A perfect season record was at stake for both the Holyoke and Caliche boys' basketball teams when they met on the HHS court Thursday, Feb. 12. A large crowd, comprised of both Dragon and Buff fans, created a charged atmosphere, full of excitement and tension for the final home game of the regular season, as the two teams battled it out for the opportunity to remain undefeated.

Unfortunately, one team had to lose, and after a hard-fought game full of back-and-forth action, it was the Holyoke Dragons who came up short, losing for the first time this season, 50-55, to the Caliche Buffs.

Despite the loss, coach John Baumgartner said his team played well and he is not at all disappointed in the players' efforts Thursday night.

"Caliche deserves a lot of credit," he said. "They're a good team. Our boys played tough, but it just didn't happen this time. All we can do is learn from it and continue to move forward."

He said he and his players loved the huge crowd and the atmosphere it produced for the game. "The crowd—both sides—was into it from the get-go," he said. "We were really charged up because of it."

"Even though we lost, we really enjoyed playing this team," added Baumgartner. "The players had good attitudes about it and it was nice to see both teams respect each other the way they did."

Kyle Carper got the action started with the first basket of the game—a two-point field goal. Caliche responded in turn, and the rest of the first half would follow that pattern, with the teams matching each other point-for-point.

With HHS ahead by one point at the end of the first period, 10-9, the Buffs made the first

basket of the second quarter to regain the lead. Again, Holyoke and Caliche traded the edge back-and-forth throughout the eight minutes.

In the final half minute of the first half, the scoreboard read: home team 21, visitors 19. Then the Buffs landed a shot from the outside for three points. HHS rapidly shot back with a two-point field goal, with only several seconds left on the clock. To the crowd's surprise, the Buffs made another two at the buzzer to give them a one-point lead, 24-23, as they headed into the locker rooms.

When the teams returned to the court, Colby Wailes quickly ran in a layup, but the Dragons' momentum didn't last long. The team "suffered mental lapses defensively," said coach Baumgartner. The Buffs took advantage of these mistakes to score 15 points on HHS, gradually increasing their lead throughout the quarter.

In the final seconds of the third, with Holyoke down by seven, a Buff player gained control of the ball and launched it from close to the half-court line. To everyone's amazement, including the lucky Caliche player who threw it, the ball hit the bottom of the net to add three more points to the lead.

Facing a 10-point deficit, the Dragons rallied back in the fourth as they did their best to close the gap. Though they outscored the Buffs that quarter, 18-13, time ran out all too quickly for Holyoke to take the win, and instead, lost by five points.

Though HHS did well underneath the basket, what ultimately hurt the team was its outside shooting. "Their three-point shots fell and ours didn't," said Baumgartner.

In fact, Holyoke had only two three-pointers the entire game, with Austin Tharp making the first one in the third quarter, and Evan Swanson the second in the fourth.

Carper had an outstanding game, earning 21 points and nine rebounds. He also set a Holyoke record, according to Baumgartner, for the most blocked shots during a game at eight.

Tharp scored double digits as well with 14 points.

Team statistics also reflect how close Thursday night's game was. In the first half, HHS was 10 for 19 to make the field goal shooting average 53 percent, with CHS at 48 percent. The advantage flipped in the second half, with Holyoke making 10 for 22 for a 45 percent average, while the Buffs were 13 for 22 at 59 percent. Total shooting averages amounted to 49 percent for Holyoke and 50 percent for Caliche.

The Dragons outrebounded the Buffs, 20-17, as well as outblocked them 10-2. They also had eight steals to Caliche's four. However, HHS had more turnovers at 19, compared to CHS's 12.

Statistics

Holyoke 50, Caliche 55

	2	3	FT	F	TP
			FG		
Tharp	5	1	1-2	3	14
Baumgartner	1	0	0-0	3	2
Carper	8	0	5-6	0	21
Wailes	3	0	0-1	1	6
Swanson	0	1	1-3	4	4
Brown	1	0	1-2	1	3
TEAM	18	2	8-14	12	50
Caliche					
TEAM	17	6	3-7	17	55

Scoring By Quarters

Holyoke	10	13	9	18	--50
Caliche	9	15	18	13	--55