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GIRLS BASKETBALL SPECIAL

THE STREAK IS OVER

Newington routs Southington, 48-36, ending 9-game skid vs. Blue Knights



Above: Glancing at the scoreboard as if to be certain of what had really happened, Sandy Ramos cheers as the buzzer sounds and the game ends with a Newington win.

The last time a Newington girls basketball team beat Southington, Beth Kelly was a senior, Tereasa Milardo was a sophomore, and Ela Lapciuk was a freshman. Jen Bolduc was in seventh grade, Kathleen Burdelski was in sixth, and Colleen Duggan was in fifth. The date was February 25, 1994. The score: Newington 56, Southington 45.

1,793 days later, the Indians did it again Tuesday.

Finally.

After nine straight losses to the Knights over the past four seasons, Newington convincingly proved Tuesday that the Southington jinx is broken at last. The Indians jumped out to a 13-4 edge early, led by as many as sixteen, and ended up on the positive end of a 48-36 rout.

"Hey, we're over the hump," Indians assistant coach Steve Markie, an eyewitness to Newington's five most recent losses to the Knights, stated after Tuesday's big win.

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Right: Kathleen Burdelski drives to the hoop to set up a buzzer shot at the end of the first quarter which would put Newington ahead 7-4.



The rivalry: Newington vs. Southington

2/25/94: Newington 56, Southington 45	2/3/97: Southington 55, Newington 51
1/27/95: Southington 43, Newington 23	2/20/97: Southington 53, Newington 31
2/21/95: Southington 50, Newington 44	2/27/97: Southington 44, Newington 39
1/26/96: Southington 52, Newington 35	2/2/98: Southington 33, Newington 31 (OT)
2/20/96: Southington 56, Newington 49	2/18/98: Southington 43, Newington 39

ALSO: February 2, 1993: #1 Newington 51, #2 Southington 44 — *story, p. 3-4*

Newington routs archrival Southington

Indians' win clinches state tourney bid, ends Knights' streak

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"You don't understand how much excitement is running through my body right now," junior tri-captain Sandy Ramos said minutes after the game. "It's adrenaline that could last me, like, forever." Ramos, who scored seven points and was a major force inside until she fouled out with 1:15 to go and the game well in hand, added, "I'm so proud of [this team]. I'm so happy... This is what we've been playing all these weeks for."

In addition to beating their rivals for the first time in nearly five years and just the fifth time in school history, the Indians secured a state tournament bid with Tuesday's win, the team's eighth victory of the season. Newington's overall record is now 8-7.

"We're in the state tournament, and I'll tell you what: people were betting heavily against us on being there this year," stated head coach Jim



Above: In an intense moment typical of Newington-Southington battles, Kathleen Burdelski fights for a loose ball with a Southington defender while teammates from both the Indians and the Knights look on.



Above: First-year Newington head coach Jim DiNello, a Southington High graduate, chats with Southington coach Joe Daddio before the start of Tuesday's game.

DiNello. "So it's nice to be there."

But it was the rivalry that really got Newington's players pumped up Tuesday, despite the coaches' best efforts to portray the showdown as "just another game." Coach DiNello, an SHS graduate and lifelong Southington resident, admitted after the win Tuesday that "I've been trying to convince them that it's just another basketball game, [but] coming from the town that I grew up in, and following Joe and that team, obviously for me, it wasn't."

"I feel great," said senior Veronique Fort. "We were due for one." "I am so happy that this time they got their butts kicked, like they should have gotten a long time ago," senior Jen Bolduc stated.

According to Bolduc, a tri-captain, the key to Tuesday's win was "knowing that we are a good team, and that they can be beaten... We didn't let their reputation of beating us every time affect us."

That attitude was displayed at the very beginning of the game, when the Indians gathered at midcourt for their pregame huddle.

Ramos' voice

could easily be heard rising above the noise of the gymnasium, telling her teammates that "This is our game!"

Other keys to the victory were the performance of Newington's three tall players—Ramos, Ryan Vicino, and Colleen Duggan, who combined for 26 of the Indians' 48 points—and the individual showing by Kathleen Burdelski, who scored 15.

"It still actually seemed just like another game, because we didn't give it that much hype ourselves. Our coaches made an effort not to give it that much hype,"

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Above: Newington's players huddle before Tuesday's tipoff. In the huddle, Sandy Ramos exclaimed, "This is our game!"

Indians defeat Knights in 48-36 romp

Southington's nine-game winning streak against Newington ends

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Burdelski said of the rivalry factor. "But we still knew, deep down, that it was important, that this was our best opportunity to beat them. And that meant a lot to us."

"It feels really good," Burdelski added, "just to know—when you look back to, say, Ela and Leslie, how much of a big deal it was to try to beat Southington, and they never got to accomplish it—and us being able to do it kind of full-fills that, finally."

In fact, Ela Lapciuk and Leslie Carlson did beat Southington once, but that victory came in their freshman year. From their sophomore year on, the pair were 0-7 against the perennially powerful Knights.



Above: Colleen Duggan attempts a jump shot early in the first quarter. Duggan scored ten points Tuesday.

Last year's senior captains, Kim Milardo and Katie Strong, were 0-9 lifetime against Southington. Strong nearly hit a buzzer shot at the end of regulation to beat the Knights last year at Southington, but the ball rolled around the rim and out, and Southington went on to win in overtime.

On Tuesday, no such dramatics were needed. Newington fell behind 2-0 and 4-2 early in the low-scoring first quarter, but then tied the game at 4-4 on a Duggan jumper with 2:42 left in the period, and took the lead for good on a free throw by Ryan Vicino with 0:54 to go. The game's only buzzer shot came in the final moments

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Six years ago: #1 Newington beats #2 Southington

This article was printed in The Hartford Courant on February 3, 1993, six years ago today—the day after top-ranked Newington won a memorable Groundhog Day showdown with previously unbeaten Southington in front of a packed house at the Rogalski gym.

They are calling it the most exciting victory of the season, but aren't getting carried away with the importance.

After being on the losing end for two years, including back-to-back Class LL semifinals, the Newington High girls basketball team, ranked No. 1 in The Courant's coaches poll, finally defeated No. 2 Southington 51-44 in a CCC South game before a capacity crowd of 1,500 at Newington.

The victory ended the defending Class LL champion's 37-game winning streak.

Newington (12-0, 8-0 in the CCC South) had lost to Southington (12-1, 7-1) three times in each of the past two seasons.

"We're going to enjoy this win until practice after school [today]," said center Jen Kelly, who scored 11 points. "We'll see them again and we want to be ready."

Newington, led by point guard Christine Bouffard (seven points), attacked Southington's full- and half-court pressure.

"I don't think we got one steal after the first quarter," Southington coach Joe Daddio said.

That's because Bouffard, a senior in her first season as a starter, kept



Above: Beth Kelly holds onto a rebound during the epic Newington-Southington battle on February 2, 1993, a game attended by 1,500 fans in the Rogalski gym. Photo courtesy of Sequin.

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Newington breaks Southington jinx

Indians' 12-point win also clinches state tournament bid

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of the opening quarter, when Burdelski drove to the hoop for two as time expired, giving Newington a 7-4 edge.

Just over three minutes later, the Indians led 13-4. Southington would never get closer than five points for the rest of the game.

Getting that big lead early was crucial, according to DiNello, because Southington's players "have the mentality... that when they step on the floor, they honestly believe they're going to win... [and] when we jumped up nine, maybe we put a hint of doubt in their heads." At any rate, he added,



Above: The crowd Tuesday was nothing like the full house which packed the gym six years ago to the day, but those who came saw another big Indians win over Southington.

Newington's players benefited from gaining that edge, because "for a young team like us, now all of a sudden, they believe that they can win the basketball game."

Newington led 17-10 at half-time, and by the end of the third quarter, the Indians had stretched their advantage to 30-19.

Newington's largest lead of the game was 36-20 with 4:29 to go. Some defensive mistakes by the Indians — including one foul against a Southington player in the act of hitting a three-pointer — allowed the Knights to stay within striking distance for quite a while.

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Six years ago: 1,500 watch #1 Newington beat SHS

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her cool when Southington guard Beth Huber (11 points) aggressively went for steals.

"Our coach [Sandy Pilz] scouted them pretty well," Bouffard said. "If we went to the corners with the ball, we were dead. I just tried to stay in the middle and looked to see who was open."

There, especially in the second half, Bouffard found Beth Kelly and Donna DeFrancesco underneath. DeFrancesco scored all her nine points in the second half. Beth Kelly led Newington with 13. Both were too tall — 5 foot 10 — for Southington to handle inside.

"Christine did a wonderful job tonight, didn't she?" Pilz asked. "Just a wonderful job of keeping us calm."

Newington, though it struggled with Southington's press the first quarter, led, 17-11.

The Indians were in the midst of opening the game up early when Jen Kelly -- averaging just less than 24 points a game -- went to the bench with her third foul with 5 minutes, 31 seconds left in the half, but her sister Beth hit a three pointer 31 seconds later to give the Indians their biggest lead of the half, 24-13.



Above: Donna DeFrancesco guards the ball while looking to make a pass during the February 2, 1993 Southington game. Photo courtesy of Sequin.

But Newington missed Jen Kelly, going the next 4:59 without a basket. Southington, on three free throws by Huber, pulled to 24-20 with 2:52 left in the half.

Bouffard's only field goal, a 14-footer, came with 1:01 left in the half to give Newington a 26-20 lead.

Southington center Bridget Buist (14 points) kept Southington close in the third. And the Blue Knights came closer when Jen Kelly fouled out and Southington made it 43-38.

"People seem to think that we're going to shut down when Jen is not in the game," her sister said. "But we're not. She was cheering us on and Christine was just great, she took control of the game from then on."

Christine was just great, she took control of the game from then on."

Not only did Bouffard continue to break Southington's pressure in the final minutes, but she hit 5 of 7 free throws in the final 1:28.

Newington went on to defeat the Blue Knights again on February 24 at Southington and finish the regular season undefeated, only to lose to the same Knights in the state championship game.

Indians score big win over Knights

Newington's 48-36 rout ends 9-game Southington streak

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Southington sent Newington's players to the foul line numerous times in the closing minutes, but the Indians hit enough of their free throws to maintain their substantial cushion. After scoring with 17 seconds left, the Knights finally let Newington run down the clock and end the game.

"That's it!" exclaimed Assistant Coach Mark Russell with six seconds remaining on the clock. Players on the bench arose and began to heartily applaud. "Nice job!" Russell added.

The streak was over. Way over.

"It's special because the kids understood that they haven't beaten that team in umpteen years," Coach DiNello added. "And eventually that starts to wear on you. So it's nice to know that it's done. We want to do it again."

That chance will come on Thursday, February 18, when Southington hosts Newington in the regular season finale for both teams, the Knights' Senior Night. Newington has only won at Southington once in school history.

"I guarantee Southington's going to play a better game than we have won this game by 20 points."



Above: Ryan Vicino takes a jump shot over two Southington defenders late in the third quarter.

Below: Colleen Gagne and Stephanie Toohey demonstrate something that hasn't been seen very often during games against Southington in recent years: smiles on the Newington bench.



on the last game of the season, but by the same token, we'll be a better basketball team too," said DiNello.

Depending on how the next few weeks go, Southington may have a motivational advantage in that game. The Knights' record dropped to 5-10 with Tuesday's loss, and now faces a tough road in order to secure a tournament bid of its own. The Knights must win three of their next five games, two of which are against CCC South co-leaders New Britain and Bulkeley, in order to qualify. That means that if they do qualify, they will most likely have to beat Newington in that February 18 meeting in order to do so.

But for now, DiNello wants his players to enjoy this win. Moments before going into the team room after the game, the coach stated, "I'm going to go in and tell them, 'Enjoy it. And then let's forget it, and let's move on.'"

"This is a great win," said Coach Markie, "because the kids were very relaxed, they came to play... [and] they weren't intimidated at all. They took it right at them, and they showed 'em. They probably could