

## Tohatchi girls blast Newcomb, 68-32

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
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### Lady Cougars No. 3 in New Mexico

The Tohatchi Lady Cougars blew past Newcomb and beat the Lady Skyhawks 68-32 Feb. 24 in the District 1-3A championship game played at a jam packed Tohatchi High School gymnasium.

All-State point guard Kalian Mitchell led a Tohatchi offensive attack that smothered the Lady Skyhawks from start to finish. Senior guard and defensive specialist Cheyenne Begay was named the 3A player of the year and Tohatchi head coach Tanisha Bitsoi was named the 3A Coach of the Year.

The Lady Cougars (22-5, 8-0) advanced to play Dexter (11-15, 2-7) March 3 in the opening round of the state 3A tournament. That game will be played at Tohatchi High.

“We were able to get in the offenses that we wanted and that helped,” Bitsoi, a former all-state guard about a decade ago at Tohatchi High, said. “We had very good guard play. We were very good on defense and that helped us get a big lead in the first quarter.”

The Lady Cougars jumped out to a 20-0 first quarter lead and never looked back. Bitsoi looked as though she was more concerned with who'd produce from the bench as opposed to figuring out what the starters would end up doing. Mitchell answered any doubts Bitsoi had about anything, Mitchell, all-state as an eighth grader at Tohatchi Middle, found open teammates with regularity. Begay was everywhere as a trailer and setting up teammates for inside and outside jumpers. Senior guard Crystal Haley, perhaps Tohatchi's most unpredictable offensive threat,

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kept Newcomb honest on defense.

Mitchell downplayed the leadership role. "It was the whole team coming together and getting in the flow," Mitchell said. "I don't think it was me who was doing a lot. It was everybody else on the team."

Tohatchi freshman forward Gabrielle Thomas was hustling and diving all over the place and saving loose balls to Mitchell, Begay or Haley. The Lady Cougars led the game 40-15 at the end of the second quarter as Mitchell superbly directed plays from the point guard position. Mitchell is equally the passer and shooter so defenses have to stay on her.

"We had a lot of turnovers and didn't execute the right way," Lady Skyhawks head coach Shawn Miller said.

Newcomb finished the season with a 16-13, 6-5, record and Miller noted that the 2017 Lady Skyhawks basketball season recorded the most wins since 2002.

"I thought we ran our offense the way we wanted to," Miller said. "Give credit to Tohatchi."

Tohatchi went on a 13-0 tear of unanswered points at the beginning of the third quarter. Miller called a couple of time outs, but even Tohatchi's bench players were getting in on the fun. The Lady Cougars coasted during the fourth quarter with the very capable Krystal Benally getting some minutes at the point.

Newcomb eighth grade guard Hanna Begay played a very respectable game for the Lady Skyhawks. Begay recorded a lot of minutes, scored 10 points, but had it tough keeping up with Mitchell and company on defense.

Tohatchi is in the state tournament for the third consecutive year. Mitchell and Haley scored 13 points apiece for the Lady Cougars and Begay hit nine points. Benally scored eight points and

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Thomas hit a well-earned seven points mostly on passes from Mitchell and on put backs.

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