

Life behind the scenes with

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This week, Monday marked the opening of the Powder-Puff Hockey Tournament. Our beloved Westlane Spartanettes played against Loretto and unfortunately lost. In fact, they were completely shut out, to the tune of 3-0. This, of course, was slightly disturbing for the general public at Westlane. For me, it meant a bit more.

A few weeks ago, I was approached by some members of our Powder-Puff team, who wanted me to make mention of their organization. To provide material for my column, they invited me to three practices. The prospect of becoming the new George Plimpton appealed to me immediately, and I agreed.

It became apparent rather soon, however, that I was a fool stepping in where only angels had tread before. For one thing, their

practices have, to put it lightly, rather unholy scheduling.

No reporter in his right mind should have have to get up at 5:00 a.m., but, then again, the truth is that I'm really right out of my mind. But the time I got to the arena at six, I was very nearly awake. I'm proud to say.

Standing in the doorway of the room where the girls pull on their skates, I noticed that there was very little talk about hockey. Virtually all attention, in fact, is centred on our star centre, who has asked to remain anonymous for insurance purposes, and whose arguments with coach Benny Trendle consistently lead to her quite effectively put her foot in her mouth.

The only other person who says anything worth writing down is Lynn Badger, who finds me a most accessible target for her slanderous remarks, especially after I tagged her with a nickname last week.

The skating of the girls is the subject of much discussion. Regretfully, we have no Karen Magnusson, but, to put it quite frankly, there was some excellent ability displayed. Some girls, however, need a little bit of practice, to make my weekly understatement. I have come to the conclusion that girls are, generally, poorer skaters than guys, but I hope no one will be offended by that remark and maybe label me something horrible like "male chauvinist you-know-what".

The coach of the team must stress fundamentals, because many of the girls have never seen a hockey stick, and couldn't tell a puck from a hole in the ground. Some catch on quickly, while with others it takes time. Perhaps the essence of a good Powder-Puff team is how well the players understand the game, not how fast they skate or how hard they shoot.

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the Westlane powder-puffs

Then one morning as scrimmage began, assistant coach Dave Monteleone asked me to play goal for one side. In case it gives any reader a perverse thrill, we lost 8-1. But I noticed a few things.

These girls come in various dispositions. Lynn, for instance, will as soon check you over the boards as look at you. But there are others who do not have the slightest intent of knocking someone into the end blues. Obviously, the first type makes for a more aggressive hockey player.

Sometimes there is a hesitancy to shoot. How often did a breakaway go sour because someone held on to the puck and was out-raced to the goalmouth! Perhaps some girls are afraid to do anything quick and decisive, or maybe they just need more prac-

The defence of our team has a few girls who know what they're doing, and do it.

This is what gives them their solidarity, even though they have difficulty with stick-checking and speed-skating.

As I mentioned last week, there is a definite lack of passing on offence. In fact, I was made to believe that this very inability to control the play led to our downfall last Monday.

As a later practice, I tested the goalies. These girls have a task that I'm still not sure about. On one hand, I expected them to let many goals in because they just don't have the quickness that a Kenestina Dryden needs. On the other hand, it occurred to me that against most Powder-Puff players, the goalie doesn't even need much skill. I'm still not sure which viewpoint holds water.

But I watched trainer Kevin Williams talk to first-stringer Janice Smith, and, more important than skill or that sort of thing, Janice proved to me that whatever she did,

right or wrong, she was trying hard, and enjoying it.

This, then, is the heart of the Powder-Puff team that is to be successful, whether they win or lose. As in every sport, it is the spirit that counts most.

Do the Westlane Spartanettes have this spirit, the drive and enthusiasm for what may be a losing cause, although a rewarding experience?

I talked to some of them at various times, and I think that from the manager, Mr. Boesveld, on through the coaching staff, down into the rank and file even onto the most ridiculous newspaper correspondent, this emotion has permeated the team.

Mind you, now absolutely everyone has this attitude, but the team as a whole can, and does, present an atmosphere that I will remember for a long time to come.