

Spartans Senior Girls Basketball 2008-2009

7	Flavia Calvar
8	Kristina Wilson
9	Casey Fortin
10	Ling Chiu
11	Krista Blackned
12	Christine Osei
14	Rume Kakpovia
15	Margarita Acero
20	Tania Laroche-Duhamel
21	Juliet Numfor
22	Dawn Namagoose
24	Necola Guerrina

Coach: Erik Van Dyke

Statistician / Player-Manager (#3): Gabrielle Fleming

Statistician / Manager: Marian Kirkman-Gagnon

February 26-27

Strong finish to season at McLeod Provincials

Just after 10:30 p.m. on a Friday night in Lennoxville (yes, that is pretty late), at the AAESQ McLeod Provincials, the 2008-09 basketball season finally came to an end. But folks, it was a good end.

Ranked second out of eight teams, the Stanstead College Spartans kicked off the tournament (which Stanstead has never won...ever) against a familiar rival, Quebec High School. The Blazers had given us all we could handle last time we faced them at the Bailly, where we escaped with a hard-fought 46-36 win, so underestimating them was not an option. Instead, we came out attacking on both ends of the court. Defensively we were all over them, clogging passing lanes, helping beautifully, deflecting passes; a true clinic of what Spartan basketball is supposed to be. And it had to be, because despite endless close looks we couldn't put the ball in the ocean on this day. Poor shooting? How about 14 for 68 from the field? But the lid on the basket didn't matter, because as we've done many times this season, defence won it for us. The well-coached QHS team kept calling timeouts and trying different things, but to no avail. How about 23 team steals? 23! How about only 5 points allowed in the first quarter? Then 2 points in the second? And only one point allowed in the third? Ridiculous defensive performance! In the end Necola's and Rume's combined 25 points was enough offense to carry us to a 40-16 win, and we were on to the semi-finals...

Against a heretofore unseen opponent, Chateauguay Valley Regional from the South Shore of Montreal, also called the Spartans. Checking them out in the warm-up it looked like they were big and tough, with guards who looked confident shooting the ball. But like most warm-up analyses, it was a waste of time. In reality, the key factors in this game were CVR's inability to 1) get back on defence and 2) clean up their defensive glass (we collected 16 offensive boards). In addition to the second chance points, the Red & White enjoyed countless fast break opportunities which accounted for our comfortable 27-10 halftime lead. And when we clamped down in the third quarter by allowing only 2 points, it was essentially over. Final score 44-24, and the Spartans (the red & white ones) were on their way to the McLeod Finals for only the third time in their history. Could they become the first Stanstead team ever to win the whole enchilada?

If so, it would be a pretty big upset, as our opponents were the number one seed Shawinigan Demons, the fifth-ranked team in Quebec, who boasted not one, not two, but THREE all-world do-everything guards. There would be two things we would have to do perfectly to pull off the upset: break the press and somehow find a way to contain their trio of super-guards. The good news is we handled the press much better than in our last meeting. The bigger floor surface helped, but mostly it was the performance of Margarita Acero and Ling Chiu, who both kept clear heads and made good decisions with the basketball under duress. The bad news is our defensive plan (a modified zone with pressure on the perimeter) was a dismal failure (8 points allowed in the first 90 seconds). So we quickly switched back to our bread and butter, help man defence. Which turned out to be another failure. We just couldn't deal with the quickness, the shooting, the all-around excellence of the Demons' ballhandlers. As Shawinigan shots kept falling, our body language started to show the signs. Slumping posture. Disbelieving faces. Sagging shoulders. When the halftime buzzer mercifully sounded we were down 39-16, and it looked like the rout was on.

The next 16 minutes of play would be the true gauge of our strength of character. When there is no realistic chance of winning, when the deficit is too large, when the other team is just plain better, when it becomes not a question of skill or strategy, winning or losing, but one of pride, would we be, ultimately, a team with pride? Would we give our best effort for the rest of this game, no matter what the scoreboard showed? Even if the Demons continued to dominate us? The second half would tell the story...

The first significant event was a lucky break; one of the SHS guards committed her fourth foul and had to sit. That made things MUCH easier for us defensively, and we started forcing missed shots. Margarita and Rume would then snatch the defensive rebounds (eight each) and off we could go before their press could set up. Now we had a game (at least in this quarter). In fact, we held the mighty Demons to only 11 points in the frame, while scoring 15 ourselves (we only scored 16 in the entire first half). It may not sound like much, but think about it. 39-16 down in the first half. 15-11 up in the third quarter. And it didn't quite end there. In the final quarter, still losing by 19 points, we pulled out all the stops and adopted the old "hold, heave and hope" strategy; make stops, chuck threes, and pray they drop. And for a little while, lo and behold, it actually worked! After trading buckets in the first couple minutes, Margo banked in a lucky three, we

stopped them, then Necola hit another three, we stopped them again, then Necola nailed another three! The crowd was going nuts, 9 points in 2 minutes, and suddenly, somehow, we were only down 10, 54-44! A 13-4 run to start the fourth! Pride? Damn right we had pride!

Unfortunately, that was as close as we would come. We lost the shooting magic (oh, but it was fun while it lasted!), the third Shawinigan guard re-entered the game, and the Demons scored the next 5 points. Two minutes left, down by 15, now all that was left was pressing, fouling, and extending the game. Which we did well but, ultimately, it didn't work out, as SHS successfully busted the pressure and hit their free throws. Final score 64-46, and for the second straight year, and for the third time in SC history, the Stanstead Spartans would proudly take home the McLeod Finalist Banner as the second-best team in the AAESQ. Well done, team!

Rewind. Two months ago the Spartans found themselves down, for the first time in the season, to a powerhouse LCC team. How did we react then? We imploded. A complete meltdown in the face of adversity. I left that game knowing that the fatal flaw on this team was a mental one, and wondering if we would ever mature enough to compete against the elite teams. Fast forward to the McLeod, where we were almost blasted off the floor in the first half 39-16, but responded by winning the second half 30-25 against a team that, let's face it, is better than us. For me, this comeback, even though it fell short, is one of the most important moments of the year. Knowing how to win is great, and we've done a lot of that this year, but knowing how to lose, how to *compete* in a loss, is just as important.

It's been, to say the least, quite a ride this season. 34 games. Only 6 losses. Not too shabby J . To the graduating Grade 12s, Kristina, Rume, Christine, Krista, Tania, Ling and Necola, THANK YOU for all you've given to The Little Program That Could. To all those returning next year for the 09-10 season, let's aim high; an ETIAC three-peat?

See you all at Sports Assembly!

Coach Van Dyke

The year in review...

Overall Record: 28 wins 6 losses

ETIAC League Play (undefeated!): 10 wins 0 losses

Points for per game: 46.3

Points allowed per game: 30.4

Stanstead Invitational Tournament Champions

Montreal Independent Schools Tournament Silver Medalists

BCS Invitational Tournament Champions

ETIAC Regular Season Champions

Bailly Small Schools Provincial Tournament Silver Medalists

ETIAC Playoff Champions

McLeod Provincials Silver Medalists

Wednesday, February 24

Instant Classic at ETIAC Final

Someone call the fire department, because we had ourselves a barnburner!

After a lacklustre 41-29 semi-final win against BCS (Ling Chiu, Kristina Wilson and Christine Osei played well, Necola Guerrina carried us offensively with her 3-point sharpshooting – 5 threes! – and that’s about all I want to say about that game), we found ourselves in the ETIAC Playoff finals against a big, strong, athletic team from Alexander Galt. In our previous two meetings we had won by 21 and 17 points, but that was with a full, healthy team. With Flavia Calvar and Krista Blackned again scratched from the roster, there wasn’t much to separate these two squads. The pre-game spiel tried to drive that point home, that this game was going to come down to the last few minutes and that every single play would matter in the outcome, but after our appalling effort in the previous game, I admit I had my doubts. Did we have enough gas left in the tank? Did the whole team care enough? And even if they did, did we have the firepower, the will, the maturity to outlast the Pipers?

Warmup was, thankfully, a good one. The girls looked ready. Focused. Good and nervous. And the first possession was promising, as we made two hustle plays on loose balls, and even though we didn’t score, I was happy with the intensity. Unfortunately, that was our best series of the first quarter, as Galt’s athleticism absolutely killed us on the defensive glass for the next seven and a half minutes. We couldn’t match their quickness to the ball, and we were a step slower in every facet. We were trying our hardest, I’m convinced of it, but after the whistle blew to end the first frame we were down 13-7. The outlook was bleak.

But the second quarter was a different story, and foreshadowed how this riveting rollercoaster contest was going to play out. The catalyst was Juliet, who played dreadfully in the semi, but who came out with that Numfor fire-in-the-eyes look when given her chance at redemption in the final. All of a sudden the fastest player on the floor

was a Spartan, as Juliet seemed to always be in the thick of things, always around the ball, hyper-aggressive, and her teammates took her cue. Suddenly we were ripping down offensive rebounds and corralling loose balls. Now the Spartans were forcing the play. Now the Pipers were on their heels, reacting to us. And most significantly we got back to playing superior man defence. All these hustle plays opened up our offense, allowing Necola to get the ball down low, where she abused her defender for 10 points in the quarter, AND drew three fouls while she was at it. A 19-5 run! 26-18 lead going into halftime! It had been gut-check time after the first quarter, and the Spartan guts, apparently, were just fine!

The Galt coach asked for a 10-minute break at halftime, meaning she had something up her sleeve. Unfortunately for us, it was a diamond-and-one on Necola, which meant that our scoring would have to come from more areas for the rest of this game. But where exactly? Some unlikely sources as it turned out. Kristina Wilson nailed two straight free throws with her patented two-handed jump shot. Nothing but net! Rume Kakpovia chipped in with three points. Juliet nailed two fieldgoals. And Necola separated herself from the tight coverage long enough for a three-point play the old-fashioned way. However, the never-say-die Pipers slowly, surely, inevitably it seemed, brought the game back within reach, and when they sunk a three just before the buzzer the score stood 38-35. A slim margin indeed, and Galt had all the momentum.

So we found ourselves up by 3 to start the final eight minutes of the ETIAC season. Anxious? Yes. But this is what high school sports is about. A meaningful, tight game against quality opposition, where every player is 100% focused on the task at hand. If you don't enjoy these moments, go do something else. I hear checkers is fun.

The quarter starts. The Pipers score first. Necola answers with two free throws. But Galt finally makes it all the way back, and ties the game at 40. It is now officially a coin flip. Who will take the coveted Playoff Trophy home? Galt goes up 42-40. Juliet answers with a runner. But we don't get back on D fast enough and hack the layup attempt, resulting in two made freebies. Down 44-42 with under two minutes remaining... Galt fans going wild... but Necola batters her way inside and draws yet another foul. And we all know how money she is from the line. But she misses the front end! (A true rarity, as she went 10-12 for the game.) She calmly drains the second, but time is ticking away, we need the ball back. The defence holds, Rume gets a huge rebound (one of her 12 on the game), and we come back down the floor... tick tick tick... and Captain Guerrina hits a clutch hoop to put us up by one! 45-44. Sixty-two seconds left. Now time for the defence to hold. Which it does. But we don't squeeze the rebound, as Galt shoots again... and again... and finally finishes. Crowd erupts. We come back down quickly, but misfire. Last timeout. Full court press. 35 seconds left, down by one, 46-45, and we don't have the ball.

Then comes the Play Of The Year TM. Galt busts the initial pressure, but as they try to feed the post Necola jumps the pass, makes a perfect steal, turns it upcourt and headmans the ball to Ling Chiu, who had already up to this moment played the best basketball of her life. Ling attacks up the right side... Spartan and Piper fans cheering like crazy... tick

tick tick... throws up a runner from 10 feet out... the ref whistles a foul!... the ball caroms around the rim for what seems like three full seconds... and falls in! And one! The Spartan bench goes positively nuts. (Yeah, I guess we've become closer as a team!) Ling steps up and coolly drains the free throw... three-point play with the trophy on the line!... up 48-46... 27 seconds left... Galt inbound after the free throw and race down the floor, they MUST score, it's the most important offensive series of the Piper season... but which Spartan cuts in and makes a ridiculous perimeter steal? None other than Ling! Who turns it upcourt with unstoppable determination in her eyes. So unstoppable, that she ignores her coach yelling "don't shoot!... don't shoot!... run out the clock!... turn away!..." Yes, Ling ignores this, but to her credit the gym was rocking and she may not have heard it. So she attacks the two-on-one just like she learned in practice, comes in wide from the left side, the defender stays home to defend the pass, the coach keeps yelling "don't shoot," and Ling proceeds to bank in a perfect layup for a 4-point lead. Five straight points for Ling Chiu in the last 30 seconds of the game! Unbelievable! One more defensive stop later, and the Playoff Championship Trophy was coming home to little old Stanstead College for the second straight year. 51-46 final score, in the most down-to-the-wire-hair-graying-rollercoaster-ride of the year.

And yes, every little play mattered. Every time Necola did NOT foul in the fourth with four fouls. Kristina going three-of-four from the line. Tania Laroche giving Rume an important two-minute rest. Christine Osei starting the game with a taped up thumb. Rume's six steals. Margarita Acero's seven defensive rebounds. If we don't make all those plays we barely lose the trophy, instead of barely winning it. Buzzer-beaters don't win close games by themselves, they just happen to be the last play that happened. Remember that. That's why it takes a team to win a basketball game.

Girls, you all showed me something yesterday. We were down early, and you came back. We were down late, and you came back. You didn't quit when things got tough, which has not always been the case this year. Looks like we've done some growing up. Looks like we're more of a team now. And believe me, that's what we needed this game. Without trust in, and support from, every single one of your teammates, this result would not have been possible. Positive energy and attitude won this trophy. As well as a healthy dose of Ling Chiu!

Congratulations to the whole team. Games and wins like this don't come along all that often. Treasure it!

Coach Van Dyke

The year so far....only McLeod Provincials left...

Overall Record: 26 wins 5 losses

ETIAC League Play: 10 wins 0 losses

Points for per game: 46.6

Points allowed per game: 30.0

Stanstead Invitational Tournament Champions

Montreal Independent Schools Tournament Silver Medalists

B.C.S. Invitational Tournament Champions

ETIAC Regular Season Champions

Bailly Small Schools Provincial Tournament Silver Medalists

ETIAC Playoff Champions

Wednesday, February 18

Girls end regular season undefeated

The Stanstead Spartans were chasing history this past Wednesday in their last home fixture of 2008-09. With a win they would finish the regular season with a perfect 8-0 record. Undefeated. Never before done in the annals of Stanstead College girls' basketball. But standing in history's path was a hungry Massey-Vanier squad intent on avenging their earlier loss to the Red & White, a sluggish 41-25 decision on the Vikings' home floor. Hopefully the friendly confines of the Amaron Gymnasium would ramp up our intensity, which we would need more than ever as we were missing not one but two starters: talented forward Flavia Calvar, as well as our best perimeter defender Krista Blackned. Could the team get it done under these conditions? Could we go 8-0?

Right away we knew we were in for a fight, down 4-0 early, but Necola Guerrina stemmed the tide with a timely three that jumpstarted her teammates. Stanstead would finish the quarter on a nice 10-3 run, and we felt pretty good at this point with our 13-7 lead. But the second quarter was a different story. With the worst perimeter defence we've played in a long time (yes, we missed Krista) and the sloppiest ball handling since opening tryouts, we literally "turnover-ed" our way into halftime all tied up at 20 apiece. The Vikings had all the momentum, and the Spartans were not reacting maturely to the adversity.

Solution? Some full-court pressure to really get the blood flowing, and it worked like a charm. During the first four minutes of the second half Necola, Ling, Margarita, Juliet and Rume made like rabid pit bulls and absolutely ravaged the MVR ball handlers. Steals, pressure, turnovers and layups. The Massey guards were utterly befuddled, and after the smoke cleared the Red & White had an 8-point lead, which ultimately proved the difference in the game. The teams traded baskets the rest of the way, and when the

final whistle blew on this ETIAC regular season the Denney scoreboard read 49-43. The Stanstead Spartans were undefeated in the ETIAC! Way to go team!

Player Of The Game was, offensively and defensively, Necola Guerrina, who kept the Vikings' top post threat on lock the whole game, while ringing up the following linescore: 17 pts, 9 rebs, 3 steals, 3 assists, and only 1 turnover. Yeah, that's pretty solid. But Necola didn't earn the Play Of The Game award. No, that was reserved for Tania Laroche-Duhamel. Final 15 seconds of the game, all five veteran Grade 12s (Kristina, Tania, Ling, Necola and Christine) on the floor in their last-ever home game. Tania playing guard for the first time in her life. Free throws for us. We miss the back end, but Tania boxes out the shooter perfectly, snatches the rebound, turns 180 degrees, sees nothing but open court, and races hell-bent for leather *towards our own basket*. The gym erupts in laughter; players, fans, minor officials, everybody! Truly a great moment. Luckily the ref noticed the backcourt violation as Tania charged over the center line, or she would be still be going, probably somewhere in East Angus by now. J

But hey, if that play doesn't put the exclamation point on this season, nothing will. Congratulations to the whole team for a perfect regular season. Now let's get ready for the playoffs!

Coach Van Dyke

The year so far....we're almost done...

Overall Record: 24 wins 5 losses

ETIAC League Play: 8 wins 0 losses

Points for per game: 46.6

Points allowed per game: 29.5

Stanstead Invitational Tournament Champions

Montreal Independent Schools Tournament Silver Medalists

B.C.S. Invitational Tournament Champions

E.T.I.A.C. Regular Season Champions

Bailly Small Schools Provincial Tournament Silver Medalists

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February 13-15

Bridesmaid at the Baily Small Schools Tournament

Last season your Stanstead Spartans won the coveted Baily plaque in miracle fashion (ah yes, the Dumas Buzzer-Beater, followed by the Comeback...good times...!), and were looking to repeat as champions here in 2009. What story would be written this year?

Opening game, perennial rival BCS, 9:30 a.m. Friday morning, and after a good warm-up the Red & White came out smoking, especially defensively. In an effort reminiscent of how we played back in December, our post defender unit (Necola Guerrina, Rume Kakpovia, Tania Laroche and Kristina Wilson) completely shut down the Crusader inside game, the perimeter defenders made life difficult for the opposing guards, and most importantly our full-court pressure ramped up the tempo and forced BCS to play faster than they wanted to. How well did it work? Only two fieldgoals allowed in the first quarter; one fieldgoal and two free throws in the second. That's it. And with Necola's 12 first-half points and Ling Chiu's penetrating drives leading the way, Stanstead entered halftime with a commanding 35-8 lead, and never looked back. Final score 56-16; six different players with at least six points; and most impressively the defence actually *pitched a shutout* in the fourth quarter, allowing zero points! Great start to the tournament!

But there was a very dark cloud surrounding this silver lining. All-star small forward Flavia Calvar went down hard in the second half with a knee injury, and unfortunately went down for good. She would not play the rest of the weekend. Very. Serious. Problem. Especially with our next game against the tournament favourites from Shawinigan. How would we do without Flavia's passing, scoring, steals, rebounding, and court sense? Would her teammates pick her up? Would others step up to shoulder the load?

The game started as well as we could have hoped. We matched the Demons' intensity from the opening whistle, and traded mini-runs for the first eight minutes. After one quarter it was tied at 14, and we had ourselves a ball game. But the second quarter was a different story. Shawinigan's superstar shooter somehow got enough separation from Ling Chiu's and Krista Blackned's tight coverage to torch us for 15 points, and we limped into halftime down 33-23. Our main adjustment going into the second half? Hopefully cover their shooter even tighter, give her no room to breathe. Nice plan, but easier said than done, as she poured in 13 more points despite our completely keying on her. Simply incredible.

But then something happened midway through the third; Juliet Numfor and Dawn "The Goose" Namagoose took over the game! Juliet attached herself to the hip of

Shawinigan's assassin, limiting her to one lone fourth-quarter three-pointer. And The Goose started shooting the lights out. Inside. Outside. Free throws. 16 second-half points. The Goose was cooking! In fact, the TSN TM Turning Point of this riveting match occurred just before the end of the third quarter, when Dawn, with the ball at the top of the circle, heard her coach yell "Safe pass! Safe pass!" from the bench, calmly ignored him, and drained a textbook three to bring the Spartans within 4. What a moment! And in the fourth, Juliet apparently grew bored of only playing lockdown defence and started taking it to the rack with a purpose, to the tune of 9 huge points of her own! From 13 points down late in the third, the Red & White stormed all the way back, took the lead, and ultimately won the game 68-61!

Remember the initial question? Would the team dig deep to make up for the loss of Flavia? I guess a season-defining 34-14 run to end the game qualifies as "digging deep." I suppose outscoring the favoured Demons 20-9 in the fourth, even with super-forward Guerrina (22 points on only 15 shots for her second great game in a row) fouling out with over 6 minutes remaining, qualifies as "digging deep." I gather a miraculous comeback victory over the fifth-ranked AA team in Quebec qualifies as "digging deep!"

Hey, sometimes the ball bounces your way for a while, and sometimes everything you shoot goes in. When that happens, all you can do is sit back and enjoy it. So enjoy this, Spartans; a game like this is why you joined basketball in the first place!

Third game, Quebec High, late Saturday night, and by virtue of the Blazers losing earlier in the day to BCS we were already guaranteed a spot in Sunday's finals. Still, we came out hard and with good energy, contesting every drive and pass, led by Krista who played the QHS point guard so closely she was sometimes inside the same jersey. It was a classic defensive performance by the veteran, who drew not one but TWO offensive fouls when Quebec tried to screen her off her man. And offensively it was the Necola show in the first half, who poured in 17 points on only 9 shots. Holy North Hero! But the Blazers, like their coach, never quit, even being down 32-15 midway through the third quarter. They started hitting some outside shots, as well as aggressively double- and triple-teaming Necola if we even looked at her. But that's where Rume Kakpovia stepped in. "Leave me with single coverage? We'll see about that," was her attitude as she abused her defender for 10 second-half points to maintain our 10-point lead until the final buzzer. 46-36 final score, and a very solid team victory against spirited opposition. Now only one more game to go. Sunday. The Finals.

So here we were, a chance to repeat as Bailly champions, but with an uber-talented Shawinigan team blocking our way with revenge in their eyes. Not content with the 61 points we allowed in the round-robin game, we changed our defence significantly to provide even more help on their two star guards while still (hopefully) protecting our basket from weak-side layups. And boy did it ever work! A paltry three points allowed in the first quarter, only 13 for the entire half! Juliet and Krista were phenomenal as the Dobermans, Margarita Acero and Necola very smart with the help, and Rume was downright incredible down low. But the Demons made their own adjustments from the first game, pressuring the ball in the frontcourt in an all-out attempt to keep the ball out of

our post players' hands. And it succeeded, as we could only manage 14 points ourselves. 14-13 going into halftime, but we were happy with that; it's tough enough trying to stop one all-world slashing guard who also knocks down threes, but two of them?

Third quarter. The exact same story. Shawinigan pressing our guards, speeding up the game, forcing turnovers. Stanstead hounding their shooters, inducing bad shots. Another low scoring quarter; 26-23 for the Red & White going into the final frame. Could we hang on? The pivotal series came midway through the fourth. Demons leading 32-29. The Spartan defence forces a weaker player into a long jump shot, but she actually hits it. Thirty seconds later we fast break, 3 on 1. But we fail to convert, and Shawinigan comes back in transition and nails a three. All of a sudden we're down by 8, and the rest is history. We brought it within 4 but no closer, as we just didn't have the offensive firepower to come all the way back. Final score a 43-33 loss, and the Finalist Banner instead of the big bright yellow one we really wanted.

But we have nothing to be ashamed of. Offensively we did pretty well considering we were without Flavia, and defensively we were simply outstanding. Kudos to Rume (24 rebs in the finals!) and Necola (20 pt/game average for the tourney) for being named to the Bailly All-Star Team, and congratulations to the entire team for the season's best weekend of basketball thus far. Enjoy your day off!

Coach Van Dyke

The year so far....

*Overall Record: **23** wins **5** losses*

*ETIAC League Play: **7** wins **0** losses*

*Points for per game: **46.5***

*Points allowed per game: **29.0***

Stanstead Invitational Tournament Champions

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B.C.S. Invitational Tournament Champions

E.T.I.A.C. Regular Season Champions

Bailly Small Schools Provincial Tournament Silver Medalists

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January 17-18

BCS Tournament a lesson in what wins championships

Six days.

That's how much time had passed since the MIS.

Six days since the Spartans, beaten and bloody, trudged off the LCC gym floor after a second-half collapse to the host Lions in the tournament finals. Six days to swallow that bitter, bitter pill.

But we used those six days to prepare for the next big fixture of our season, the annual BCS Tournament. Twelve schools, some private and some public, meeting in Lennoxville to vie for the coveted championship banner.

Last year Stanstead College won this banner for only the second time in tournament history. Could we repeat? Could we hang the 2009 banner right beside the 2008 banner in our own Amaron Gymnasium?

The first test would be a difficult one, an opening game against the well-coached, uber-aggressive ECS Beavers and their frenetic full-court press. From the opening tip the Spartans were flat. Slow. Weak. Not only were we late getting back in transition, twice we allowed a player to go coast to coast for a layup. Not only were we losing loose balls, we actually had some balls ripped right out of our hands by our opponents, who were simply outworking us. But luckily we could still play help defence, as evidenced by the 17-10 lead we enjoyed at halftime. And when we scored two quick hoops to start the third quarter, affairs looked well in hand. But then ECS shifted their press into overdrive,

and to say the least, it worked. Suddenly the vaunted Red & White transition game couldn't even get the ball across half. We threw the ball away. We had passes intercepted. We travelled. And even when we broke through the pressure we muffed the 2-on-1.

Flustered. Frustrated. You could feel the thread of panic seeping through the players. The wheels were coming off. And then ECS turned another steal into two points, and suddenly the score stood 21-20. A slim one-point lead, with all the momentum going the other way. Would we again mentally fold to adversity, like we did against LCC six days ago? Would our tournament be over before it really began?

Nope. Because that's when Stanstead stopped the bleeding with the Play Of The Game. Flavia Calvar (12 steals, 9 rebs) corralled a defensive rebound, turned the corner, headmanned the ball wide up to an alert Ling Chiu, who took one dribble then hit a streaking Rume Kakpovia (12 pts 11 rebs) for the most important layup of the tournament. 23-20, and the Spartans never looked back. An 8-0 run when it mattered most, and a tooth-and-nail 32-24 victory over a spirited, athletic adversary.

Our second round-robin game was against Montreal's Queen of Angels Academy, and the Red & White dominated this one from the start. Christine Osei scored a breakaway layup four seconds after the opening tap, and the tone was set. Kudos to Ling Chiu for her controlled performance at the point, Krista Blackned for her four steals, Margarita Acero for her six assists, and to Dawn "The Goose" Namagoose for her best all-around game of the year. My Favourite Plays: 1) Tania Laroche's power post move from the right baseline; and 2) Ling to Kristina Wilson to Dawn for two perfect "peytions" in a row. 54-12 final score, and the Spartans had qualified for the semi-finals Saturday morning.

We were facing the always-tough Sacred Heart Saints for the third time this season, and this time their top scorer would be there. Nerves? A little. But I am proud to say that the Spartans answered the bell and turned in their **BEST DEFENSIVE EFFORT OF THE SEASON**. Krista, Ling and Juliet Numfor each took their turn sticking to the Saints' shooter like the proverbial glue, like white on rice, like Coach Van Dyke on a spare rib. Not only did these three players hold her scoreless for the first half, *she only touched the ball four times!* This superb performance raised the level of the entire team defence (18-2 lead at the half!), while completely frustrating the opposition. And offensively the game was decided beyond the arc. With Sacred Heart clogging the key to prevent our post-up game, Necola Guerrina drilled two consecutive open threes, followed by Flavia nailing a triple of her own. These daggers basically iced the low-scoring contest, and this bee-yootiful 28-10 victory ensured us an all-important berth in the finals. Nestle's Quik TM Thinking Play Of The Game goes to manager Gabrielle Fleming, who reminded the minor officials that we were shooting bonus at the end of the first half before the refs could put the ball in play. Did we hit the free throws that Gabie had earned us? Oh yes. Both. J

In the finals we faced off against Westwood, whom we knew nothing about. Turns out they were a big, strong team that liked to crash the offensive glass, which proved problematic for us until we made some adjustments at halftime. But the real story of this game was a) our shooting (atrocious), and b) our defence (immaculate). We missed countless layups and chippies throughout the game (16 for 65 shooting, oh my), but our help defence (which improved throughout the tournament) saved our bacon once again. 36-16, and the Spartans were tournament champions for the second straight year!

Kudos to Flavia for being selected to the Tournament All-Star Team, and to Neola for being named the Tournament MVP. And special congratulations to the entire team for gutting out some difficult wins. A friend (in fact, a Stanstead College basketball alumnus) reminded me quite recently of the following sage advice: offence puts the fans in the seats, but defence wins championships. Adding up every point-against for the entire tournament, the Red & White allowed an anaemic 62 points in 4 games. That's not even 4 points per quarter.

That's championship basketball. Well done, girls!

- Coach Van Dyke

The year so far....

Overall Record: 15 wins 1 loss

ETIAC League Play: 3 wins 0 losses

Points for per game: 45.0

Points allowed per game: 20.3

Stanstead Invitational Tournament Champions

Montreal Independent Schools Tournament Silver Medalists

B.C.S. Invitational Tournament Champions

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January 9-10

Silver medal performance at the MIST

The Spartans returned to action this past weekend at the annual Montreal Independent Schools Tournament, in defence of their 2008 Championship Banner (ah yes, I remember, what a weekend that was!). But it had been over a month since we'd played any games, with only two practices; how would we respond to the long layoff?

We found out in our first game against St. Clement's School from Toronto, i.e. we did not respond well. No communication on defence, cement hands, balls thrown out of bounds, ill-advised running lanes in transition and missed layups. Yes, SCS was a big

strong team with some talent, but our poor execution was making me wonder how we'd ever started the season 6-0. However, in the end Flavia Calvar (16 points, 7 steals), captain Necola Guerrina's double-double (11 points 13 rebounds), and an inbounds play that produced eight easy points proved to be the difference, and the Red & White escaped with an ugly but important 33-21 victory.

Our second opponent was The Study, the host school, which meant a rowdy crowd, vocal fans and intense opposition. Thankfully we matched their intensity, with Necola's 3-pointer sparking an 11-2 start to the game and our perimeter defence successfully disrupting The Study's offensive sets, to the tune of 21 steals! By halftime we had built a comfortable 17-7 lead, and built on it in the second half with an impressive 15-point run. Kudos to Necola for her 17-point effort and to the entire team for not backing down from an aggressive, physical contest, even with the crowd (and the refs?) against us, and gutting out a 34-16 win. Most Memorable Moment: Tania Laroche-Duhamel, one of the nicest people in the world, "getting into it" with the referee, who incorrectly thought Tania was sassing him.

We really started hitting our Spartan stride in the third game against Vincent Massey Collegiate, and I'm not gonna lie to you, it felt pretty good. We cut down on turnovers (only seven in the game), had 13 team steals, started executing the new Peyton offense properly, consistently broke the VMC pressure and ran like crazy. For some reason our opponents continued to press us the entire game, which led to eight different players scoring en route to a gaudy 59-27 victory. Nice way to end Day One!

The 3-0 Friday record qualified us for the Championship Division the next day, with all three games to be played against the other three round-robin division winners. First up was a rematch with Sacred Heart, who we had barely beaten earlier in the year at our own invitation. However, their best offensive threat was missing for this game, and the Spartans seized upon this opportunity by playing their BEST DEFENSE of the season. Against a fast, athletic team we stole the ball 21 times and allowed a paltry 9 points, with 7 of those being free throws! Only one true basket the entire game! Kudos to the Red & White for this highlight 35-9 win, and special mention to Flavia for her 14-point, 5-rebound, 10-steal performance. Most Memorable Moment #2: yes, Tania again, eyes flashing, screaming "Dead!" at the top of her lungs into the face of an opposing guard who had inadvertently hit her in the face with the ball.

Next up, Trafalgar, and a convincing 47-10 victory with, again, eight different scorers. Special mention goes out to Christine Osei for her three consecutive fast-break layups in under a minute; to Ling Chiu for playing her overall best game of the season; to Krista Blackned for yet another strong defensive effort; and to Dawn Namagoose for pulling her first ever dropstep post move in a game.

So we were undefeated in the first five games, which put us into the finals against tournament favourite LCC. It would be the first time this season that Stanstead College would be the underdogs, and I was hoping that the "Kristina Wilson pre-game speech" would get us hyped. And hyped we were, for the first half at any rate. We ran, we passed

beautifully, we pushed the pace, and we finished inside. I couldn't have asked for much more, at least offensively. But we had absolutely no answer for the Lions' star player, henceforth known as the BHSPIES (best high school player I've ever seen). Even though we clogged the lane and focused all our help defence on her, the BHSPIES nailed 3 threes on the way to 26 first-half points (38 total in the game). Nevertheless, the furious action of the first 20 minutes only finished with us down by 5, 32-27; it was still a game, and an entertaining one at that. But we came out in the second half flat, and then things got worse. In the lowlight of the season thus far, once adversity hit us, we mentally folded. Turnovers and stupid fouls (which are bad enough), but much worse than that was our body language; we looked beaten, we stopped running, we hung our heads. One needed only to look at the Spartan faces to know who was losing, and that is something that we need to change. No matter the score, no matter the momentum, we must learn to approach each minute of the game the same way, with single-minded intensity. Final result a 57-44 loss (our first defeat of the season), but hopefully a valuable lesson has been learned.

The final half of the final game, however, shouldn't overshadow the positive steps we took this tournament. As mentioned previously we ran well, and improved our defensive communication. We also did a great job on the defensive glass, allowing very few putbacks. Our free throw shooting was solid (Necola only missed one in six games), and we played intelligently when in foul trouble. All in all, a silver medal finish in a 15-team tourney, which is not too shabby. And most importantly, we learned about our strengths, and we identified some of our weaknesses.

Next up the BCS Invitational Tournament this Friday and Saturday, where we are, again, defending champs. Let's try to win this one!

- Coach Van Dyke

The year so far....

Overall Record : 11 wins 1 loss

ETIAC League Play: 3 wins 0 losses

Points for per game : 47.5

Points allowed per game : 21.9

Stanstead Invitational Tournament Champions

Montreal Independent Schools Silver Medalists

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Wednesday, December 3

Spartans firing on all cylinders vs ETIAC rivals



Once in a while it happens. You learn something in practice and it translates perfectly to the next game. You prepare for a certain opponent, and they play exactly the way you want them to. It's rare, but every

so often every pass hits the mark, you finish your layups, your defensive pressure is stifling, you nail some jumpers, and your free throws are pure.

This is what happened during the first half Wednesday at the Amaron Gymnasium as we hosted the BCS First Team in another critical ETIAC fixture. It's been a long time since I've coached a team that flew out of the gates like the Red & White did yesterday; 2002 in fact, back in the Megan Lill / Katherine Wright blitzkrieg years. But it looks like happy days may be here again, as the 2008-09 Spartans played near-perfect basketball for the first 16 minutes of this game (43-11 at halftime!). We scored 3 seconds after Dawn Namagoose's opening tip on a Rume Kakpovia layup, and never looked back.

Perimeter defence? Easily the best it's been all year, with unceasing pressure being applied to the beleaguered Bishop's guards. Transition? Solid runouts by the entire team, who benefited from Flavia Calvar's numerous assists. Post defence? Deny, deny, deny, especially by Nicola Guerrina who made it very difficult for BCS's most dangerous post player to catch the ball near the paint. Speed of play? Very good. And offensively we were that most beautiful of words, especially with respect to high school girls' basketball, "creative." We took what was there, we drove when there was a lane, we pounded it into the post when we could, and we consistently recognized, and found, the open man.

Favourite Play #1: Guerrina driving right from the left wing, jump-stopping at the free throw line, rising to shoot, and instead firing a backdoor pass to Christine Osei for a layup.

Favourite Play #2: Early in the offense Ling Chiu finding Tania Laroche at the high post, who turns, shoots, and snaps the net with a perfect 15-footer.

Player Of The Game was the aforementioned Guerrina, who dominated on both ends of the floor. Check out this sequence: perfect post move from the low block for the hoop,

next possession a drive from the high post with a left-handed finish, then the next possession she drills a three in transition. 7 points in 45 seconds. Not too shabby!

And that goes for the entire team. Ten out of 11 of you scored on offence, and 11 out of 11 played hard-nosed, aggressive defence. Two consecutive practices on defensive principles, and instead of becoming bored you bought into it. The casual fan sees 65 points for and thinks “wow, what a talented team.” The knowledgeable fan sees 18 points against and thinks “wow, what a hard-working, disciplined team.”

You ALWAYS want the latter comment. Always. And you all earned it Wednesday. Enjoy your holidays!

- Coach Van Dyke

The year so far....

Overall Record : 6 wins 0 losses

ETIAC League Play: 3 wins 0 losses

Points for per game : 53.0

Points allowed per game : 20.5

Stanstead Invitational Tournament Champions

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Saturday, November 29

Impressive performance at the S.I.T.





The last time we Spartans won our own early-bird invitational tournament, forward Dawn Namagoose was only 7 years old. Yes, it's been a while. But this past weekend at the Amaron Gymnasium the 2008 edition of Senior Girls Invitational basketball brought the championship plaque back home for the first time since 2001! Here's how.

Opening game. 9:00 a.m. Our first look at perennial ETIAC rival BCS, who we can expect to see about 29 more times this season.

And we started the game exactly the way we wanted to – sprinting. With quick runouts and aggressive passing (and despite several missed layups) Stanstead blitzed their Lennoxville nemesis early, and when the dust cleared at the end of the first quarter the lead was 14-2. But the second quarter was more closely contested, with breakdowns in our perimeter pressure and post defence costing us points and fouls. The second half was also hard-fought, with neither team backing down from the physical play. In the end the Red & White were just too strong down low, with Rume Kakpovia and Necola Guerrina (6 for 8 shooting – now that's efficient!) combining for 25 points in the paint and 7 offensive boards. Final score 49-23.

The second game saw Stanstead squaring off against Sacred Heart School from Montreal, a fast, athletic team that had manhandled Quebec High School earlier in the day. By virtue of the round-robin format of the tournament, this contest would actually represent the finals of the Stanstead Invitational; the winner of this game would be crowned 2008 tournament champion at the end of the day, regardless of later results. So yeah, this was a big game.

Both teams came out flying, with the Spartans attacking the basket and the Saints hitting their shots, to the tune of a 14-12 first quarter score, a lot of points in a running time game. Once again Necola Guerrina provided the offensive spark with 11 first-half points down low, but continual defensive mistakes on the perimeter allowed Sacred Heart's top scorer 14 points of her own. The half ended with Stanstead barely ahead 23-20, which meant that we were officially in our first real dogfight of the season.

And fight we did, like Dobermans. The referees were calling a loose game, so there was serious contact all over the place; body contact, reaching hands, over-the-backs, everything but the kitchen sink. But the Spartans refused to back down. And most importantly, in the most crucial performance of the tournament, Ling Chiu and Krista Blackned put a complete lockdown on the Saints' shooting star, holding her to only three second-half points. And that, folks, was the difference. We only managed four baskets ourselves all half (all by Rume Kakpovia), but with ice in the veins we went 8 of 10 from the free throw line to secure the win, highlighted by 4-for-4 from Flavia Calvar when it really mattered down the stretch. 39-29 final score, and Stanstead were the champs! Well



done, team! It's always nice to bring home some hardware, especially in front of a raucous, Plexiglas-banging crowd of Spartan fans!

This meant that the final game against Quebec High would have no effect on the standings. But a game is a game, and we took the opportunity to play a disciplined, well-rounded contest. Nine players scored en route to a 46-12 victory, led by Flavia Calvar's stat-sheet-filling 18-point, 6-rebound, 7-steal performance. Good finish to the day! Kudos to Margarita Acero for being named to the Tournament All-Star Team and Rume

Kakpovia for being named the Tournament MVP. And congratulations to all 10 players for a true team victory. Every single player contributed to all those little things that make up success in basketball – rebounds, loose balls, deflected passes, help defence, setting screens, etc. That's how you win three games in one day, and that's what you all did.

Next up for the Red & White is an all-important ETIAC League game against BCS this coming Wednesday, on our home floor. Let's get better in practice, and let's keep things rolling!

Coach Van Dyke

The year so far....

Overall Record : 5 wins 0 losses

ETIAC League Play: 2 wins 0 losses

Points for per game : 50.6

Points allowed per game : 21.0

Stanstead Invitational Tournament Champions

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...And they're off!!

The Stanstead College Spartans, defending ETIAC League and Playoffs champs, finally got their 2008-09 campaign going this past month. Despite losing some key starters from last year (including a Major S recipient and a team MVP), the basketball sense and (I'm not gonna lie to you) the height of some of the walk-ons who reported to opening tryouts made me optimistic about the season. In fact, after a week or so of watching the new players mesh with the seasoned veterans in practice, I started entertaining the idea that maybe, just maybe, we could make some more noise this season in the ETIAC.

We decided to focus on defence and transition in practice, for two reasons – defence is integral to winning, and transition gets you in shape (as well as twilight interval training!). Offensive sets and inbounds plays would have to wait; hopefully we could score enough to avoid early season losses.

Our much-anticipated home opener was against Richmond Regional High School, newly returned to the ETIAC Senior level after a four-year absence. The Stanstead players were extremely nervous, but soon realized that the Raiders were young and very inexperienced. The final score (70-13) featured nine different Spartans scoring, but it should be noted and appreciated that the Richmond players never gave up, despite being severely outmatched.

Two more weeks of practice (some of them good, some not so good) led us to yesterday's game at Alexander Galt. A year ago we had played them in a similar early season league contest, and the memory of it was almost impossible for the veterans to swallow – Galt nailing 2 free throws with 0 seconds on the clock to beat us 51-50. What a heartbreaker! Hopefully we could avenge that loss.

From the opening tip the game was fast, and it stayed fast. The Blue & Yellow pressed; the Red & White ran. Risky. Sloppy. Exciting. Missed layups. Beautiful passes. Terrible passes. Blocked shots. Bad hands. Then great hands! We jumped out to a 7-2 lead, but the Pipers quickly tied it up. Yes, we were pushing the pace well, but our defence was disorganized and tentative. Very little help and too many players going for big hooray-for-me blocked shots instead of moving their feet. Luckily a 9-0 run in the second quarter created enough separation for us to enter halftime up 24-12, but we had some adjustments to make.

And make them we did. With a concerted effort on D, and more poise against the Galt press from point guard Margarita Acero, the Spartans played a solid quarter, outscoring the opposition 14-3. Crucial rebounds and impressive passes from Flavia Calvar, quick runouts by Christine Osei, consistent error-free play from Rume Kakpovia and some tough hoops inside from Necola Guerrina highlighted this pivotal run, which basically sealed the game for us.

Kudos to the entire team for gutting out this important win, which was not nearly as easy as the final 49-28 result may suggest. Galt is an athletic, spirited team that never quits (they beat us in the fourth quarter 13-11), and we had to keep the pedal down for all 32 minutes to secure this important victory. Well done to all, as our team depth was a major factor. But let's not forget the nine missed layups, the 5 of 18 from the line, and the countless defensive breakdowns on the perimeter. We've got a lot to work on in practice Friday. A whole lot. And I'm looking forward to it.

Let's get better.

Coach Van Dyke

The year so far....

*Overall Record: **2** wins**0** losses*

*ETIAC League Play: **2** wins **0** losses*

*Points for per game: **59.5***

*Points allowed per game: **20.5***