



Miners edge Lady Cats in thriller

By Joel Priest
Special to the Drum

To a victor went the more coveted spoils.

However, had Homecoming queen been voted upon after, rather than before the Saturday, Jan. 21 San Juan Basin League action — well, Telluride's girls' royalty might have looked much, much different.

Center Emily Langley and guards Jo Bush and Carla Stauber — the winner — were three of four nominees, and required a uniform change afterward for their presentation before the MinerDome masses.

But on-court, guards Sarah Wontrobski and Emy Ludwig and forward Sonja Erickson stepped up most regally to crown a 41-35 victory.

It wasn't secured, though, until the final 30 seconds.

The visiting Ignacio Lady Bobcats, sluggish throughout most of the first quarter, had also intensified after a first half, yielding a 17-16 score. Rallying out of an early 9-nil hole, consecutive Mariah Vigil baskets in close first evened the count, and a Sky Cotton free throw then gave IHS a one-point lead after eight minutes.

Seeking fire that fueled a 55-42

road win at rebuilding Mancos the evening before, the Lady Cats returned from the locker room eager, and Vigil converted a three-point power play right off the bat. The all-systems-go Ludwig answered with a speedy drive, but Ignacio then got back-to-back buckets from guard Michelle Simmons and forward Pam Cotton for a 23-19 advantage.

With both sides now having led by their most, the fuse was lit for a fireworks-finish, and Telluride tied at 25 on an Erickson triple, 1:27 remaining in the third, after a Langley free throw. With 0:32 left, Langley took an Erickson feed inside for a brief advantage; Pam Cotton crept along the baseline just before the buzzer for a nearly-uncontested layup and 27-all deadlock.

The fourth frame began cautiously before Ludwig took a steal end-to-end to restart the scoring. Simmons, however, spontaneously combusted from long range in reply, giving IHS a 30-29 lead on a three-pointer from four feet behind the arc.

Telluride (7-2, 4-2 SJBL) regained a one-point lead on two Mallory Bosse FTs, then went up 33-30 on an Erickson breakaway layup. It could have been crippling to the guests, but wasn't; Simmons bulls-eyed another try from the same spot as before, just a step closer.

Again, could have been a crippler, but wasn't; Wontrobski (11 points) buried a three on the Lady Miners' next possession, and after Vigil forced her way in for another hoop, Ludwig (seven

points) floated into the opposite lane for a running basket and 38-35 lead with 55 seconds left and the crowd roaring.

They all knew of whom their team should be wary. But after Ignacio's ensuing, unsuccessful attempt, Simmons fouled out with 0:29 left, trying to save time after Sky Cotton's effort at an infraction apparently didn't create enough audible contact.

One of THS's six active seniors and seven overall, Erickson (eight points), then hammered in proverbial nails one and two from the stripe, and Ludwig added another with five ticks remaining.

Simmons totaled 10 points for Ignacio (5-6, 3-4), while Vigil led with 13. Pam Cotton, denied a big two-and-one try in the third quarter by a foul deemed before her shot, finished with five. Sky Cotton chipped in three, with Cloe Seibel — who scored 13 at MHS — and Valerie Armstrong each booking two.

Langley finished with nine points for Telluride, with Bosse and Bush netting three apiece.

Next for IHS will be a rematch with Dolores on Friday, Jan. 27, then road trips to Dove Creek (Friday, Feb. 3) and Ridgway (Saturday, Feb. 4) — all SJBL contests — before a Tuesday, Feb. 7 home game versus 3A Pagosa Springs.

TIDBITS FROM TELLURIDE: The Lady Miners owned a 12-4 advantage in attempted FT's during the first half, but made just five. Justa Whitt took the head-coaching reins with Brice Searles away,



photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

Ignacio junior Michelle Simmons (bottom) ducks and covers amidst a defensive air raid by Telluride senior Jo Bush (20) during a Saturday, Jan. 21 game at THS.

and found herself opposing another former University of Colorado alum: THS volunteer assistant Allison Gausman was a standout defender for the CU soccer team.

MATH FROM MANCOS: Simmons, who notched a 25-

point, 14-rebound, 11-assist triple-double in Ignacio's Saturday, Jan. 14 home win over Nucla, came close to another (12-12-5) against the Lady Jays. Armstrong, Vigil and Pam Cotton combined for an effective 27 points and 22 rebounds.



photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

Ignacio sophomore Cloe Seibel (12) and Michelle Simmons (3) hit the deck to tie up possession with Telluride senior Emy Ludwig (22) during a Saturday, Jan. 21 game at THS.

IHS boys overwhelm Telluride

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Having starting point guard Fischer Hazen back for his senior year — he'd spent 11th grade studying in Spain — has been great for Telluride. On the night of Saturday, Jan. 21, he was even named Homecoming king.

Having starting center Roger Liljegren attempting multiple three-pointers against the San Juan Basin League's established monarchs, however — well, at least he was a Denver Post First Team All-1A (eight-man) Football pick. That too was great for THS, and Norwood, for whom he dons pads and cleats.

In the first half against visiting Ignacio, the rim seemed as hard to see as if it hung outdoors in the literal winter wonderland rapidly developing. And head coach Mike Hughes knew that could be as dangerous as hypothermia.

His Miners' best hope would be that the Bobcats, coming in off a road win at Mancos the night before, would be in too much a hurry to leave for home, heading south over Lizard Head Pass before a possible closure.

Didn't happen. The Cats were too cool, too quick inside the MinerDome.

Chris Valdez's crew, despite senior shooting guard Xavier Watts using crutches to take weight off his right ankle, was as methodical as ever in allowing senior Shane Richmond and freshman Adison Jones to establish low-post supremacy — which stoked a 9-0 opening spree, a 24-5 first half, and a 48-27 win.

Hazen finally got the young hosts (he and Liljegren are the only seniors, reserves Jared Balkind and Nathan Loomis the only juniors) on the board with a three-point play, but going 5:13 without as much as a free throw was too overwhelming for the underwhelming Miners, who shot a horrific 2-of-20 from the field in the first 16:00 of regulation time.



photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

Ignacio sophomore Clayton Jefferson (11) divides and conquers a Telluride trap (Brooks Rogers, left, and Sam Demas, right) during a Saturday, Jan. 21 game at THS.

"You're not going to beat Ignacio shooting 10 percent," Hughes stated bluntly. "You're just not."

Telluride managed to create many open attempts, but the height of Richmond, Jones, Justin Carver and Austin Haire was decisive on the glass, and second-chance tries offensively were almost nonexistent. Not until Valdez completely emptied his bench — JV starter Sam Mestas wore Watts' No. 12 for the game — did the Miners muster much; sophomore Conner Courter netted eight of his team-high 10 in the fourth.

Richmond led the Bobcats with 20 points, hitting five of six at the stripe. Sophomore Kelton Richmond dropped in 10, hitting two of IHS's unusually-low three triples. Four-of-4 at the

line, Carver scored six, Jones (17 rebounds) and Clayton Jefferson each had four, while Haire and John House had two.

Hazen and soph Tristan Purdy each chipped in five for THS (6-3, 3-2 SJBL), soph Brooks Rogers hit a late three, and soph Sam Demas matched Liljegren's two points.

Ignacio (10-3, 7-0) next hosts Dolores on Friday, Jan. 27, then waits for a Saturday, Feb. 4 trip to Ridgway.

In Mancos, while they were not the all-to-the-wall Bobcats the fans inside the Mancos Performance Center expected, IHS still swamped the Blue Jays by 20. Shane Richmond led the 49-29 romp with 21 points, while Jefferson added 10 and Jones six. He and Richmond combined for 15 boards.

Wrestlers 10th at Screaming Eagle

By Joel Priest
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There's a taekwondo black belt in his possession.

And 5A Fruita Monument's Thomas Gaasche also holds a green belt in judo — definitely the better of the martial arts, given its emphasis on throws and leverage, to bolster his grappling repertoire.

Ignacio's Alex Pena, though, already owns three state wrestling championships — and the unknowing Wildcat 126-pounder received a schooling from the Bobcat senior in the second round of the 23rd annual Screaming Eagle Invitational on Saturday, Jan. 21 at Paonia High School.

Sticking the freshman to the mat in less than a period, Pena then stormed through Cedaredge's Beau Hebert (16-1 technical fall) and worked past PHS's Cody Clawson 3-1 to reach the title match against a very familiar foe: Fowler's Zach DuVall.

The two had clashed the night before at the Paonia Mixed Duals event, with DuVall appearing ready to take victory until Pena rapidly turned the tables — and the Grizzly senior — for a pin with only 12 seconds left. The weekend rematch was just as tight, but Pena prevailed 6-3 and improved to 19-2 overall.

Ignacio had fallen to FHS in their only team-on-team action at the Duals, 54-12 (Pena's pin and a forfeit for 195-pounder Colton Wyatt), and also lost senior Jeff Herrera for the SCI after he re-aggravated a damaged wrist bone in a 5-3 loss to Dakota Parker at 132.

But with a six-man squad down to five, Ignacio still had three of Class 2A's elite for the bracket-style tournament, which pulled in 18 teams. Ignacio took 10th place, led by Pena, senior Teagan Overturf at 160 (up from 152 against FHS, defeated 12-9 by Ethan

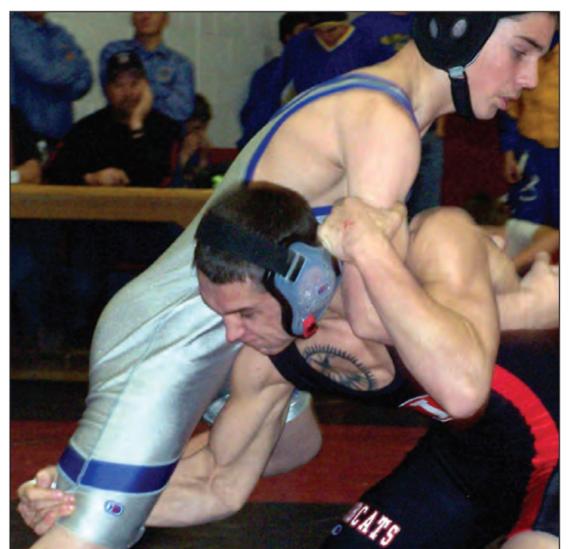


photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

Ignacio 126-pounder Alex Pena musters all muscle available to uproot Fruita Monument's Thomas Gaasche during the Saturday, Jan. 21 Screaming Eagle Invitational inside Paonia High School.

Wright), and Wyatt.

Overturf breezed through Cedaredge's Isaiah Surber (pin, 1:07) and Dove Creek's Wyatt Applin (pin, 1:55) before running into Jack Woods of Custer County (Westcliffe). Pinned by the Bobcat in blue, Overturf recovered to take third place after pinning Cedaredge's Sterling Rose and then winning by default over Antonito's Joey Gallegos to improve to 28-7 in 2011-12.

Everyone in the 195-pound division received a first-round bye, and Wyatt then officially began with pins of Cedaredge's Ely Fritchman and Sargent's Chance Padilla before losing a 7-6 decision to SJBL nemesis Jaron Ragsdale of Norwood, and dipping to 18-4 overall.

At 113 pounds, junior Taylor Smith was first pinned in 1:39 by DC's Chance Randolph, and then eliminated 14-2 by Fowler's Drew Corsentino, who'd pinned him 15 seconds into the third at the Duals.

And at 170, freshman Blaine

Mickey — like everyone else — received a first-round bye, but then had to face Paonia's K.C. Christian as a reward. Winner of a hard-fought 7-4 decision over FHS's Chance Chambers the night before in that particular dual (a 51-10 Eagles win), Christian made sure to stick Mickey and avoid an upset on his home mat. Mickey's SCI then ended under a pin by Cedaredge's Brian Leahy.

Up next for the Cats will be their Butch Melton Invitational on Saturday, Jan. 28 at IHS (9 a.m.) after an all-La Plata County triangular on Friday, Jan. 27 in Bayfield (6 p.m.) against the 3A Wolverines and 4A Durango.

LOW-END THEORY: The 2012 SCI was a minefield at the lower weights, and a quick dash through at the upper weights. The 106-pound and 113-pound divisions had to be broken into two brackets each, with 52 total wrestlers competing. By comparison, the 220s and heavy-weights had just 14.