

SPORTS

Big Mac winners back home adding holiday special sauce

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BULLARD - Riding high and walking tall after capturing the McDonald's Brazos Valley All-Star Invitational, the Bullard Lady Panthers flexed their muscles 80-32 win over Palestine on Friday night at Panther Gymnasium.

The varsity game completed a sweep over the Lady Cat's for the first games of the new year as the junior varsity rode the inside play of Ashley Shidler with 22 points for a 51-33, win.

The freshmen game was a one-sided, one-player dominated affair also for Bullard with Rachel Horton scoring 25 points in a 30-23 first game.

The third-ranked Lady Panthers took control early with a 22-4, first quarter lead as point guard, Minta Spears



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Photo by Xxxx Xxxx

began a long-distance display, finishing the night with seven, 3-pointers and 25 points. The freshman added eight assists, five steals and three rebounds.

Senior post, Danielle Heithoff was close behind in the point totals with 21 points, adding 12 rebounds.

Senior post/wing, Calli Miller continues to come on strong with another double-double performance; joining Heithoff with five straight duo, double-doubles. Miller duplicated ten points and rebounds in a minute-shortened game due to the free substitutions by Coach Gay.

"They have a new head coach and it's hard to get a program turned around in one-year, but they have always got some good athletes," Gay said about the Palestine squad and head coach, Stephanie Johnson. "Our girl's I think really wanted

to make a good showing at home after winning the tournament."

Cruising to a 43-15, half-time lead, head coach Greg Gay tried a various combination throughout the third quarter, and played a guard-based offense to try and slow things up, but the Lady Panthers kept pouring in, on, or in may be more appropriate.

A 60-20, third quarter total said it all, and the final grew as Emmy Long, Heather Camp, Samantha Phillips added baskets, and the rest of the Lady Panthers made their respective defensive contributions as everyone played for Bullard.

As the Lady Panthers begin to tune up for district play, the ladies entertained Athens on Tuesday night. For the story, box scores, and action photos, see next week's Banner Sports.

Freshman making impact early on

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After winning the McDonald's Brazos Valley Shootout MVP award last week, Freshman, Minta Spears was her usual noble and humble self, playing off the MVP award as a team tribute, and spoke of her teammates only. The old-school, 'Pistol' Pete Maravich certainly comes out in the youngsters demeanor and game.

What was Maravich's number at LSU where he still holds the record for points per game for a season and career?

Spears wears the number 23 in honor of the Pistol too. Pete however wore droopy-grey socks. Not cool this day and age. So I called up Minta to talk about the tournament over the holidays, and she wanted me to call one of the seniors. Typical as you will see.

"We really played well, and our defense really set the tone for the wins," Spears said when asked to comment on her award. "We got a lot of points with everybody hustling back and getting open on breakaways, so it's nice to see that phase of our game improve."

Asked again, how it felt to



said the Bullard record setter for the Cross Country team. "But I know out there somewhere somebody is working just that much harder and I want to be the best I can be for the team, the seniors especially, the school, and the coaches."

Strange the girl can sing in a first-ever school musical, and star in two varsity sports as a freshman, won't say a word about it. Any of it. It's just another day in the life of Minta.

Please don't move! Takes me back to an old 'Chicago' Song, called "Make Me Smile." Just to watch her compete, act, and play basketball at a level I don't know that everyone is really aware of is teh level she plays at and really loves it and lives it."

Some may think it a bit extreme. They thought "The Pistol" was crazy in high school when he started as a freshman but I am leaving that to you and some Googlin'.

Congrats to the whole team, and to Minta. All-State in cross country, and a tournament MVP at a holiday showcase.

We really wish you'd get serious though!

win the MVP award of this caliber as a ninth-grader. Spears grinned and retorted. "Coach (Greg) Gay did a great job of making some adjustments at some key points in the game, and out seniors seem to really step it up when we needed them this tournament."

So okay, you aren't gonna say anything about yourself. How about working hard for what she earned maybe?

I asked. "I like to get in the gym as much as I can and shoot at least 500 shots a day, plus practice, and I start pretty early in the morning doing my road work (running),"

McDonald's Box Scores

McDonald's Brazos Valley All-Star Girls Shootout Basketball Tournament in Bryan, TX

FIRST ROUND
Bullard 56, Stafford 35
Stafford 12 8 2 13 - 35
Bullard 17 19 13 7-- 56
STAFFORD - K. Jackson, 6; C. Jones, 9; C. Espinas, 8; A. Thomas, 4; C. McRae, 8.
BULLARD - Calli Miller, 9; Ashley Ricci, 3; Ally Covalt, 4; Samantha Phillips, 3; Minta Spears, 13; Kayla Welling, 4; Danielle Heithoff, 22.

THREE POINT GOALS - B: Phillips, Spears.
RECORDS - Bullard 14-3.

SECOND ROUND
Bullard 48, Lovelady 47
Lovelady 12 16 11 8 -47

Bullard - 11 10 13 14 -48
LOVELADY - Crum, 2; Coward, 4; McKnight, 6; Lundy, 2; Graham, 32, Richard, 1.

BULLARD - Calli Miller, 12; Ashley Ricci, 5; Ally Covalt, 6; Minta Spears, 8; Danielle Heithoff, 15.

THREE-POINT GOALS - L: Graham (3). B: Spears (2).
RECORDS - Bullard 15-3.

SEMIFINALS
Bullard 48, Hempstead 41
Bullard 11 10 7 20 -48
Hempstead 10 7 16 8 -41
BULLARD - Millaer, 18; Ricci, 1; Covalt, 3; Samantha Phillips, 3; Spears, 8; Heithoff, 15.
HEMPSTEAD - Hill, 7; Taylor, 20; Smith, 2; Graves, 5; Glover, 2; Jordan, 5.
THREE-POINT GOALS - B: Spears (2), Phillips. H: Hill,

Graves.
RECORDS - Bullard 16-3. Hempstead 15-4.

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME
No. 3 Bullard 63, No. 6 Mt. Vernon 43

Mt. Vernon 9 17 10 7 -43
Bullard 17 21 12 13 -63
MT. VERNON - Whitlock, 5; Whitlock, 3; McGill, 2; Thames, 3; Deloney, 8; Summerlin, 20; Hargraves, 2.
BULLARD - Miller, 10; Ricci, 9; Covalt, 11; S. Phillips, 4; Spears, 15; Welling, 2; Heithoff, 12.

THREE-POINT GOALS - MV: Myra Whitlock, Summerlin. B: Spears(4), Covalt (2).
RECORDS - Mount Vernon . Bullard 17-3.
NEXT UP - Palestine at Bullard, 6:15 p.m., Friday.



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