

Overkill?

Jenks' 104-5 win over Mason sparks girls basketball controversy

By ANDRE HINDS

Optimism seems to be the only thing holding Mason High School's girls basketball program together, and Coach Ron Bowles hopes optimism is enough.

Mason lost its 13th game of the season Friday 104-5 to Jenks, and Bowles says the publicity nearly wrecked his team.

"We are scheduled to play Owasso Tuesday night," Bowles said. "But I don't know if my players will want to come back. I can understand it if they decide not to play."

"I JUST don't think it is right for Jenks to beat us that badly. It is one thing to lose, but it is another to be humiliated."

Owasso Coach John Branch has promised not to humiliate Mason Tuesday night. "It is not my style

to embarrass a team," Branch said. "Teams like Mason are weak right now, and they need all the help they can get."

"I'm just afraid their girls won't finish the season. I don't blame them. How long can you ask a kid to go out on the floor and get demoralized every week?"

EVEN IF Mason completes its season, Bowles is afraid there might not be another season for his team. "There might not be a program here next year," Bowles said. "Who wants to play on a team that loses 104-5?"

All of this talk has made Jenks Coach John Allison look like a villain. "It seems I have been wearing the black hat all season," he said. "I don't understand why all the other coaches are mad at me. This is the first time another coach

has tried to run my program.

"I am at a loss as to how to react. Nothing I can say will make me look good."

ALTHOUGH ALLISON played all the girls on his team against Mason, he did not alter his game plan, which was to run a zone press on defense. "Allowing them to throw the ball to the other end of the court is not part of my philosophy," he said.

Mason was handicapped before the game began. Leading scorer Cindy Schendel, whose 31.5 scoring average leads the city, was sidelined by an ankle injury.

"Two girls stepped on me in a game Tuesday night," Schendel said. "I've been getting double-teamed all season."

WITHOUT SCENDEL, the Mason forwards missed all but two shots from the field and the first shot of 11 one-and-one free-throw attempts.

Another reason for Mason's poor record is its lack of numbers. Of the 15 who began the season for Bowles, only eight remain. "There is a lot of apathy for athletics at Mason," Bowles said. "It seems that the girls just have better things to do."

The exodus of players at Mason is a rerun of last year. "There were very few players returning from last year," he said. "It seems that every season is a rebuilding season."

MANY AREA coaches didn't want to comment about the game. "I have to play Jenks later this season," said one coach. "After what happened against Mason, I certainly don't want to get Allison mad at me."

"If that is the way Allison wants to play, there is nothing I can do about it," said Webster Coach Calvin Moore. "Webster is my main concern."

"But you don't know how it feels until you are on the receiving end."

"I COULDN'T bring myself to beat anyone that badly," said Memorial Coach Waldo Eichling. "Allison said he couldn't ask his team not to shoot. I could ask my team not to shoot. And if my players did shoot, I would put them on the bench."

Although Jenks has outscored its opponents 231-32 the past two games, it is not unbeatable. Jenks

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has lost two games — at Bixby and against Memorial in the finals of the Metro Tournament.

"Beating Mason by 100 points doesn't prove anything," said Branch. "They should try to beat Bixby by 100 — now that would be something."

"BASKETBALL IN Tulsa has been hurt by the way Jenks played Friday night. If Allison says he couldn't keep from scoring 104 points, he is a liar."

Union Coach Mike Polk agreed. "I think Jenks is crazy," he said. "I think they ought to know they did something wrong."

But that is not to say Allison doesn't have any defenders. Joe Sasser of Edison can understand Allison's point of view.

"TEAMS LIKE Mason and Webster are just very weak," Sasser said. "I don't see how Jenks could have avoided putting it on them badly."

"Sometimes, even when you pull out the first string, the second string seems to shoot just as well. I think that if he could have pulled off, he would have."

The only truly positive note seems to come from the Mason players themselves. But, says injured forward Schendel, the first few minutes after the game were very rough.

"I FELT LIKE an outsider since I didn't play," Schendel said. "I didn't know what to say to them after the game. I wanted to cry for them."

"There was even talk in the dressing room about quitting immediately. Then, when we met together Saturday, things returned to normal. We started talking about Tuesday's game against Owasso."

Facing their comeback challenge is one thing, but facing the other Mason students at school is another. "I know we will get razed a little by the other kids at school," she said. "We will take it jokingly."

"But it will hurt inside."

ALLISON ANTICIPATES some backlash from other coaches because of his team's victory. "But I can take it in stride," he said. "We have been beaten before, and I am not mad. I hope teams will play their best games when they face us."

For the other coaches in the Tulsa Public Schools, the game has served to illustrate the need for a stronger junior high school basketball program. "The outcome of the game should be insulting enough for the Tulsa Public Schools to do something to improve girls basketball," said Moore.

But the most immediate challenge will be for Mason's team to recover from Friday's defeat intact. "I still plan on playing Jenks one more time (Feb. 9)," Bowles said. "And I still dream that one day I will beat Jenks."

"THERE IS always the hope that we will play better. That is why we have athletics, isn't it?"

"Besides, losing is not a bad thing. It is how you take losing."