Annual Native American tournament sees variety of teams compete

ALBUQUERQUE – The St. Michaels Lady Cardinals beat Red Mesa 51-43 in a Dec. 29 semifinal game of the annual Striking Eagle Native American Invitational Tournament. The tournament was played at the University of New Mexico's Johnson Gymnasium and included various teams from around greater McKinley County.

As a result of the semifinal win, the Lady Cardinals advanced to play Santa Fe Indian School, which beat Cuba in an earlier tournament game.

On the boys' side of the tournament, Tse Yi Gai advanced after beating Native American Community Academy of Albuquerque by the score of 53-41. The Tse Yi Gai girls won over Pine Hill 47-43 and played Mescalero. In another boys game of the tournament, Red Valley/Cove of the Navajo Nation lost to Alamo Navajo 77-58 in a semifinal contest. And, in another boys game, Tohajillee (6-3) beat Navajo Pine (1-7), 68-51.

In another tournament bracket, St. Mary's beat Shiprock, 38-31. The Lady Chieftains won the 4A state championship last year.

Striking Eagle Finals

Both the St. Michaels Lady Cardinals and the Tse Yi Gai Lady Dine Warriors lost in the finals of the Striking Eagle Native American Invitational Tournament. The Lady Cardinals (7-5) got out to decent leads, but couldn't maintain the advantages and lost to Santa Fe Indian School, 58-53, in the Hawks bracket. St. Michaels led 30-22 at halftime of that game.

At the end of the third quarter in the finals game, the Lady Cardinals led 42-40, but ultimately fell victim to turnovers and stepped up defense by SFIS. The Lady Cardinals play Red Mesa (5-6) Jan. 3 at the old Window Rock High School gymnasium in Fort Defiance, Ariz.

The Tse Yi Gai Lady Dine Warriors lost to the Mescalero Lady Chiefs in the finals game of the Striking Eagle Native American Invitational Tournament. The first half of the game ended with the Lady Dine Warriors behind 25-22. A strong second half by the Lady Chiefs put the game out of reach and still undefeated Mescalero won the game, 60-37.

Senior point guard Janiece Comanche of Tse Yi Gai scored a team high 16 points in the finals game. The Lady Dine Warriors next play Newcomb Jan. 15 in an away game and the beginning of 3A play for both teams.

Tohajiilee 60 Tse Yi Gai 42 (Boys)

Tohajiilee beat the Tse Yi Gai Dine Warriors in a Dec. 30 boys game of the Striking Eagle Native American Invitational Tournament.

The Warriors led at halftime, and then pulled away with a 40-point outburst in the second half to beat the Dine Warriors, 60-42. The Dine Warriors mustered just 4 points in the second half of the game. Tse Yi Gai (7-2) was playing in the tournament for the second consecutive year, having lost last year to Alamo Navajo.

As has been the case over the years at Tse Yi Gai, which student body numbers just under 200, the varsity boys basketball squad fielded two freshmen and a sophomore in the starting lineup throughout the tournament. Jacob Trujillo of the Dine Warriors scored a team high 16 points.

Tse Yi Gai takes on 3A Crownpoint (0-4) Jan. 9 in Pueblo Pintado.

By Bernie Dotson
For the Sun