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...showdown

[continued from front page]

The Knights may have set some kind of record by trying to run out the clock so early in the game. The Indian defenders certainly looked puzzled when the Hempfield guards started passing lackadaisically back and forth, while their forwards and center rocked on their heels and surveyed the crowd.

After their victory, the Hempfield girls were very happy with their overall game. Their shooting, defense, fast break and playmaking had never been better, coach Sharon Sweger and her players agreed. Yet, for most of the game, the red-hot Knights were unable to outscore a Donegal team that was cold as a week-old turkey sandwich; in other words, if Donegal catches fire tonight, the Knights may feel like paper tigers who have been tossed into an incinerator.

All of which brings us back to that fatal first period. Why was Hempfield unable to run up an unbeatable lead so quickly?

Some possible explanations are:

—The huge crowd was a new experience for the Donegal girls. It may have made them a bit nervous. The team made quite a few mistakes in the first period, literally handing the ball to their opponents several times.

—The Indians had not played for four days, which probably accounts for their cold shooting fingers. Since then, they've played two games to Hempfield's one. Those games should warm the Donegal girls up, and restore their magic touch.

—Hempfield's strategy surprised Donegal and kept our girls off balance for a while. The Knights had obviously done some very careful scouting, and their zone defense shut out practically every standard Indian attack. Donegal was unable to penetrate close to the basket, but had plenty of room for outside shots. Fortunately for Hempfield, Donegal was not shooting well that night.

—Hempfield's offensive tactics—fast breaks alternating with a very deliberate set of set-plays (designed to put a maximum of tall Knights in rebounding position after each shot)—seemed to take Donegal completely by surprise—at first. The fast break lost its zip in the second half, and Donegal began grabbing a fair share of rebounds in spite of their height disadvantage.

Tonight, things will be different. The Indians won't be unnerved by the big crowd, and they won't be surprised by the new tactics. The chances are good that they'll be shooting with at least their usual accuracy. And the chances are good that they will win.



Donegal's shooting was not as accurate as usual last week. We're not positive about who is taking the shot in this photo. The photographer thinks she's Tanya Merchant. The editor thinks she's somebody else. He won't say who. A \$1 bet has been placed.

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