

Blue Devils Split Pair at Tourney

But the Blue Devils didn't fare as well Saturday afternoon, losing to an "unbeatable" five from Mount Olive 74-53. "They are the best team we've played this year," Bartholomew claims.

Smyrna played good defensive ball until the closing moments of the first half. "We got into foul trouble then, and never got out of it." The coach credits a portion of the loss to a bad night from the floor. The Blue Devils were accurate only 33 per cent of the time, and only 30 per cent in the first half.

"A good defense always has a lot to do with the other team's poor offensive showing," coach Bartholomew says, "but Parker's shots kept rolling in and out all night." Smyrna didn't score for five minutes, from the final two minutes of the second quarter through the opening three minutes of the third quarter.

Parker again led the Blue Devils in rebounding, but with fewer, and he found the going a good bit tougher. He found himself battling a 6-foot, 5-inch Mount Olive center by the name of Larry Jones. "Even so, Parker did very well against the big man," the coach said.

The Blue Devils did well against Mount Olive from the foul line, hitting 74 per cent. But their opponents didn't commit enough fouls for Smyrna to count heavily on free points.

Behind Willis, Smyrna's high-scoring guard, were Norris Nelson, with 12; Parker, 8; David Bailey, 5; Danny Gillikin, 4; and Tommy McGee, 2.

Mount Olive's big guns were Jones with 21 and guard Doug Simmons with 24. According to coach Bartholomew, Simmons was the most outstanding offensive player in the tournament. "He led their fast break, and when he got hot, he couldn't miss."

The coach cites Joe Willis as the best defensive player seen at the Knapp Central Invitational, and probably the best all-around player. Parker did a beautiful defensive job in the Mount Olive game as well, Bartholomew commented, especially against Jones.

Scoring by quarters saw Smyrna take a one-point lead at the end of the first period, 12-11, but lose it midway in the second period. Mount Olive ended the half with a 31-23 lead, and pushed it to a 57-32 lead at the end of the third period. The Blue Devils fought back to pick up four points, outscoring Mount Olive 21-17 in the final quarter.

The win and loss at the invitational tournament gives Smyrna

an 8-2 record overall. The other loss was to Havelock. To date, the Blue Devils have not played a conference game, but they are scheduled for an all-important one next Tuesday night at Smyrna.

The Blue Devils will meet the Newport Hawks, who boast a 6-1 record, having lost only to Beaufort. Previously, Newport and Smyrna were part of a larger conference including schools in Carteret and Craven counties. This year, the conference has dwindled to three, those two and Atlantic.