

To'hajiilee wins Rehoboth basketball tournament

Written by By Bernie Dotson For the Sun
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Maes, Harrison, Toledo too much for Lady Lynx

REHOBOTH, N.M. – The Rehoboth Lady Lynx entered the Jan. 13 Rehoboth Girls Basketball Tournament with a reputation for tenacity and nerves of steel.

But the 2A To'hajiilee Lady Warriors (6-9, 1-0) managed to cut through that Rehoboth veneer and beat the Lady Lynx 60-53 in the championship game in which superstars emerged on both sides. And it wasn't just the players that stepped up to the plate, the head coaches made their presence known right down to the wire with some crafty decision-making.

"This is who we are. It's what type of team we are," To'hajiilee head coach Daniel Gallegos said afterward. "I just told the girls to stick to the game plan and play together and play smart. Give a lot of credit to Rehoboth."

The game saw the Lady Warriors take the lead at the onset on a 3-pointer by senior guard Mariah Maes. Maes, the team's leading scorer, definitely came to play and it showed throughout the game. Rehoboth (10-6) tied the game 5-5 in the opening quarter on a put back shot by Kennedy Chapman. Chapman was tough on the boards in the first half, which allowed senior guard Halle Lizer and junior guard Jayme Daniels to get loose for jumpers and back door cuts.

THE BACKGROUND

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Lizer and Daniels became household names as a result of the championship game and Maes, junior center Audrey Harrison, senior guard Trista Apache and senior point guard Alexis Toledo put the state on notice that the small Navajo Nation school near Albuquerque is for real. The 3A Lady Lynx ended the first quarter ahead 15-8, but one got the feeling that the Lady Warriors were sitting back and waiting to make a move.

"They are a very good team," Rehoboth head coach Adrian Pete said. "They went to a spread offense toward the end of the fourth quarter. That may have been the turning point in the game, considering they were protecting a small lead."

The versatile Harrison got aggressive on the offensive and defensive boards in the second quarter and Maes continued to hit shots from everywhere. Harrison set picks, rolled when there was an opening and the steady and smart Toledo — she's weighing collegiate decisions on attending Stanford University in California, Smith College in Massachusetts or Duke University in North Carolina — ran a near perfect offense from the point guard spot.

By the time the first half was over, Maes tallied 10 points and Harrison was not far behind with 9. By the same token, Lizer, a multiple sport athlete for the Lady Lynx, was heating up with 12 points.

THE SECOND HALF

The lead changed several times in the third quarter, with To'hajiilee going up 37-36 with 2:10 left on the clock. Lizer put Rehoboth ahead a few more times on long-range jumpers. Junior guard Wylencia Weaver got in on the action toward the middle and end of the third quarter, nailing a 3-pointer to give Rehoboth a 42-37 lead going into the fourth.

That's when the Lady Warriors gelled. Harrison was on fire with rebounds and put backs. Maes hit shot after shot and Toledo committed just one turnover in a 10-minute offensive stretch. Harrison connected on some foul shots and made some steals. Apache made a few steals, as two were back-to-back — and hit four foul shots for To'hajiilee.

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Lizer hit a layup and two consecutive long jumpers and Rehoboth went up 48-45 with 5:45 left in the game. Maes got free inside on a cut for a 50-48 Warriors lead. Rehoboth got new life when the reliable Toledo threw an errant pass with 3:10 left in the fourth quarter. When To'hajiilee got the ball back, the team went into a four-corners offense and Rehoboth could only watch as Maes, Apache, Toledo and Harrison ran Boston Celtic-like plays.

Maes scored 19 for the Lady Warriors and Harrison hit 18. Apache scored 12 and recorded six steals. For Rehoboth, Lizer scored a game high 24 points and Daniels put in a silent 8.

Besides Rehoboth and To'hajiilee, the teams in the tournament included Native American Community Academy, Zuni, East Mountain, Navajo Pine, Ramah and Academy of the Classics.

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