



David B. Corbin for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*

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ADEPT AT SLEIGHT OF HAND...Cougar senior Mairead McKeary, right, was one of her team's "Chief Thieves" in the opening round of the Cougar Classic against Kent Place on December 27.

QUEST TO POSSESS...Cougar Sarah Ross, center right, attempts to wrest the ball away from a Kent Place Lady Dragon at the Cougar Classic.

McKEARY, PACE, DeMARS BECOME 'CHIEF THIEVES'; WISCHUSEN ADDS THREE STEALS

Lady Cougar Cagers Muffle Kent Place Dragons, 45-8

By **DAVID B. CORBIN**
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Converting from not using hands during soccer season to becoming chief thieves played out very well in a 45-8 Cranford High School girls basketball team victory over the Kent Place Lady Dragons in the opening round of the Cougar Classic in Cranford on December 27.

In fact rebounds took a back seat to steals as the Cougars committed, at least, 26 acts of thievery, and three girls, who were members of last fall's very successful soccer team, seniors Mairead McKeary and Hannah DeMars, and sophomore Lindsey Pace accounted for more than half of them among the 10 Cou-

gars, who managed to get involved in the act of thievery.

Due to the lopsidedness of the score, McKeary scored all eight of her points in the first quarter and rested a large portion of the remainder of the game, along with the other starters, to allow the entire bench to see action. McKeary, who had two assists, finished with four steals. DeMars, who had two points and two assists, swiped seven, and Pace pilfered three and added four assists. Senior guard Kerry Wischusen finished with five points and three steals, senior guard Sarah Ross also had three steals, two assists and five points, and junior Erin Meixner added a pair of steals and five points.

"We knew where to position ourselves and knew what they were they were trying to do. It's nice to know if you go for a steal that your team is behind you to cover up," McKeary said.

"They were very athletic and aggressive as soccer players, so it was easy for them to make the transition. They put themselves in the right position and knew when to make the steals," Cougar Head Coach Jackie Dyer said.

Senior forward Carly Maucione scored the game's first two points, which ignited a 16-1 run. Several steals were converted to points. Mixing reserves with the

starters, the same process of converting steals to points continued and the Cougars easily won the second quarter to zoom to a commanding 33-5, halftime lead. By that time, 10 Lady Cougars managed to get into the scoring column with Hannah Ross, Jessica Casale, Megan Pringle and Cerys MacLelland each also contributing two points.

Due to the huge point spread, the pace of the game was geared down in the second half, but the Cougars' defense was still in high gear and they won the third quarter, 8-0. MacLelland, Maucione, Sarah Ross, and Bela Speer each added two points. Hannah Ross and Speer each scored two points in the fourth quarter.

"It's nice to see them all play. They work very hard in practice, and their time out there will give them more confidence," McKeary said.

Sometimes with such a mismatch, there may be a bit of a letdown in the quality of play by the favored team.

"We haven't seen them play. We just went out there and played our game," McKeary said.

"There is a tendency to play down to some teams. The girls did not play down and they stuck to their game," Coach Dyer said.

"We had some very tough games earlier and struggled, so the win was nice," McKeary said.

Probitas Verus Honos

Kent Place	1	4	0	3	8
Cranford	16	17	8	4	45