

Report from the “Tina Thompson Classic” in District Heights, MD: Saturday December 17, 2011

by Ann O. Nymous

The Ursuline Girls Basketball team boarded the Big Yellow School Bus on Saturday and headed down to suburban Washington, DC to wage war with Bishop McNamara HS in an inter-state matchup that evidenced the differences between girls' basketball in Delaware and in larger, more densely populated States, where there are larger pools of athletes to draw from.....

LA Sparks and USA Basketball Team member Tina Thompson, who was the signature sponsor of the event, was on hand to watch the games, hand out some awards, and offer some photo ops, as were a number of assistant coaches from notable college programs, taking notes, Tweeting, and texting for the “home office”.

UA started its journey, leaving school on the Yellow Bus at 4pm, anticipating a ± 2 hour drive to arrive well in time for their scheduled 7:45pm matchup, the last game of the event vs. home team Bishop McNamara, the tournament host. In what must have been a comedy of traffic errors, the combination of holiday traffic, a major back-up on I-95 south in Cecil/Hartford Counties (MD), and traffic congestion near/on the DC Beltway, forced the late arrival of the Raiders at the venue at 8pm after a 4 hour bus ride, which occurred only with the benefit of a police escort that helped shuttle them around some of the vehicular obstacles.

The Bishop McNamara girls had warmed up starting at about 7:40pm, and continued to do so during the brief 15 minutes that UA stretched its legs and ran some drills before the delayed 8:20pm tip-off. The writer, having gotten to the venue at 7:20pm, had time to see the preceding game between Forest Park (VA) and St. Anthony's (NY), and one could tell that the upcoming UA game was going to have different level of intensity than your usual DE vs. DE girls high school basketball game. The TTTournament was using a 30 second shot clock, apparently standard fare in Maryland girls HS hoops, and the impact on the pace at which the games was played was dramatic.....push, push, push, every team, every second.

With time to peruse the rosters of some of the teams that were entered in the TTT, it was notable the maturity, size, and depth of the teams represented. By way of example, Bishop McNamara sported a ± 18 girl roster with the majority being

Seniors and Juniors, 2 Sophomores, and only 1 Freshman.....the shortest girl on the roster was listed as 5' 7" tall (perhaps a bit gratuitous, but hey, that happens, right?) and the tallest was 6'2" (not gratuitous, as she was of formidable stature and the eventual MVP of the UA vs. BMcN game). UA's Varsity roster runs 14 deep, has 3 Seniors, 4 Juniors, 2 Sophomores, 3 Freshman, and 2 Eighth Graders.....the UA girls run the gamut from one senior center listed at 6' to a freshman guard at 5' 2"; UA has seven players (1/2 the team) listed at under 5' 7", the listed height of the shortest player on Bishop McNamara's roster. The difference in depth, experience, and size ultimately proved to be palpable!

But not before the Delaware girls put up one heck of a fight, trading push for push, box-out for box-out, bucket for bucket, in a game that, with under 3 minutes to go UA was still ahead, and really "in it" 'til the end, but we're getting to the conclusion before the plot.....

With its long trip, late arrival, smaller line-up, shorter bench, playing in the opposing team's home court, and with only 10 fans having made the trip and rooting from the Bishop McNamara bleachers, UA looked like the underdog in this match up, in every respect. Who'd a thunk that the score at the end of the 1st quarter would be **13 – 7 UA?** And the score at the end of the 1st half was **24 – 23 UA!** Ursuline fought and fought, play for play, pound for pound, and showed a tenacity that, clearly, threw Bishop McNamara (and its coach) off guard. An honest assessment would be that BMcN had much more offensive firepower and that UA won the 1st half with its defense, ball control, and effort/intensity.....that and the offensive production of its Freshman point guard, Adrianna Hahn. After an early drive and dish, a drive and finish, and an open "3" off of a screen, Hahn could hide no longer. She drew regular doubles and traps from the BMcN defense, but she played composed and she frustrated the other team, playing strong with the ball and out-letting to open teammates when subsiding to the dribble pressure. Hahn finished the 1st half with ± 16 points, supported by Mary Abram, Meghan Carter, Jill Lyons, and Brenna Williams, who contributed additional scoring, defensive intensity, and confident ball handling in the UA rotation. Delaware's girls took a blow, countered, and fought back, then went to the locker room with a lead, while BMcN went to the locker room, no doubt, for an "ear full".

The 2nd half was a tale of depth and size, as Bishop McNamara continued its liberal substitution strategy and threw more "bodies" at Ursuline.....BMcN probably gave 10 – 11 players significant minutes while UA, effectively, went just 6 deep for 97% of the game's 32 minutes. BMcN abandoned its strategy of playing the game on the

perimeter (i.e., trying to challenge the Raiders at their strength, which clearly hadn't worked in the 1st) and drove the ball into the paint, getting a fair number of buckets inside, some easy but many contested. When your "starting 6" averages 5' 8" tall and the other team starts at 5' 7" and moves up rapidly in size from there, the lines between guards, forwards, and centers blur.....UA threw whoever they had in the game at BMcN's "biggs" in the lane and the results were pretty compelling for the Delaware kids!

With extra pressure on Hahn, Abram stepped up to challenge the opposition off-the-dribble, driving into the lane vs. taller opponents to finish for a couple of contested layups! Laura Hurff, the designated "6th woman", handled the Point some, to draw attention from Hahn, and hit some key free throws late! Lyons found her touch and had some success in the paint! Carter hit a big "3" mid-way thru the 3rd! At the end of the 3rd, though it wasn't over yet, it was still **UA, up 43 - 42!**

With a bit of a rest, Hahn kicked it back in, in the 4th, dropping an uncontested three-pointer on BMcN from the wing, then taking it to the hoop to be fouled on consecutive trips down the floor (and pretty hard ones at that) and confidently hitting her free throws. With the lead traded back and forth through various permutations of tie, one point up/down, two points up/down, the game was "a dead heat" with under three minutes to go! In the end, Bishop McNamara wore UA down in the 4th prevailed, with the final score of **59 – 54 BMcN**, as the depth, size, and paint play of the Home Team, finally (and only just finally) wore down the Delaware girls. In a Delaware setting and without a shot clock to force the pace of play, one could fathom that UA could have (no doubt John N. would have!) used its smaller guards and crisp ball handling to slow the game via possession, and the game might have ended differently. But, what a great opportunity for Urline's girls to play a big-time game vs. a big-time opponent, in an "away" venue, with a tournament feel, and to come home triumphant in the knowledge that they played big, played proud, and represented, well, their team, their school, and their State!

Bishop McNamara's 6'2" Senior center, Dionna Joynes, who finished with 17 points and 13 boards, was awarded the game MVP. One might suppose that this had to go to a player from the winning team, but if you were at the game and not matter whom you were routing for, you'd have had to give a pretty strong "shout out" for UA's Freshman, Adrianna Hahn, who finished with 25 of her team's 54 points, adeptly handled the pressure of the opposing team's guards, and guided her

resilient teammates to a near victory in a tough DC environment. (Even the Tournament host, Tina Thompson, was heard to exult Hahn's praises, after one cross-over dribble & drive!)

The Big Yellow School Bus rolled back onto Franklin Street in Wilmington at 1:00am, very early Sunday morning, after a "quick" two and one-half hour return trip from District Heights, MD, and a weary Ursuline Girls Basketball Team disembarked, not defeated in their effort, but proud in defeat.....if you were at a Holiday Party somewhere in Delaware on Saturday night, sipping Egg Nog, you missed a great one down in DC!!!!

Date: 12/17/2011						Bishop McNamara HS (MD)@ 7:00pm
	1	2	3	4		Final
Ursuline Academy	13	11	19	11		54
Bishop McNamara HS (MD)	7	16	19	17		59
Scoring Summary:						
Ursuline - Carter(3 0-1 8),Abram(4 1-5 9),Williams(1 1-1 4),Lyons(2 0-0 4),Hahn(7 7-8 25),Hurff(12-4 4),Kampert(0 0-0 0), McCormick(0 0-0 0)						
Totals: UA(18 11-19 54) McNamara(22 9-9 59) -						
Totals: Alexander(7 3-3 17),Lee(4 0-0 8),Jognes(7 3-3 17),Wilkins(2 0-0 6),Young(1 0-0 2),Middlebrooks(2 3-3 7),Lee(4 0-0 8),Brown(1 0-0 2),						
3-Point Goals: UA7(hahn4,carter2,williams), McNamara2(Wilkins2),						
Highlights:						