Defense produces cagey cagers

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If basketball were as statistic-ridden as major league baseball, this year’s Owls would already be in the record book under a heading like “Earliest Matching of Previous Season’s Victory Total.”

Despite all statements to the contrary, the Trinity game was neither a fluke nor a meaningless victory over a creampuff. Trinity has a fairly strong team that had a definite advantage over the Owls. The Owls won simply because they consistently outplayed and out hustled a good team. (I know this sounds pretty basic, but Rice cage fans have had so few victories of late that some explanation of the term is necessary.)

As we said last week, this is an aggressive, fighting team that will beat some superior teams on hustle alone. They almost beat Florida State that way Monday night.

Hustle, unfortunately, can’t cover all sins. The Owls have given up the ball through poor basket-ball too many times to be a winning team. Still, they are young and will undoubtedly gain poise as the season continues.

Soph Greg Williams has already established himself as the finest Rice playmaker in years. The value of the diminutive guard was shown in the Georgia Tech game. The Owls and Yellowjackets were tied in the first half when Williams accidentally banged his head against the floor and had to leave the game.

Rice eventually lost 87-61. If nothing else, this proves that hustle can’t replace a guard who can break the full court press and get the ball to the big scorers under the basket.

The biggest of the big scorers thus far has been Bill Doty. This is no surprise, of course. The big change in Doty has been in his fanatical defense and rebounding.

Although there is still room for much improvement, defense has been the key to the Owls’ improved play this year. As the young team learns Coach Knodel’s system, the mistakes which led to the Georgia Tech and Florida State losses should decrease.