



Girls held at bay by Ridgway

By Joel Priest
Special to the Drum

There's something of a 'kindred spirit' between Michelle Simmons and Candace Yengst.

Neither wants to lose to the other, but both know to expect fireworks from each other – and Simmons proved once again, on the first attempted shot, that another Ignacio-Ridgway clash would go down to the wire. Round One this season, Dec. 9 at IHS, went to the Lady Demons 64-59 – but with Simmons outscoring Yengst 26-25.

Round Two, last Saturday at RHS, again went to the Lady Demons ... by an eerily-similar 64-56. Said Yengst, whose initial try was pounded aside by Simmons, "How many did Michelle get?"

Avenging fivefold a stifled six-point performance in a 46-43 upset loss to Telluride the night before, Yengst exploded for a game-high 30 points versus the Lady 'Cats. But, as in the first battle – in which Simmons also swatted her first shot – was quiet for eight minutes (three points on 12/9, two on 2/4).

Meanwhile, IHS' first-quarter work was nearly identical to the first engagement: ahead 13-12 after a quarter then, up 11-10 'now' via a Sky Cotton bank-shot three with 0:10 left. And Simmons? Three points up to that juncture; she'd had four after one frame back in the first go-round.

She would finish with a team-high 24 points – the answer to Yengst's inquiry – and also pull down 14 rebounds. Sky Cotton, coming off a 13-point, seven-steal game in Ignacio's 43-28 win the night before at Dove Creek, finished with ten points (exactly as she'd had her first time versus RHS). Mariah Vigil also mirrored her Game 1 with Ridgway – eleven points the first



photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

Ignacio's Michelle Simmons (3) stomps on the gas to drive towards the basket, leaving Ridgway's Bailey Kerson in the dust during the Lady Bobcats' Feb. 4 trip to RHS.

meeting, eleven the second.

RHS' Rowan VanArsdell netted 11 points, up just three from December's game, and teammate Leta McNatt doubled her December output, from one point to two – and also fouled out again.

Told you it was eerily similar ... Except for the play of Ridgway senior point guard Jenna Beamer, her team's most consistent threat in the loss to THS, as well as both wins over IHS. Having managed nine points against the Lady Miners – which she also netted the first time against the Lady 'Cats – Beamer totaled 17 points last Saturday, and connected five times from long range. And all the makes came at the most opportune (and most detrimental to the black jerseys) moments.

Her first bomb put the Lady Demons up 13-11 early in the second quarter, and her second increased the lead to 20-11 en

route to a 35-22 halftime advantage. Ignacio (7-7, 5-5 SJBL) had fought back to 24-20, but then saw Ridgway literally run up and down the court on an 11-2 spree in the last 2:40.

After IHS' Pam Cotton – inactive for the teams' first meeting due to a one-game suspension due to a double-technical ejection – and Yengst swapped buckets inside starting the second half, Beamer's third triple put RHS (12-4, 9-2) up 42-25, and her fourth gave the green-and-white a 20-point lead with 3:45 left.

Cotton converted successive shots from in close, forcing Ridgway boss Steve Hill to erupt and call timeout, despite still sitting on a 50-32 cushion. Beamer's fifth trey came with just five seconds left, making the lead 55-38 with a quarter remaining. [She'd sent Game 1 to the fourth also with a three, but Ridgway's lead then was just 45-42.]

Re-enter Simmons. With RHS more wary of Vigil (seven third-quarter points) and Pam Cotton (also seven), and keeping Beamer near the freshman Sky Cotton as much as possible, Ignacio's junior set in motion a near-single-handed attack – creating three 'and-one' chances, converting two – and dropped 13 points to fuel the Lady Bobcats' comeback bid.

Pam Cotton would join post counterpart Bailey Kerson in fouling out, but with VanArsdell proving poisonous on weak-side putbacks, and Yengst and Beamer providing steady ball control, Ridgway had enough juice to cross the finish line first – despite a long Sky Cotton trey in the final seconds.

Up next, IHS hosts Mancos tonight and Telluride tomorrow to wrap up regular-season San Juan Basin League play, then wholly concludes the regular season versus 3A Bayfield on Valentine's Day.



photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

Ignacio's Mariah Vigil (center, left) hits the deck to battle for the ball against Ridgway's Leta McNatt (front, left) and Rowan VanArsdell (rear, left) during the Lady Bobcats' Feb. 4 trip to RHS. Arriving, at right, to assist Vigil if necessary is IHS teammate Pam Cotton.

Junior High 'A' boys rolling

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Shocked at the skill level she'd just witnessed, a Ouray County fan approached former Ignacio High standout Timmy Velasquez last Saturday afternoon with this question:

"What grade does Ignacio go up to in middle school? Do they go up to ninth?" Velasquez, currently the coach of the IJHS 'B' team, could only grin and answer no, "just eighth." The fan was referring particularly to the Bobcat 'A' squad – which had just dismantled Ridgway Secondary, 62-22, inside the House of Troy in Ouray.

With 10 of 11 players scoring – only one had fewer than five points – led by big Nick Herrera (11 pts) and Anthony Manzanares (10), the scary thing

was that Ignacio was only getting started; an encounter with Ouray was still to come. And the 'Boys of Troy' were trounced almost as terribly as the dejected Demons; IJHS held the Trojans to just five field goals and 14 total points, while posting 53 themselves.

Herrera again led the way with 16 points, Wyatt Hayes increased from seven points to ten, and Trey Taylor went from six to eight to help book the San Juan Basin League sweep as nine 'Cats registered points versus OMS.

Ignacio improved to 13-0, obviously unbeaten in the loop. Sound familiar? Kind of like a certain 'varsity' crew you may have heard of...say...anytime in the last four years? It should; not only are there bloodlines to current or former IHS Bobcats, there's also a relation to the team's first-year head coach.

Who's 'first-year' only because it's his first new team in, well, quite a long time. Back on a bench in the hoop game, long-time Bayfield High School leader Forrest "Butch" Prior (relative Austin McCaw wears the red-and-white) now holds the reins – until he releases the beasts upon overwhelmed prey.

The 'A' team [television pun most definitely intended] goes into battle again this Saturday, Feb. 11, in Nucla against the Mustangs as well as Dove Creek. Thursday night's home clash with Bayfield was finished after the Drum went to print, and the young Bobcats' season ends next weekend.

ON THE ROSTER: Herrera, Hayes, Manzanares, Taylor, McCaw, Joseph Herrera, Tucker Ward, Charles Rohde, Rain Rosa, Andrew Martinez, Chase Sanchez.

Bobcat boys re-route Ridgway

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Fans of the hosts likely thought they'd seen the game's last true highlight.

Started by a deflection towards midcourt by a diving, rolling Xavier Watts, leading to a quick, one-touch pass ahead by Clayton Jefferson, Ignacio senior Shane Richmond didn't get the most elevation skyward – but enough to muscle the ball over the rim for a breakaway 'dunk' late in the fourth quarter.

And fans of the visiting Bobcats knew, despite the 54-37 advantage, there could still be more to follow; an abnormal half-dozen players still hadn't yet scored in last Saturday's eventual 66-44 road win.

Sophomore forward Justin Carver showed his hops the following trip after Richmond's flush, hovering over a Ridgway Demon for a left-handed layup, then calmly drained a well-if-you're-giving-it-to-me three-pointer off the left wing on IHS' next offensive rush.

RHS' Quinn Strickler finally countered with a layup, but with the scoreboard showing Ignacio 59, Ridgway 39 with 2:20 still remaining in the fourth, IHS' reserves were more than ready to contribute.

Senior Jesse Vigil knocked down a straight-away triple with 60 seconds left, and classmate Darrin Lagerstrom got into the ledger with a putback of a missed close-range try by sophomore John House. Junior Austin Haire and soph Adam Herrera tried pushing the pace just a little more, but the regulation 32 minutes expired before both they, along with House and senior Matt Silva could net a digit or two.

But in their earlier minutes, all of Chris Valdez's bench players were tested by an improved Demons roster. In fact, after Carver began the first-quarter scoring with two free throws and 6:37 left, RHS recovered to take an 8-6 lead on a short hook by sophomore big Nathan Hagemeyer.

Never panicking, the 'Cats moved back out front on a trey from soph Kelton Richmond, and with 1:25 left, freshman



photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

Ignacio's Clayton Jefferson (11) takes a heftily hack from a bypassing Kolton Kyne (12) of Ridgway during the Bobcats' Feb. 4 trip to RHS. Jefferson scored six points in IHS' 66-44 victory; Kyne missed the majority of the first quarter after crashing into the end wall on this play.

Adison Jones stepped out to hit from distance and build a 14-8 lead, which reached 18-10 entering the second. And quickly swelled to 21-10 on a three by Watts from behind a double screen, and later ballooned to 28-12 on another Watts three-ball – following a 14-footer in transition by Jefferson.

RHS' Kolton Kyne drilled a three, but Shane Richmond answered immediately with a hoop-and-one play to keep the lead at 16, 31-15, with 2:23 before halftime. And to Ridgway's credit, panic also did not ensue; behind senior guards Tanner Skalla and Harley Ryder, the Demons (10-6, 7-4 SJBL) went on an 11-2 run to shrink the score to 33-26 at the break.

Carver threw a fine lob to the elder Richmond for an easy bucket beginning the third, and Jones later canned a key three from the right corner for a 42-29 lead, and the contest went to the fourth 46-35.

Four straight Shane Richmond points and two Jefferson FT's

[IHS was a perfect 7-of-7 all told] bookended a Ryder hoop, and at 52-37, with IHS' defense tightening especially on Ryder and Skalla, the outcome was imminent – with the highlight-reel mayhem about to commence.

Richmond paced the victors with 27 points, while Ryder's 11 led the victims. Skalla totaled ten and RHS got six each from Kyne, Hagemeyer, and junior Corbyn Robinson. Watts and Jones each finished with eight, Jefferson six, and Kelton Richmond five for Ignacio (12-3, 9-0) – playing after a week off.

Making up for the down time, three tilts were on the slate this week. Tuesday's home game versus non-league Pagosa Springs was completed after the Drum went to print, but the 'Cats will be in town from here on out: Mancos visits for SJBL play tonight, Telluride comes tomorrow for more, and the 2011-12 regular season ends inside IHS Gymnasium on Valentine's Day against non-league Bayfield.

IHS JV's stay hot in SJBL

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Setting the pace early, maintaining under fire, and then excessively speeding away after six minutes, the Ignacio Bobcat JV snapped up another San Juan Basin League win last Saturday in Ridgway.

Behind a team-high 12 points from junior Austin Haire – who set the action in motion with a three right off the bat – and eight each from sophomore Adam Herrera and Angel Ortiz, the boys shook off a 14-14 first quarter to command a 30-16 halftime lead, and virtually coasted to a 48-36 victory.

RHS junior Kyle Cotton – who answered Haire's initial hoop with a shorter deuce himself – had tied the count with a triple out of the left corner, but IHS soph John House hit a baseline ten-footer beginning the second stanza to undo the knot. As the rhythm of the game slowed, Herrera later hit two free throws for an 18-14 advantage and 4:14 before the intermission.

The Demons finally managed their first bucket of the quarter, but Haire finished off an 'and-one' effort to make the score 21-16. Senior Jesse Vigil hit a pair from the stripe to build the pad up to 25-16, and reserve guard Xavier Reynolds crippled the hosts with a triple in the waning moments.



photo Joel Priest/Special to the Drum

Ignacio's Sam Mestas saves his dribble under duress from Ridgway's Weston Patton (25) during the Bobcat JV's Feb. 4 road victory.

the deficit back down to 36-24 entering the final quarter. And Ridgway closed the contest on a 7-2 spurt, but not before Ignacio's Sam Corrado followed an Ortiz fall-away jumper with a basket for a [then] 46-29 lead.

Vigil finished with seven points, Tucson four, and House/Reynolds with three each

for the 'Cats, who will precede the varsity in home SJBL games this weekend against Mancos (2/10) and Telluride (2/11), as well as versus 3A Bayfield on February 14.

IHS' non-leaguer Feb. 7 at home against 3A Pagosa Springs ended after the Drum went to print.