Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Curley (Ganado), Chee (Window Rock) PLAYED solid games

The best of the Arizona boys and girls basketball teams beat their New Mexico counterparts in three out of four games played March 30 and April 1 at Miyamura High School.

The games were not sanctioned by sports governing bodies of either state. The game is an annual affair organized by a free-lance journalist from Fort Defiance, Ariz.

In the first game, the Arizona girls, behind the savvy court play of Ganado guard Jaylynn Curley, beat New Mexico 89-88 in a game that went down to the wire with several changes of possessions. In order to play in the annual game, a player must be a senior.

Window Rock's Dominique Chee scored 9 points in the first game and provided some steady leadership toward the end of the game, which worked in Arizona's favor. Jacqulynn Nakai of Coconino dropped 11 points and Lynnae Mitchell of Winslow hit 11 points in the first game.

Mitchell was particularly difficult to control in the game with respect to ball handling. Chee was the other ball-handler for Arizona as the Arizona Lady All-Stars held on for the win. New Mexico's Shynell Dawes of Tohatchi scored two 3-point shots in the second half to keep New Mexico close. Tohatchi won the state 3A championship about two weeks ago.

In the first boys game, Arizona won 100-96 as Rory Bille of Winslow scored 16 points and Michael Yellowhair of Ganado hit 14 points. Yellowhair was a steady presence in the game as his ball-handling skills and shooting ability were key in getting teammates Jevon Yazzie of Page and fellow Hornets' teammate Jamal Coleman free for jumpers and inside shots. Coleman was one of the two tallest players on the court with David Riley of Farmington the other tall player. Coleman won the game's dunk contest with a reverse tomahawk slam.

"It was a very-well played game by both teams," Arizona head coach Ryan Brown said of the first game. "Considering that this was the first time that most of these guys even met each other, much less played together on the same court, I'd say it was a good game."

Arizona withstood a late New Mexico rally led by power forward Troy Etsitty of Gallup and shooting guard Brandon Belone of Wingate High School. Balone got hot late from long range in the game and played some very heady defense for New Mexico that enabled the home team to make several runs.

In Saturday's girls game, Arizona jumped out to big leads and never looked back in what turned into a rout. Cherelle Speen of Valley Sanders provided an inside and outside court presence that helped free up practically everybody on the Arizona team. Speen was part of the Sanders team that won this year's state championship.

Window Rock's D'Ovionn Wagner momentarily got hot late and hit back-to-back 3-pointers to give the away team an added cushion. Arizona led 61-47 at the half and Francine McCurtain, a coach for Arizona, and former standout basketball player at Washington State University, could be heard telling the players, "Keep getting back on defense. Look for open teammates." McCurtain is a head basketball coach at Piñon High.

The Arizona girls won the second game 116-97. The New Mexico boys won the second game 101-97.

The second boys game went to overtime. The beginning of the fifth quarter in the overtime game saw Coleman and Riley battle it out with consecutive inside shots and post moves. But guards Matt Vail (Grants) and Michael Anzures (Grants) proved too much from the outside for Arizona.

Vail was one of the game's most valuable players as were Cheyenne Begay (Tohatchi) and Nizhoni Thomas of Flagstaff.

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