

Tohatchi's Begay off to Mesa, Ariz.

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 26 May 2017 03:09



Bitsoi honored by USA Today

The player who helped the Tohatchi High School Lady Cougars win the 3A girls state basketball championship signed a letter-of-intent May 4 to attend Mesa Community College in Mesa, Ariz. The signing, Tohatchi's first since the end of the 2017 girls basketball season, took place in the gymnasium at Tohatchi High and with Begay's parents and head coach present.

Cheyenne Begay is the first player coached by head basketball coach Tanisha Bitsoi to receive a basketball scholarship. Bitsoi noted that guard Crystal Haley is set to sign with a school in the coming weeks.

"(Cheyenne) is a very versatile player and can play multiple positions," Bitsoi said. "Everyone at Tohatchi High School is very happy for her."

Begay was a mainstay in Tohatchi's offense, averaging big numbers per game over the past few seasons. Begay transferred to Tohatchi from Wingate High school after her freshman year at Wingate. She played volleyball and basketball at Tohatchi.

Begay hit a late 3-point shot in the 3A state championship game that solidified the Lady Cougars' win over Eunice 57-50. Tohatchi made it to the state quarterfinals last year, but lost that game 74-57 in overtime to Tularosa.

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"That was the biggest moment of my career in terms of basketball at Tohatchi," Begay said. "That was the best feeling. I will remember that for a long time."

Bitsoi said she, Begay and assistant girls' basketball coach Darrell Bitsui visited the school several months ago. She said each came away with a good impression of the school. Bitsoi said they were looking for a shooting and defensive guard, two things Begay excelled at while at Tohatchi.

"She'll fit in very well," Bitsoi said. "She's one of the smartest players I have ever coached."

MCC is the largest of the 10 community colleges in the Maricopa County Community College District. It is the largest such district in the United States in terms of enrollment.

"I'm confident that I will do well," Begay, the oldest of four children, said. "I am going to work hard and play hard."

John Brooks, athletic director at Tohatchi High School, called Begay a very special player. "She can play point guard and shooting guard and is a very good defensive player," Brooks said. "She's definitely one of the best in the state."

A first team all-state player for the Lady Cougars, Begay was named the Most Valuable Player of the April 1 New Mexico-Arizona girls' all-star basketball game.

BITSOI HONORED

Bitsoi, who has coached for five years at Tohatchi, was recently honored by USA Today by winning a 2017 Coach of the Year award. In recognizing Bitsoi, the newspaper stated that Bitsoi, a former all-state basketball player at Tohatchi, guided the small reservation school to a 26-5 record and the first New Mexico championship in Tohatchi girls' basketball history. Begay averaged 15.7 points a game for Tohatchi.

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