

KYAT launches local sports coverage program

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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‘Native Rez Hoops’ a hit with listeners

Hearing local sports just got better with “Native Rez Hoops,” the new name for KYAT-FM’s live broadcast of local high school basketball games.

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Local radio station, KYAT-FM, part of Millennium Media, Inc., is the first of its kind to begin broadcasting local high school basketball games in the Navajo language on a 100,000 watt FM station.

The coverage debuted when the boys varsity teams – Wingate Bears took on the Tohatchi Cougars at the Tohatchi High School Gymnasium Jan. 10.

KYAT's Navajo DJ Eugene Plummer, who started working at the station in 2010, admitted that he was nervous at first, but it all fell in place for him as the evening progressed.

"I felt rusty at the beginning, but got the hang of it eventually (laughs)," he said. "It's been about four years since I last broadcasted a sports game; it was a fast game and the varsity boys are usually very fast players and you just have to follow it with your voice.

Tohatchi won the game by a score of 54-56. Excitement was definitely felt not only by the close game, but with the game being broadcasted over the airwaves.

"I was pretty excited and especially the game being very close," Plummer said.

Millennium Media President/General Manager Sammy Chioda said this new, live coverage will enhance local sports here in the Gallup area.

"We're excited about it and the fact that it provides service to some of the other schools that don't get any coverage in the area," Chioda said. "Here in the community everybody seems to be doing the same games over and over again, and we wanted to be a little different and provide service to some of the rest of schools that have great basketball programs."

KYAT-FM, launched six years ago, and it's an all Navajo format. Broadcasting local high school

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basketball games has been in the works and now is a reality ... and highly anticipated by those closely tied to the station.

"It's been a long time coming," KYAT Program Director Deni Gonzales said. "Every time we go out and do live remotes, listeners come up to us and ask when are we going to start covering games. We had it on the back burner for awhile until Sammy C., myself, and some of the KYAT staff decided that it's time."

"A lot of people were excited that – that day finally came," Plummer added. "Roy Keeto, another KYAT announcer and I used to broadcast on our sister station, KYVA-AM. With KYAT coming on we are all excited about it."

Listeners were supportive when the game was about to be broadcasted. In fact, they even helped Plummer set up in the gym, find the outlets and get the roster.

"Broadcasting the Tohatchi and Ft. Wingate game was cool because they are both awesome schools," Gonzales said. "Next year we plan on covering the whole season and we'll have Eugene Plummer doing it; he's exciting to hear that he's covering the game. I don't fully understand the Navajo language, but his energy was wonderful and that kind of energy should be there when broadcasting a sports game. He keeps you at the edge of your seat and that is what you want."

KYAT-FM can be heard on 94.5 FM.

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