

Farmington beats Wingate 71-36 to take Holiday Classic

Written by Story and photos by Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Scorpions win tourney for second straight season

The Farmington Scorpions blew through the Wingate Holiday Basketball Classic - beating the host Wingate Bears 71-36 to take the championship game of the annual Christmas tournament played at Wingate High School. The Scorpions beat Wingate 49-47 in a nail-biter in the same championship game in 2015.

"We played good defense from the start of the game and that definitely made a difference," Scorpions' head coach Paul Corley said. "They have a good team. We stayed focused and came away with a win."

Farmington (8-1) got out of the blocks fast in the first quarter and opened a 16-5 lead behind the inside play of senior center David Riley. The Bears were dominated inside by Riley and senior off guard Nick Granger kept things interesting on the perimeter for Farmington with an array of jump shots and drives.

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By the time the first quarter ended the Scorpions were in a rhythm and Wingate couldn't figure out what was hitting them. Wingate head coach Al Martinez called a time with five minutes off the game clock in the first quarter, only to have Farmington come out after the timeout even more aggressive on the offensive and defensive ends of the floor.

"We let them score too many points early in the game," Martinez said. "We had spurts where we started a couple of comebacks, but the early leads hurt us."

The Scorpions began the second quarter much like the way they ended the first. Granger kept up the offensive penetration and several turnovers by the Bears resulted in Farmington fast breaks. Farmington junior Jacob Brown was the recipient of a Granger pass off of a steal which resulted in the game's first fast break dunk, a dunk in which Brown ran the floor practically alone and jumped from underneath the basket for the shot.

The third quarter began with the Scorpions up 42-25 and one got the feeling that Farmington was simply looking to build on an already sizable lead. Wingate's Manuelito Chee made some offensive cuts and scored on a few back door plays and set up teammates to score, too. Josh Begay of Wingate put down some jumpers and senior shooting guard Brandon Belone scored on some jump shots for the Bears. But Wingate was not consistent enough from either the inside or outside to keep the score of the game close.

Farmington led the game 69-29 with 2:57 left on the game clock in the fourth quarter.

In an earlier quarterfinal game of the tournament, Zuni (3-5) lost to Wingate 60-58. The Thunderbirds beat Tohatchi 52-43 to advance to the quarterfinals of the Holiday tournament.

"We were in it right up until the end," Zuni head coach Wilfred Eriacho said of the quarterfinal game. "Give credit to Wingate. Both teams played a good game on both ends of the floor."

Granger ended the game with 11 points, but had seven assists. Junior forward Jesford Toledo

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finished with a very quiet 12 points and grabbed eight rebounds for the Scorpions. Becenti put in 13 points for Farmington.

Wingate fell to on the 2016 basketball season. The Bears (3-5) take on Pojoaque Valley (3-2) on Dec. 27 at home. The other teams that Farmington beat were Thoreau and Hot Springs. The Scorpions blew out Hot Springs 62-32 to get to the championship game against Wingate.

***Story and photos by Bernie Dotson
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