

## Dragon boys fall to Haxtun Bulldogs in season opener

Written by Chris Lee

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**Ryan Parker, at left, goes up and under for a reverse layup during Holyoke's season-opener against Haxtun. Haxtun's Gabriel Marner attempts to defend Parker who made the shot. Haxtun went on to win the game 73-58.□□**

—Enterprise photo

Round one went to the Haxtun Fighting Bulldogs after a 73-58 win over the Holyoke Dragons Friday night, Nov. 30 in Holyoke. The cross-county rivalry has been dubbed the Phillips County Shootout and the second round will be held in February.

Dragon coach Scott Dille said he was somewhat pleased with the way the team hit the floor last week but definitely had a little higher expectation for the team.

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“I really like the group and I like what they can do,” Dille said.

Looking back, Dille said he has three players with some level of varsity experience. Logan Tharp, Deyten Klein and Tito Fierro have each dipped their feet into varsity action. Ten players saw the court last Friday and seven of those had not really ever been thrown into the thrust of a varsity game.

In addition, Holyoke had four other players not suited up due to various injuries. In addition to Trevor Dalton, likely varsity players Logan Zeiler, Tanner Smith and Daniel Bencomo were all forced to sit last week.

Dille hopes having this week off will give a few of those guys time to rest and prepare for a busy upcoming week.

The Dragons are scheduled to travel to Yuma Tuesday, Dec. 11, host Brush Friday, Dec. 14 and travel to Sedgwick County Saturday, Dec. 15. Following those three games, the team will break for the Christmas holiday.

Haxtun jumped out to an early 17-13 lead last Friday after the opening quarter. The Dragons held strong and kept the deficit at four at the half as both teams scored 12 in the second.

The third quarter proved to be the deciding period as the Bulldogs outscored Holyoke 24-13 to take a commanding 53-38 lead into the final stanza.

Both teams hung 20 on the board in the final quarter which gave Haxtun the 73-58 victory.

“We had to play a certain way just because of the size and the kids we have,” the coach said. “We’ve got to force turnovers, we’ve got to shoot free throws and we need to attempt more shots than the other team.”

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Dille said they did all of those but they need to do them better. The Dragons finished 13-29 from the charity stripe. A lot of their shots also came up short and Dille attributes that to tired legs and not quite being in game shape yet.

“In hindsight, I’m happier than I was right away,” Dille said. “I like this group a lot and I know how hard they work and I want them to do well.”

Something the team is going to work on moving forward is limiting the amount of second shots they give teams. Haxtun’s size let them dominate the offensive boards last Friday night.

“Big teams are always going to be a struggle for us so we’ve really got to work a little bit smarter on the defensive end,” the coach said.

Dille said he thought Wyatt Powell and Ryan Parker did an admirable job down low. He believes they will progress as the season moves forward. “It’s hard to simulate that in practice because we don’t have a 6’8” 250-pound guy to throw in there or whatever.”

Dille also said Haxtun did a good job of rotating their bigs to keep them fresh throughout the game.

Tharp led the Dragons with 23 points. Fierro also finished in double digits with 16.

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