

Modern Girls Basketball

1/7/2005

My father in law coaches girl's basketball.

He's done it ever since he started teaching after he retired from the Marines over 20 years ago. He tried to sit out a season a few years back, but took the next assistant job offered to him during that year. He said he was going crazy just sitting around.

He's coached for quite a few of the high schools in North San Diego County, from the biggest and most athletically dominant to the small and struggling.

Tonight I went to watch him coach this year's team. It's a tiny private school located very close to his home. It's very small, about the size of the small town high school I attended in Iowa where my graduating class was less than 100.

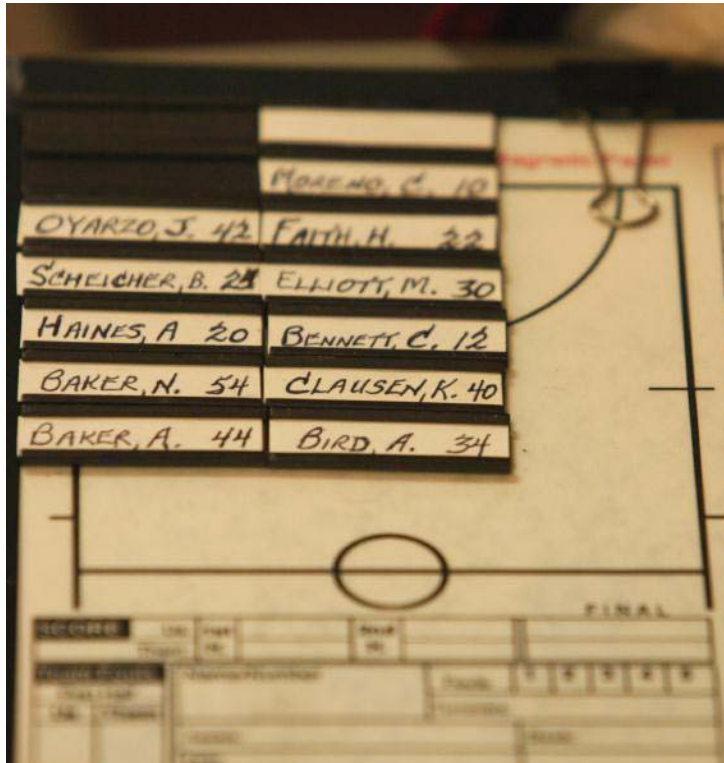
I took my camera along to have something to do while the game was being played.

As I watched the teams warm up, I wondered how different today's game would be from that played by my high school's girls basketball team, the state championship runner-up Adel Tigerettes.

Here's what I learned about today's version of girl's basketball.

Today they use magnetic strips to hold the names of the starting lineup and reserves.

Instead of chalkboards they use erasable markers and small white boards with a template of the court.



1/8/2005

Modern Girls Basketball

The girls still have team spirit.



They still start the game with a jump ball, but it's 5 on 5 these days, none of that quaint 6 on 6 they played in the old days on the prairie.



They still shoot free throws.



Modern Girls Basketball

They still play the two-three zone, just like we used to play for Coach Gunderson. And it still forces kids to launch long jumpers from way outside their range.



They still lob over the zone trap press.



They still block out for rebounds.



Modern Girls Basketball

They still defend the inbound pass, just like Patty Turley used to do.



They still drive to the hole, just like Joyce Elder used to do.



Modern Girls Basketball

They still fight for rebounds.



They still throw up out-of-control runners. (At our school, this shot would have brought down the Wrath Of Niemeyer. If she'd played for Adel, this girl would have been running bleachers for a month.)



Modern Girls Basketball

They still concentrate on their free throws.



They still steal the ball and run the fast break.



They still stare up into ominous double teams.



Modern Girls Basketball

They still get full extension on their free throws.



They still force the ball upcourt.



Modern Girls Basketball

Coaches still get their point across during time outs.



They still make their free throws.



They still elevate for their jumpers.



Modern Girls Basketball

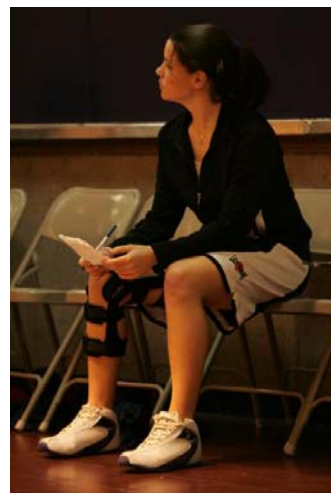
The guys are still scoping out the cheer leaders during quarter breaks.



They are still moving the ball upcourt with the two hand chest pass.



And sometimes the team's best player watches the entire season from the bench with a blown out knee.



Modern Girls Basketball

They still look for an opening for the entry pass.



They still launch shots over a double team.



Modern Girls Basketball

The coaches are still teaching with every move, expression, grunt and word.



And they are still providing comfort when their players foul out.



Modern Girls Basketball

And they are still shooting free throws.



They are still fighting through adversity.



Modern Girls Basketball

They are still playing defense on the head instead of the pelvis and wondering why they get beat on the drive.



The bench is still hating to lose as much as the starters.



Modern Girls Basketball

They are still hustling the ball up the court, even when they are hopelessly behind in the closing seconds.



And even when the scoreboard tells a sad story,



they are still congratulating each other for a game well played.



Modern Girls Basketball

It's been just about exactly 30 years since I shot a girls basketball game.

Back then, I was shooting future hall of fame coach Larry Niemeyer and the Adel Tigerettes as they marched to the state championship game.

Although it's probably unfair to compare athletes from different eras, I couldn't help but wonder how the girls I watched tonight would have fared against my schoolmates Sherry, Judy, Patty, Joyce, Julie and Barb. The girls today have such advanced nutrition, medical care, facilities and overall athletic programs, it really is a different world in women's athletics. They have so many advantages today, are so much taller, are so athletic and have such superior equipment, it just isn't comparing apples and apples to even wonder how these modern kids would have matched up against the girls from my little high school.

But as I watched the two California teams head for the locker rooms I couldn't help but think, "They wouldn't have stood a chance."



L to R: Sherry Blome, Judy Lienemann, Patty Turley,
Larry Niemeyer, Joyce Elder, Julie Goodrich, Barb Straight

Adel Tigerettes, 2nd Place, 1974 Iowa State Girls Basketball Championship