

Only a Basketball Game

The Poke Korner

Putnam County Vidette – February 17, 1977 – By Ron Pokorn

It would be needless to dwell on the fact that the recent Ottoville/Kalida basketball game got out of control. It is not the purpose of this space to make an attempt to lay the blame for the fracas on any specific person or persons.

What does disturb us the most about the events that occurred at the contest was that several people – most of them can be termed ‘adults’ due to their age – did not control themselves in a pressure situation.

Admittedly, the game was not your typical Sunday tea. Whenever these two schools get together, the audience can expect a finely played game. This season the two clubs are very evenly matched, even though Kalida won both meetings; the first, 62-61, and last Saturday, 61-59 in double overtime. Just the fact that the game was so close contributed to the pressure considerably. Of course, the personal history of Dick Kortokrax lent itself to the overall situation.

Kortokrax became upset with the game’s officials for not controlling their end of the proceedings, during the hectic final moments of the first overtime. One of the Kalida players hit a follow up basket, but no one seemed to know whether the bucket came within the time limit. After a conference with the timer, it was decided that the basket came after the buzzer, thus calling for a second overtime.

Kalida took a two-point lead in the second overtime, and after a missed shot from Ottoville, Kalida regained possession of the ball and held on until time ran out. But still, the game continued for a few extra moments.

The problem at the end of the second overtime was the same problem that caused trouble at the end of the first overtime period. Because of the noise in the Ottoville gym, the buzzer could not be heard. The officials could not hear it. The players could not hear it. Neither could the fans.

Kortokrax had words with the Ottoville timer at the ends of both overtimes. This, of course, led to more

noise from the crowd. At the end of the contest, fans actually came on to the floor.

We spoke with both coaches involved on Monday of this week. Both told basically the same story – although the villains were decidedly different in each case.

One thing the coaches did agree about was the behavior of the players from each team. Phil Muehlfeld stated that “the players of both teams handled themselves well” and Kortokrax told us that he was “proud that the two teams were gentlemen.”

The game was developed at the high school level for the players. We can imagine the first high school athletic organizational committee speaking of things such as “sportsmanship development”.

But it is not the players who should feel some disgrace at the events of their contest. The adults, no matter what part each individual played in the fracas, were the perpetrators.

Ottoville’s head coach, Phil Muehlfeld, emphasized that the way the game developed affected the fans. He said that many incidents mounted until the breaking point was finally reached.

But after all, it was only a high school basketball game. Luckily, no one was injured in the ruckus that followed the contest, but that fact hardly negates what did happen.

While the young men on the court showed an amazing amount of maturity, a few of the ADULTS almost turned a great basketball game into a tragedy.