

Tohatchi falls to Texico in 3A championship, 48-47

Written by By Bernie Dotson For the Sun
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Mitchell goes for 28 in loss

SANTA ANA PUEBLO — Tohatchi senior guard Brianna Denetso nailed a 3-pointer with just seconds left in the game but the Lady Cougars couldn't connect on a subsequent shot and fell to Texico 48-47 in the state 3A girls basketball championship March 9 at the Santa Ana Star Center in Rio Rancho.

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Tohatchi's 47-46 lead with 13 seconds left in regulation came as a result of a long jumper by Denetso. It was players like Denetso that stepped up to aid the Lady Cougars in getting through the 3A tournament the past several years. Tohatchi won the 3A state championship last year after beating Eunice.

"I'm proud of my girls, very proud," Tohatchi head coach Tanisha Bitsoi said after the game. "We fought. We played well on offense and defense. It just wasn't our game this time around."

Tohatchi all-state point Kalian Mitchell was superb for the Lady Cougars (24-7, 8-0), scoring 28 points in the game, including an eye-popping 18 in the first half. The Lady Cougars led the game at halftime, 23-20, and the Lady Wolverines seemingly had no answer for Mitchell.

Maryelle Dickerman of the Lady Wolverines scored after a teammate took the ball full court off of a rebound and Dickerman scored and gave Texico the victory with less than five seconds on the game clock. Texico (26-4, 7-0) has been in the championship game two out of the past three years.

The winning play was to go as far down the court as possible and look for a pass, Texico head coach Richard Luscombe said. When that happened, junior point guard Baylee Souls found Dickerman for the winning shot, in spite of the fact that Tohatchi had converged on Texico's ball handlers in the back court.

"It was just a great shot and a great play," Luscombe said. "Baylee got down court very fast. Maryelle hit the shot. Give credit to Tohatchi. That's a great team and Mitchell is a special player."

Mitchell put Tohatchi up 6-2 on a 3-point shot and another shot whereby she was fouled in the opening minutes of the game. Mitchell went on to shake and bake through the Texico defense for an assortment of inside and outside shots during the first half.

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Sophomore forward Samatha Belone scored a jumper for Tohatchi and Mitchell hit two inside shots to bring the Lady Cougars to 28-25 with about two minutes left in the second quarter.

Unfortunately for Tohatchi, Mitchell fouled out after attempting a drive to the basket in the fourth quarter. It was the third time in the game that Texico successfully drew an offensive foul from Mitchell.

Dickerman finished with 20 points in the game and Sours recorded 14 for Texico. The loss snapped a 17-game winning streak for Tohatchi.

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For the Sun***