Thursday, Jan. 26.

Against visiting Kearney on Tuesday, Jan. 24, junior forward Marisa Shackelford scored 18 points as the Cards defeated the Kings, 48-34.

Aquinas improved to 9-7 for the season with a come-from-behind, 50-45 win over Wilson on Friday, Jan. 27. Dan Bates' Little Irish were down by eight points in the fourth quarter, but Tammy Rice and Amy Reynnders fueled the comeback win. Rice finished with 18 points — eight in the fourth quarter alone — while Reynnders poured in 14 points. Six of Reynnder's points came in the decisive fourth quarter.

Over in Section 4 Class C, Elmira Notre Dame proved just how far it has come this

season with a 57-40 win over visiting Hornell on Saturday, Jan. 28.

Jeff Sobkowski's Crusaders (10-7 overall, 4-5 league) nipped Hornell by one point in the previous meeting between the two Sullivan Trail Conference teams back on December 22.

Sobkowski kept his fingernails this time around, as ND jumped out to a 16-2 lead after one quarter and led 30-12 at intermission.

Notre Dame led 36-25 after three quarters.

Kathy Lynch paced ND with 19 points. Melissa Jaskolka and Julie Cox scored 13 and 10 points, respectively.

Sobkowski's team will face tougher competition this week, with scheduled games against Corning West (Jan. 31) and Elmira Free Academy (Feb. 3). ND edged CW, 40-32, earlier in the season, but fell to EFA, 48-26.

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