

Newington presses to 78-33 victory

By DESMOND CONNER
Courant Staff Writer

NEWINGTON — When the Newington High girls basketball team walked off the court after its final game last season, something was missing.

Solid defense down the stretch and a scheme it could use to its advantage.

The Indians are trying to make sure they will have both at the end of the season.

Newington's defense and a fierce, full-court press was intact Tuesday as it defeated New Britain 78-33 in the Newington Holiday Tournament.

Newington advances to the tournament championship game Monday against the winner of the game today between East Hartford and Hall.

"We're pressing more, we're quicker, playing more up-tempo de-

fense," senior forward Donna DeFrancesco (17 points, four blocks, four steals) said. "Our goal is to force turnovers."

The need for better defense surfaced when the Indians (3-0), ranked No. 2 in The Courant's coaches poll, were unable to hold off a fourth-quarter surge by Southington in last year's Class LL semifinal. Subsequently, the Indians lost a chance to play for the state title, which Southington eventually won.

Newington is using the press for the first time, which is taking teams by surprise.

It is not as good as coach Sandy Pilz or some of his players want it to be, but they're working on it.

In last week's victory over East Hartford, the Indians had some trouble with it. East Hartford didn't.

"We had to go back to the drawing board on it," Pilz said. "Because they were breaking the press and scoring

off back-doors against us. I was really pleased with how it worked today."

The Indians forced 11 turnovers in building a 20-2 first-quarter lead. They led 42-6 at the half. The Hurricanes, led by Jaime Blass (eight points) and Joella Autorino (seven points), were held to one field goal in the first half.

"We're definitely not where we want to be defensively," junior forward Beth Kelly (18 points, two blocks, six steals) said. "We need a lot of work."

The press is only part of Newington's ability to keep the opposition from scoring. Some players have made some adjustments from last season as well.

Beth Kelly and DeFrancesco have improved their defense from last season. All-State center/forward Jen Kelly (23 points, four steals) is getting more steals. Senior point

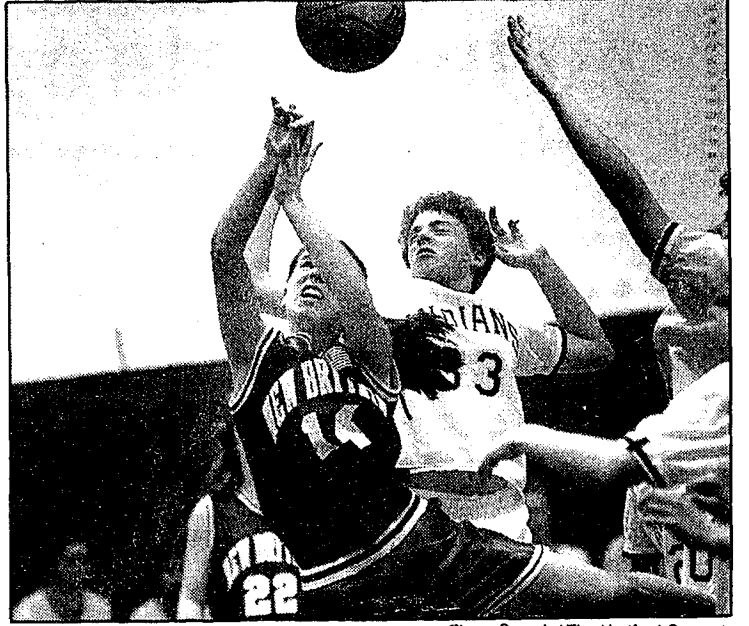
guard Christine Bouffard has been tough on opposing point guards and Kerri Blankenhagen, although she fouled Tuesday, is a spark of aggressiveness.

"Last year, the thing about Southington was, that they were in our faces all the time," Jen Kelly said. "We've stepped up our intensity on defense against everybody this year. Now we want to be in everybody's face."

Pilz is giving more reserves more playing time, with emphasis on defense.

Yes, some of the starters were in late in the game. But Pilz said he wasn't trying to run up the score on New Britain (3-2).

"I wasn't trying to do that," Pilz said. "Some of these players aren't going to get enough experience with this style of play if we take them out."



Shana Sureck / The Hartford Courant

■ New Britain's Sherry Robitaille battles Donna DeFrancesco under the basket during Newington's 78-33 victory.

Camby scores 33 as HPHS breezes

Staff reports

Marcus Camby scored 33 points and Kendrick Moore added 16, including three three-pointers, as Hartford Public defeated Bulkeley 80-53 in a City Series boys basketball game Tuesday in Hartford.

Tom Forte scored 24 and Derrick Lowell nine for Bulkeley (1-1), which trailed 46-25 at halftime. Hartford Public is 2-0.

In other CCC interdivisional games:

Wethersfield 73, Fermi-Enfield 61; Charlie Bowes' 27 points led Wethersfield (2-1) over Fermi (0-3) in Enfield. Chet Kasper had 18 points for Wethersfield.

Jon Lydecker led Fermi with 11 points.

CCC

Vinal Tech-Middletown 54, Rocky Hill 43; Joe Mullins had 29 points and 13 rebounds and Vernon Thomas scored 12 for host Vinal Tech (1-1) in a victory over Rocky Hill.

Joe Morales scored 17 and C.J. Inturri nine for Rocky Hill (1-2).

Cheney Tech-Manchester 74, Cromwell 64; Junior forward Kala Williams scored 29 of his game-high 33 points in the second half as Cheney (2-0) came back from an 11-point halftime deficit to defeat Cromwell (1-1) in Manchester.

Williams had 18 of his team's 25 third-quarter points and 11 of 26 in the fourth.

Others

St. Thomas Aquinas-New Britain 53, Sacred Heart-Waterbury 51; Sam Smith (13 points, five assists) hit two foul shots with five seconds

Boys

remaining as Aquinas (1-0) defeated Sacred Heart (0-2) in New Britain.

Hillhouse-New Haven 69, Southington 49; Rodney Rogers scored 18 points and James Hoskins 11 to lead Hillhouse (4-0) over Southington (0-1) in Southington.

Emmanuel Christian-Newington 59, Springfield Christian 53; Matt Frazee scored 31, including three three-pointers, and Jeff Erickson added 13 to lead Emmanuel Christian (1-3) over Springfield Christian (1-3) in Newington.

Newington Holiday Tournament

New Britain 78, Newington 57; Malcolm Yelling scored 25 points and Tebucky Jones 12 as New Britain (2-0) won a first-round game in the Newington Holiday Tournament.

Kenyon Rose added 11 for New Britain, which led 48-41 after three quarters before putting up 30 in the fourth quarter.

George Sousa and Don King scored nine points each for Newington (1-1).

New Britain plays the winner of tonight's East Hartford-Hall game Monday for the tournament championship.

Hockey

Hall-West Hartford 5, Windsor 3; Ken Wosczyzna scored two goals as Hall built a 5-0 lead in a victory at Loomis Rink in Windsor.

Brian Slitt, Lindsey Baker, Todd Growick also scored for Hall. Adam Bulewicz, Matt Taylor and John Jary scored for Windsor (1-3).



Bob Stern / Special to The Courant

■ Bulkeley's Tom Forte, left, fouls Marcus Camby during Hartford Public's 80-58 victory Tuesday. Camby scored 33 points; Forte had 24.

Bulkeley tops Weaver in OT

Staff reports

Nikki Campbell scored 16 points and Shonrice Starks added 13 as Bulkeley defeated Weaver 47-43 in overtime Tuesday in a City Series girls basketball game at Weaver.

Girls

Bulkeley (2-0) sealed the victory with an 11-7 run in overtime. Weaver is 0-2.

Rockville 40, Conard-West Hartford 19; Desiree Johndrow and Karen Marshall each scored seven to lead Rockville (2-2) over Conard (0-3) in West Hartford.

Kim Bruton scored seven for Conard, which trailed 18-8 at halftime.

Elm City Tournament

Mercy-Middletown 36, East Haven 16; Jen O'Brien scored 12 points as Mercy (3-2) defeated East Haven (1-4) in the Elm City Citizen Newspaper Classic at Albertus Magnus in New Haven.

Mercy led 13-5 at the half.

Sacred Heart-Hamden 50, Luraillon Hall-Milford 35; Alicia Longobardi had eight points and seven steals, and was named MVP of the Elm City Citizen Newspapers Classic as Sacred Heart (5-0) defeated Luraillon Hall (0-3) at Albertus Magnus in New Haven. Jenn Rice had 14 points to lead Sacred Heart.

Sacred Heart, ranked fourth in the Courant Coach's poll, outscored Luraillon Hall 16-0 in the fourth quarter.

CVTC

Wilcox Tech-Meriden 59, Whitney Tech-Hamden 47; Martina Crouse-Smith scored 20 points and Fiona Cross had 10 points and 20 rebounds to lead Wilcox Tech (3-1) over visiting Whitney Tech (1-2).

Prince Tech-Hartford 38, Bullard-Havens-Bridgeport 28; Yolanda Harris had 14 points and 19 rebounds to lead visiting Prince (4-1) past Bullard-Havens (1-3).

Jawanna Major and Shenae Hamilton scored nine each for Prince. Cindy Ackerman scored 18 for Bullard-Havens.

Bullard-Havens led 14-12 at the half.

Paskus considers it career highlight

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"My big goal then was to make All-State," Paskus said. "That was definitely one of the first big highlights of my career."

Paskus would earn All-State honors again the following year when he won the Berkshire League title, Windham and Woodbury invitationals and the Class S championship.

The Class S race stands out in Paskus' mind.

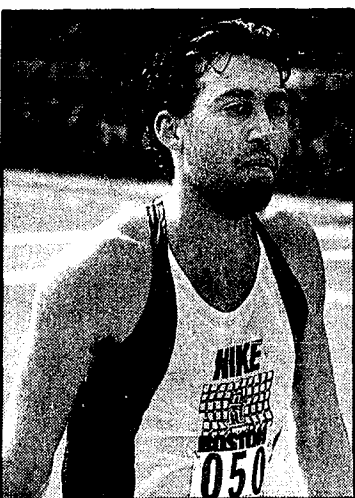
"We had a couple of buses of students show up," Paskus said. "There were cheerleaders. There was quite a crowd. I was so pumped up."

Krueger loves to tell the story about the time he told Paskus to ease up on training before the State Open his sophomore year. But Paskus had such a tremendous work ethic he felt he needed more work.

By race day, Paskus was a little burned out and ran a poor race.

"I just didn't think I was working hard enough," Paskus said. "I would sneak off after dinner and go for a run. He got me back on course."

Paskus said he learned a lot from Krueger, much of which he used to great success at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H.



Courant file photo

■ An All-State cross country runner, Tom Paskus won the Willimantic 5K in 1990.

"A lot of big high-powered high school running programs burn out their runners," Paskus said. "So when they get to college, they don't do anything. He helped me get ready for college."

At Dartmouth, Paskus earned All-America, All-Ivy and All-East honors. In his sophomore year, he competed in the Junior World Games in Athens, Greece, finishing seventh in the 10,000-meter race.

But after college, Paskus was plagued by nagging injuries, including a stress fracture and a torn Achilles'. At Virginia, where he is working on a Ph.D. in psychology, Paskus has trained sporadically. Two summers ago, before his injury, he finished 10th at the Falmouth (Mass.) 7-mile road race, which drew a field of world-class runners. It was his third road race.

Paskus is thinking about getting back into top running condition. Who knows? With the 1996 Summer Olympics not that far off, Paskus might try to qualify for the 5K or 10K races.

"I'll try to be running during [Christmas] break," Paskus said. "It's hard to say if I'm in shape. But I can't be chasing it at the expense of other things. I have a lot of work in graduate school and I want to move along in other aspects of my life. I don't want to be just one-dimensional."

Where are they now?

■ Some members of the original All-State teams and where they are now:

■ Jim Bell, Hand-Madison football: A 6-foot-1, 182-pound running back, he scored 26 touchdowns and rushed for 1,653 yards while leading Hand to the Class MM title game. Rushed for 100-plus yards in each of the 16 games he started over a two-year period. After playing at Boston College, he was signed as a free agent by the San Francisco 49ers and played on the developmental squad for two years after pulling a hamstring in preseason. He still got a Super Bowl ring. He played for the Barcelona Dragons in the World Football League for a year before being traded to the Birmingham Fire and was the second-leading scorer in the league. . . . Is now working in Seattle selling a nutritional supplement.

■ Maribeth Blonski, Wethersfield soccer: Had 18 goals and 12 assists in leading Wethersfield to 11-6 record in the program's inaugural season. . . . Works as a freelance artist and recently illustrated for a children's book entitled "The Story of The Christmas Bear." . . . Played soccer at the University of Hartford and was co-captain her senior year. Graduated from the U of H School of Art in 1989. Lives in Wethersfield.

■ Kelly Brantner, Enfield field hockey: Captain of Class M state championship team. Scored 22 goals. Went on to captain the Northeastern field hockey team. . . . Married Mike Morton, her high school sweetheart. Has one child, Shannon, who is two months old. Lives in Columbia.

■ Wayne Churyk, Shepaug Valley-Washington soccer: Brother of 1992 All-Stater, Jared. . . . Forward led his team to a 16-2 record and was named Berkshire League MVP. . . . Was a three-year starter for UConn at center halfback. . . . Works in his father's business, Churyk Iron Works.

■ Kara Devlin, New Canaan swimming: Set State Open records in the 200 freestyle (1:51.97) and 500 freestyle (4:58.45). Went on to swim at the University of Southern California, where she was ranked in the top 20 nationally in the butterfly. Graduated with degree in communications. . . . Works with People and Properties, a sports marketing group in Manhattan. . . . Lives in Darien.

■ Peter Fickinger, Xavier-Middletown cross country: Led Xavier to an 8-0 season and the Class LL championship. . . . Attended St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. . . . Now a regional sales manager for Mila Leasing Corp.

■ Robin Gaby, RHAM-Hebron soccer: One of the best defensive players in school history. Played soccer and basketball at Eastern Connecticut State University. Scored more than 1,000 points in basketball and eventually will be inducted into that school's athletic Hall of Fame.

■ Jenny Greene, Darien swimming: Accumulated 425.95 points in State Open diving competition as a junior, a record that still stands. Spent senior year at Phillips Andover, where she was a prep All-American. . . . Went to Harvard, where she was an All-American twice. Was on U.S. national diving team in 1988. Graduated in 1989 with degree in economics. . . . Works in Washington for the Federal Housing Finance Board as a financial analyst.

■ Kristen Huff, Tolland soccer: Scored 23 goals and led Tolland to Class S state title. Played at University of Hartford and graduated in 1989 with degree in business administration. Received her master's in economics in 1992 and is employed by the state health commission in Hartford. . . . Engaged to be married in October 1994.

■ Lara Kelly, Aquinas-New Britain cross country: Class S champion. Finished 18th in the State Open with a time of 16:59. Ran track and cross country at the University of Vermont, where she graduated with a degree in education in 1989. Teaches at Aquinas and helps coach the track team.

■ Teresa Kittredge, East Catholic-Manchester: Three-time All-Stater. Best finish in State Open was fifth in 1981. Competed in cross country and indoor and outdoor track at Bentley College in Waltham, Mass., for four years. Northeast-8 conference cross country champion in 1985. Qualified for Division II NCAA national championships in 1,500 meters four

times. Graduated in 1988 with a degree in finance. Married with two children. Lives in New Haven.

■ Sal Lombardo, Woodrow Wilson-Middletown football: The 5-6, 163-pound linebacker was named to the All-Northeast Conference team and was a two-way player. He also started in the offensive backfield, handled snaps on punts and kicked extra points and field goals. . . . He was a three-year starter at Plymouth State in New Hampshire. Now an assistant coach at Xavier-Middletown.

■ David Oremorser, Farmington soccer: Led Farmington to a 14-3 record and was an All-Northeast Conference selection on defense. Played at Bryant College in Rhode Island. . . . Now an accountant in Boston.

■ Hector Ortiz, East Hartford soccer: As a junior in 1983, he finished fifth in the Class M meet and was on the All-Central Connecticut Interscholastic League team for the second time. . . . The next year, he won the State Open and Greater Hartford Invitational and was Class LL runner-up. . . . Lives in Stowe, Vt., where he is a bartender.

■ Carolyn Palfio, St. Bernard-Montville cross country: Led team to championship and was individual winner in Class L state meet. Graduated from Brown University in 1990 after earning All-New England honors as a club rugby player. . . . Lives in New London. Works for a book distributor and publishing company in East Haven.

■ Liz Palmer, East Catholic-Manchester soccer: Was East Catholic's career goal-scoring leader with 39 before that record was broken this year by Darcey Devaney. Palmer is still the school's all-time leading scorer with 107 points. All-Hartford County Conference selection three times. Played at University of Hartford from 1984-87. Graduated in 1988 with degree in business administration. Works as an insurance agent with Palmer and Associates in Glastonbury. Assistant to her father, Ron, at East Catholic. Lives in Wethersfield.

■ Sal Peppone, Xavier-Middletown football: The 5-11, 205-pound running back helped Xavier to a 7-3 record and a share of the Hartford County Conference title with South Catholic and East Catholic. . . . Played for Northeastern for a year before transferring to Springfield. He is now studying sports medicine at Daemen College in Amherst, N.Y. . . . Third cousin of former Yankee Joe Peppone.

■ Dan Rice, Rocky Hill soccer: Co-captained Rocky Hill's 17th consecutive Charter Oak Conference championship team and earned All-COC honors for two years. Anchored a defense that recorded 36 shutouts in three years. . . . Graduated from West Point in 1988 and spent three years in Army Rangers school, including some time in Turkey. . . . Works for McGaw Medical Supply Inc. in Los Angeles.

■ Bill Romanowski, Rockville football: At Rockville, where he was a 6-3, 215-pound linebacker, he was nominated for All-America honors by the coaches association. Played at Boston College in glory years with Doug Flutie. Led BC with 156 tackles as senior. Drafted in 1988 by the San Francisco 49ers and is in fifth year with the team.

■ Cathy Spence, Hartford Public soccer: Her 105 goals in four-year career is still the most of any Hartford player. Played four seasons at UMass, leading the team to the NCAA Final Four every year, including a trip to the national championship game in 1987. Was an All-American in 1985. Graduated in 1988 with a degree in sports management. Lives in Hartford and works for National Council of Compensation Insurance Co. in Windsor.

■ Doug Widell, South Catholic-Hartford football: A 6-4, 230-pound offensive tackle, he was an All-Hartford County Conference and had 10 sacks on defense. . . . Played four years at Boston College. . . . Now playing with brother Dave — also a South Catholic and BC alum — with the Denver Broncos.

— Compiled by Roberto Gonzalez and Kevin F. Hayes

Mystery phone call altered Watts' life

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Watts' easy transition to a totally different sport is not all that surprising. She's been good in just about every sport she tried.

As a senior volleyball player at Bristol Eastern in the fall of 1983, Watts was selected to The Courant's inaugural All-State team. She was a two-time All-State selection in volleyball and basketball, leading her basketball team to the Class LL state title in her junior year.

It is the 10th anniversary of The Courant's first All-State team, and Watts, 26, remains one of its most fascinating alumnae.

As a senior at Bristol Eastern, she was heavily recruited for basketball. She decided to go to UNC because she liked the people, enjoyed the atmosphere and wanted to test herself against the competition in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"It was a tremendous experience," Watts said from her dorm room at the Olympic training site in Colorado Springs. "In basketball, we played everyone in the Top 20, so I



"I would probably have given it up now, but it's important for me to let my family be able to experience the thrill of watching me compete in an Olympics that is in the United States."

Chrissyandra Watts

got to go up against all of the big guns. Just being on the court with those players was great."

She wasn't so bad herself. A 5-foot-8 guard, she was co-captain of the team her senior year. She stopped playing volleyball in college, but continued her other love — track. In the outdoor season her senior year, Watts finished third in the heptathlon and helped lead the Tar Heels to the ACC championship.

Now, Watts is concentrating full time on the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. To support herself, she

works part time for the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Watts said she thought about giving up on handball after the last Olympics, but wants to stick around long enough for her family to be able to make the trip to Atlanta.

"I think [the constant training] is getting to me a little more now as I get older," Watts said. "I would probably have given it up now, but it's important for me to let my family be able to experience the thrill of watching me compete in an Olympics that is in the United States."