

1941 game puts a new spin on Colo. basketball history

Written by Darci Tomky

Dragon fans have been out in large numbers for this season's basketball games, packing the home side of the HHS new gym with green and gold. They love the action, and fans of all ages can really be heard when HHS athletes sink a basket or two.

Here's the question: What are the reactions of athletes, coaches, parents and fans when it's a low scoring game, or rather, a no scoring game?

Sports enthusiasts should note the approaching 70th anniversary of a game that made history for Colorado basketball.

At 2-0, the March 7, 1941 game against the Las Animas Trojans and the La Junta Tigers is the lowest-scoring game in Colorado high school basketball history.

And no, it wasn't soccer or hockey or baseball, this was, in fact, a high school boys' basketball game at the district level!

Supporting their hometown boys at the game played in Rocky Ford, Las Animas and La Junta fans intently watched one of the tightest defensive basketball games in history.

Both teams used "rock-ribbed zone defenses," according to a 1941 United Press newspaper article, resulting in a scoreless tie at the end of the regular playing period.

The Trojans and the Tigers both played very controlled ball, each refusing to take any chances.

Time after time La Junta brought the ball into Las Animas territory, reported the United Press, but they found themselves tossing the ball back and forth without any attempts at the basket. The Trojan boys, under orders from their coach, refused to break up their zone defense.

1941 game puts a new spin on Colo. basketball history

Written by Darci Tomky

The La Junta coach knew they couldn't beat the Trojans without breaking up their defense, so by stalling they prevented Las Animas from scoring and hoped to get an opportunity for a set shot in the final minutes.

The Trojan coach accepted the gamble, refusing to let up the zone defense which prevented any Tiger players from finding the basket.

"The clock was the most important feature throughout most of the game, with fans watching the minutes and quarters tick away and wondering which of the two coaches would crack first," said an article in the Bent County Democrat.

The Rocky Ford band even got in on some of the action, playing the funeral dirge.

In the three-minute overtime period, the Trojans finally connected with the basket. Lloyd Caldwell, the tallest player on the floor, was in the right place at the right time as he grabbed a rebound and tipped it in from below the basket—just enough for the two-point win for Las Animas.

"As the minutes and quarters passed, the tension and excitement arose, and the action, when it did come, made up for everything which had been missing before," the Bent County Democrat reported.

Las Animas went on to win the southern Colorado district tournament, earning the right to advance to 1941 state basketball action. They lost to Edgewater 36-21 in the championship.

Holyoke got in on some of the action the following year. The Dragons, coached by Sidney C. Werner, represented the eastern Colorado league and District No. 8 in the 1942 state class B basketball tournament in Denver.

1941 game puts a new spin on Colo. basketball history

Written by Darci Tomky

HHS defeated Alamosa 41-32 and Ault 55-19 in the first two rounds. They faced the tall, husky Las Animas Trojans in the semi-finals—the Dragons losing 21-32 to the Trojan team who went on to claim the state championship title.

Did you know?

If this 2-0 basketball game from 1941 wasn't enough of a shocker, here is some Colorado high school basketball trivia for all the Holyoke Dragon basketball fans out there.

Boys' basketball

—Record for most state championships goes to Manual with 11 while Merino has the most consecutive state championships with five.

—Holyoke boys have made appearances at state 14 times, eight of those with coach John Baumgartner.

—A 1979 Brush vs. Holyoke game landed the most overtimes at seven.

—At 144 points, Ignacio holds the title for most points in a single game. Chuckie Sproling of Manual holds the record for most individual points in one game at 74.

—The most consecutive free throws in one game was 26 by Pawnee in 1991.

1941 game puts a new spin on Colo. basketball history

Written by Darci Tomky

—Holyoke's 2008-09 team has Colorado's best defensive average per game at 34.3.

—Kyle Carper and Ryan Baumgartner of Holyoke both made the list for most points in three state tournaments (2008-10) at 141 and 75 respectively. HHS's Russ Brown was recognized for his 45 points in a single 1984 state tournament game.

Girls' basketball

—Eads has the most state championships with nine while Wray and Broomfield have the most consecutive titles at four.

—The score of 120-23 for Heritage over Aurora Central gave them the record for the most points in a game while Berthoud had the widest margin of victory at 112-8 over Jefferson.

—Abby Waner of ThunderRidge holds the record for most points in a single game at 61.

—Most free throws in a row was 28 by Sabrina English from Wiggins.

—The fewest points for two teams in one game was the combined score of 10 for Deer Trail and Flagler in 1984.