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More than 5,000 attend golden anniversary of 'The Game'

It is simply known as "The Game" to those who have connections to either Mercy High School or the Institute of Notre Dame (IND).

The 50th edition took place Friday night at SECU Arena on the Towson University campus in front of over 5,000 fans. IND won for the fourth time in five years, defeating Mercy, 41-26, as Ja'Lyn Armstrong scored a game-high 14 points and blocked six shots. Mercy leads the all-time series, 30-20.

"The amazing thing is the records of the teams is irrelevant," said WBAL Radio's Keith Mills, who has been covering sports in Baltimore for 40 years. "They turn out 4,000-5,000 strong for this game regardless of how good the teams are. It is probably the most pure rivalry in the area. I am not taking anything away from Calvert Hall-Loyola, City-Poly or Dunbar-Lake Clifton, but this one is what is great about high school sports."

Mills was the emcee for last week's pre-game festivities which included a prayer from Archbishop William Lori. The rivalry between the Catholic institutions located five miles apart in Baltimore City is more than just another game on the schedule. The festive event offers alumnae, students and perspective students a unique opportunity to celebrate a tradition that began in 1967.

IND president Dr. David Ring experienced the rivalry for the first time last weekend and the event exceeded his expectations.

"I didn't know anything about the rivalry until I spent a day on campus during the interview process," Ring said. "Having been part of the planning process the last six months, it was quite exciting to hear about the game. But the high point was actually being there and seeing everything that we had planned come to fruition. I have never seen a high school basketball game with over 5,000 fans. It was absolutely incredible. Both sides were excited. The students look at it as an opportunity to celebrate each other. It is competitive but not to a point where it becomes destructive. I think that was the most important thing I left with Friday night."

The schools have produced some of the top players ever to come out of Baltimore: IND's Karen Gower and Chandra Jones and Mercy's B.J. Bango and Rosemary Kosiorek. Kosiorek was the 1988 Baltimore Sun Athlete of the Year and went on to an All-American career at West Virginia, where she was voted the nation's best player 5 feet 5 or shorter and narrowly missed making the 1992 Olympic team.

"Times have changed from when I played but the two things that haven't and stick out are the institutions and their mission for a Catholic education and the respect



each has for the other," Kosiorek said. "This is one of those special games for any athlete who has a chance to play at a place with tradition. It was a privilege to get the opportunity to represent Mercy in this game."

Mary Ella Marion represented Mercy three times as a player during the 1970's then coached her alma mater from 1985 to 2013. Her daughter Maggie scored 20 points in the 2009 game. Former IND coaches Jerry Hahn and Herb Hoelter also coached their daughters.

"The rivalry is pure and authentic," added Mills. "It is all about IND and Mercy and the respect that each institution has for the other. That goes for the players and coaches to the teachers and parents to the custodians at the two schools."

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MARYLAND SERVES AND ADVOCATES FOR THE POOR, VULNERABLE AND THOSE IN NEED NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE CATHOLIC, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE CATHOLIC.