Lady Lynx hit by scoring deluge from Cameron Tsosie

REHOBOTH, N.M. — The Tohatchi Lady Cougars and the Rehoboth Lady Lynx played one of the most evenly matched basketball games anybody has ever seen, at least in the first half, some people mused after the Feb. 6 game.

It was near the end of the second quarter that enabled the Lady Cougars to pull away and beat Rehoboth 68-46 at Rehoboth Christian School. The game was a much-hyped contest with Tohatchi (18-6, 5-0) ranked No. 1 in District 1-3A and Rehoboth (14-9, 2-2) sitting at No. 3. The Newcomb Lady Skyhawks (12-11, 4-1) are ranked at the No. 2 spot in 1-3A. Tohatchi is undefeated in district play.

“We knew (Kalian Mitchell) could beat us if we didn’t play tough defense against her,” Rehoboth head coach Adrian Pete said. “She’s a very good player. We were focused in the first quarter, but their other players just stepped up and caught us by surprise and we had some defensive lapses.”

Mitchell is an all-state senior with “looks” from a variety of colleges and universities around the United States. The cupboard at Tohatchi definitely isn’t bare as sophomore guard Cameron Tsosie demonstrated in Tuesday’s game. Tsosie exploded for 28 points and, literally, shot the ball every time it came her way whether for inside or outside shots.

Tohatchi won the first quarter 10-8 in what was a relatively slow scoring session for both teams.

THE SECOND QUARTER

Both teams heated up in the second quarter with Mitchell driving the ball more and senior forward Voneisha Cecil and sophomore guard Samantha Belone positioning themselves for shots or passes.

Neither team missed much in the second quarter, but it was Tsosie who emerged as the go-to player for Tohatchi. Tsosie moved well without the ball and received passes from Mitchell and other players like Cecil.

For the Lady Lynx, senior guard Halle Lizer was her usual unstoppable self, creating shots off the dribble and driving at random on the Tohatchi defense. Tohatchi outscored Rehoboth 23-17 at the end of the first half, but it was the Lady Cougars that took momentum into the locker room.

“We took our time getting set and focused,” Tohatchi head coach Tanisha Bitsoi said of her team’s first half play. “We knew they were gearing up to stop (Kalian). Other players stepped up.”

THE THIRD QUARTER

Tsosie was shooting the lights out from long and short distances no matter who was guarding her. After both teams exchanged leads at the latter part of the second, Mitchell took things to another level.

Mitchell made back-to-back steals and converted each to layups. Tsosie hit from long range and Cecil got key rebounds and hit a few put backs. From an opening third quarter lead of 33-25, Tohatchi built on that margin and never looked back.

Rehoboth junior forward Kennedi Chapman rebounded well and hit some inside shots and Lizer continued to hit jumpers. Junior forward Emerald Toddy made plays on the defensive end for Rehoboth, which led to easy baskets by Lizer or Chapman. Lizer hit the sole 3-point shot in the game for Rehoboth.

Tohatchi led 44-26 with 5:32 left in the third quarter. By that time Mitchell was in a scoring frenzy as were Tsosie and Cecil. The third quarter ended with the Lady Cougars leading 58-37.

‘THE SECRET WEAPON’

Bitsoi emptied the bench at the start of the fourth quarter. The player who showed a lot of offensive and defensive ability was senior forward Kalista McCorkey. McCorkey proved difficult to handle for Rehoboth as she was rebounding and hitting mostly inside shots and going to the free throw line after getting fouled.

“She’s our secret weapon,” Bitsoi said after the game.

Tsosie scored a game high 28 points and Mitchell scored 19 in the win. McCorkey put in 8 points from the interior. Cecil scored a quiet six points and Belone had 4.

Lizer hit a team high 17 points and was the sole Rehoboth player in double-digits. Toddy scored 9 points and Chapman recorded 8.

By Bernie Dotson
For the Sun