Biggest Tournament, Others Eat Crow

Written by Story and Photos by Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
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Nothing better in any season than watching a tournament. In this area basketball is King, of course, and the biggest tournament belongs to Wingate High School and their three-week, 32-team Holiday Classic.

This tournament starts off the week before Winter Break with a varsity girls' bracket, then goes to varsity boys' the next weekend. Following those two are two-day junior varsity tournaments, one for each gender.

This current edition started in 1998 as a JV tournament for girls and boys, but added varsity boys in 2002 and varsity girls in 2012. To my knowledge, it is the largest basketball tournament in the state if all divisions are counted.

And the facilities at the gym in Wingate are very nice, not to mention the efforts of the workers in the Hospitality Room and the great food they serve to coaches, staff, and media. I'd travel twice as far for half of the good food that was available for free in Bear Country last week.

Oh yeah, and the ball playing was pretty good as well! The Wingate boys came within a single play or two of knocking off the Farmington Scorpions, which is always a pleasant result in these parts. The crowd was very expressive throughout the contest, as they always are, and kept those people in striped shirts on their toes.

The most talked about item during the last week was double-edged. First the Gallup McKinley School District Board reinstated (in November) Superintendent Frank Chiapetti after their investigation could find no fault with his conduct as at least members had hoped. The up side for those two members is that recall petitions against them also failed. They were fortunate, I believe, that the petitioners did not hire legal counsel in this matter.

No sooner was the recall finished though when the board un-suspended Chiapetti and put him back to work at the job he was hired to do. Shortly thereafter it was announced that the programs Chiapetti had promoted, and which the board did not like, proved to have been successful. Time for at least two board members to 'Eat Crow.'

Not all of the schools are fixed, but improvements are being made and that is a good sign. Another year of so should keep GMCS out of the basement, academically, if the board will only stand down and keep their noses out of what they don't understand!

I'm always asked if I get in a holiday mood this time of year and have to admit that Santa Claus and resolutions don't do much for me. I practice my religion and celebrate the birth of our Savior, but in my way, which is pretty low key as compared to most, I'm sure.

I do say Merry Christmas and not Happy Holidays, and I don't apologize if my free speech offends you. Yours doesn't bother me, so try to take the higher road on this minor subjcct.

It only takes a glance at the Sports Schedule for this coming week to see there isn't much in the way of local games to see. Barring an out-of-town trip for a tournament, spectators will have to wait until the new year for the local season to start up again. The Gallup boys' will have their tournament starting the seventh of January and those games should provide lots of interest and excitement. Until then, stay safe, warm, and enjoy your family. Then we'll see you in the bleachers!