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Article Launched: 02/09/2006 04:30:15 AM

Eureka gets four times the Curry

Daniel Squier

MCKINLEYVILLE -- When McKinleyville and Eureka meet up on the basketball court you expect a close, hard-fought chippy contest. That's been the pattern over the past few seasons. This isn't the past few seasons, however. On Wednesday night, in front of a nearly empty house that was nearly empty by the time the third quarter began, the McKinleyville girls rolled out to a 20-3 lead after the first quarter and cruised home with an easy 50-27 win over Eureka in Humboldt-Del Norte League Big 5 play.

It wasn't that McKinleyville's defense all of a sudden reminded folks of those great Arkansas teams under Nolan Richardson and the "40 minutes of hell" they employed to shake, rattle and finally roll an opponent. No, it was simply a solid 2-3 zone, good hustle, poor shot selection and the fact that Eureka couldn't buy a bucket even if they had already laid down a deposit.

The Panthers (16-5, 5-0) came out on fire and Ashley Curry was the spark. She didn't light up the scoreboard with her scoring, but she did get the Mack offense rolling with two nifty inside passes to Courtney Cuffee in the opening two minutes, and from there the rout was on.

Curry, who finished with just 10 points, was literally everywhere. It wasn't her point total that had Eureka fans shaking their heads, but her defensive presence and her offensive savvy. She finished with an unheard of quadruple-double, with 10 assists, 12 rebounds and 11 blocks to go along with her 10 points.

"We've been getting out to good starts since we returned from the tournament in Phoenix and we did it again tonight," said McKinleyville head coach Brad Warze, whose team is now one win and one Arcata loss away from clinching its third consecutive Big 5 title. "We mixed it up on



Mark McKenna/ The Times-Standard

The Lady Panthers' Ashley Curry drives for a lay-up during Wednesday's game.

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defense, used some 2-3 and 1-2-2, and when you've got Curry in the middle blocking double-digit shots it makes things a lot easier on everybody else."

And it was easy, in part due to Mack's tenacity on defense, and in part to the fact that Eureka just couldn't score.

Eureka missed its first six field goals, and didn't get a two-pointer until there were just under two minutes remaining in the first quarter and finished the first eight minutes having

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gone 1-for-11. McKinleyville, on the other hand, hit three of its first four field goals and went 6-for-11 from the field to take that 20-3 lead.

It didn't get much better in the second quarter for the Loggers, who managed to score six points, while the Mack machine

rolled along. Once again, it took Eureka most of the quarter to finally get its first basket, this time at the 2 minute, 18 second mark, but by that time, Mack was ahead 28-5 and folks were looking forward to getting a slice of pizza at halftime.

Cuffee finished with a game-high 17 points and didn't miss her first field goal until late in the third quarter, and that was a 3-pointer.

"I felt we did a good job on defense, but when you can't put the ball in hoop you can't win," said Eureka head coach Kristie Christiansen, whose team fell to 11-9 overall and 3-3 in the Big 5. "I will say this, the team never gave up. They could have come out in the third quarter trailing by 30 and folded, and they didn't. I can't ask any more of them than what they gave tonight."

Christiansen could have asked the basketball gods for a bucket or two, but with Mack packing the zone into the paint to frustrate Eureka's big front-line duo of Katelyn Guild and Kayanna Walstrand, they forced the Loggers to take shots from the outside, and they didn't fall.

Freshman Kelly Kime led the Loggers with 13 points, all of them coming in the fourth quarter, the one frame Eureka won, out-scoring Mack 13-5, although Mack played its reserves for much of that time.

The Loggers' scoring drought got so bad in the second half, that Eureka didn't score its 10th point of the game until the 1:57 mark of the third quarter, an extraordinary statistic and one that best illustrates both Eureka's futility and the effectiveness of Mack's defense.

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