



Lost Dutchman Doubles Shuffle-Board, Results & photos by Pearl Holmes, see B-4

Time Out



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Hang In There

The Prospector varsity basketball team may have won only three games the entire season and gave up 31 points in the first quarter to Chaparral in their season finale last Thursday, but these kids never quit.

After trailing 31-16 at the end of one quarter, the AJHS boys actually out-played 3rd-ranked Chaparral over the next three quarters before falling 77-65. And this despite their leading scoring all season long fouling out of the game with more than four minutes to go.

Since moving up to the 4A-I division in 2007, AJHS is just 6-45 overall and have yet to win a region game. But they have played hard during this stretch despite a lack of depth and overall talent we had grown accustomed to with the likes of Cody Anderson, Stephen Elman, Justin Higuera, Matt Garcia and Aaron Quiroz in recent years. And for that, you have to give credit to coaches Richardson and Beatty.

Farewell Seniors

By Chuck Baker
The News

Three Apache Junction senior basketball players, Ian Firnbach, Brandon Robbins and Gabe Weaver, played their final game for the "Black and Gold" last Thursday as the Prospectors hosted Scottsdale Chaparral for "Senior Night."

After jumping out to a 12-11 lead over Chaparral midway through the opening quarter, the Firebirds went on a torrid shooting pace, putting up 31 first-quarter points and led by fifteen when the quarter ended.

The Prospectors played very well the remainder of the game and ended up losing by twelve points, 77-65, meaning Apache Junction

actually outscored heavily favored Chaparral over the final three quarters. The Firebirds are listed with a 15-4 overall record and are ranked number three overall in the 4A-I power points.

Robbins led the Prospectors with 14 points. The senior center also pulled down five rebounds and handed out three assists.

Firnbach netted 13 points, including 10 alone in the second quarter, and finished the game with seven rebounds as well.

Despite fouling out with over four minutes left in the final quarter, junior Colt Grandstaff finished with 7 points, seven rebounds, seven assists and three steals.

Demario Hill knocked down three, three-pointers

and finished with 9 points for Apache Junction. Kyrel Parker contributed with 8 points, Ravi Patel tossed in 7 points, Mike Cano scored 5 points to go with his six assists, and Weaver added a bucket.

Apache Junction also hosted Scottsdale Chaparral last Tuesday and dropped a 67-46 decision. Grandstaff tallied 17 points to lead AJHS, Firnbach and Cano each scored 7 points, Hill netted 6 points, Stephen Copeland scored 3 points and Patel, Paul Miles and Robbins all scored 2 points.

In an update from Apache Junction's February 6 game at Peoria Liberty, the Prospectors lost a heart-breaker, 47-44, to officially finish their season with a 3-24 overall record, the wins coming over Ray HS, Prescott and Williams Field. It is also the same number of wins as the previous season.

J.V. Falls Twice

The Prospector junior varsity team also ended their season last with a 72-47 loss to Saguaro and a 70-39 loss to Chaparral.

In the Chaparral game, Corbin Ott scored 7 points, handed out four assists, grabbed four rebounds and came up with two steals for AJHS. Jake Abbatacola netted 6 points as did Ernie Bracamonte, Lawrence Johnson scored 4 points and

see **Hoops**, page B-4



Prospector varsity basketball player Kyrel Parker (#14) knocks down a jump shot for two points in last Thursday's season finale against Scottsdale Chaparral.



(left) Prospector senior Ian Firnbach is escorted by his parents, Randy and Kim, at last Thursday's AJHS "Senior Night" festivities prior to the team's final game of the 2008-09 season.

(right) That's Prospector senior Brandon Robbins in the middle, escorted by his parents, Mike and Monica, at last Thursday's AJHS "Senior Night" festivities prior to the team's final game.



(left) Apache Junction senior Gabe Weaver is escorted by his Mom, Amy during "Senior Night" festivities held just prior to last Thursday's final game of the 2008-09 basketball season against Scottsdale Chaparral.

Lady Prospectors Come Up Just Short Of Post Season Bid

By Chuck Baker
The News

To have a chance to make it into the 4A-I post season basketball tournament, the Lady Prospector varsity basketball team had to travel to Scottsdale last week and win their final two games of the regular season against fellow Desert Sky Region opponents Saguaro and Chaparral.

After taking care of business with Tuesday's 39-35 win over Saguaro, Apache Junction, listed at number nineteen in the power point rankings, took on Chaparral this past Thursday in what basically came down to a playoff game for both teams.

Chaparral came into the game at number seventeen in the power point rankings and since only the top sixteen teams qualify for post season play, the final



Lady Prospector sophomore Sierra Aulik, shown here laying in two points in the February 6 game against Liberty, led Apache Junction with 16 and 9 points in their final two games last week against Saguaro and Chaparral.

game of the regular season for both teams became an all important one.

The teams played to a 10-10 tie after the opening quarter and their wasn't much scoring in quarter number two, with Chaparral

holding a 6-3 edge for a 16-13 halftime lead.

Apache Junction edge the Lady Firebirds 11-10 in the third quarter to pull to within two points, but another 6-3 quarter edge by Chaparral gave the Lady Firebirds a 32-27 victory in a defensive struggle and likely a tournament bid.

Sierra Aulik scored 9 points to lead the Lady Prospectors against Chaparral after tossing in 16 points in the win over Saguaro on Tuesday. Sara Cranmer netted 7 points, Emily McGann scored 6 points, Katasha Braaten and Riley Mullender both tallied 2 points and Katie Karbo added a free throw.

"We lost a tough one," said AJHS head coach Brock Kearsley of the game with Chaparral. "We played one of our best

see **Girls**, page B-2

Hall Of Famer Comes To A.J.



Major League Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Gaylord Perry (above, in middle) made a special appearance last Thursday at the Superstition Mountain Museum as a fundraising event for the museum and the Superstition Mountain Historical Society. Perry, who in his 22-year Major League Baseball career, won 300 career games and became the first player in league history to win the Cy Young Award in both the American and National leagues, was on hand to sign autographs and meet and greet museum attendees during their regular Thursday free lecture. Also pictured above with Perry are Rene Lesieutre (left), president of the Superstition Mountain Historical Society, and Shirley Baer, one of the museum's board of director members.



AJHS Sophomore Nate Rees Aims High

By Chuck Baker
The News

With Spring just around the corner, most sixteen-year-old boys might be thinking ahead to the Prom, wondering if they can muster enough courage to ask that special girl to the dance. The only exercise they might get is working out their opposable thumbs on their Nintendo Wii or Xbox 360. Apache Junction High School sophomore Nate Rees may not be your typical sixteen-year-old.

With an Arizona Sprint Triathlon (at left) In just his first year of competition, 16-year-old Nate Rees won an Arizona Sprint Triathlon Championship title.

Championship Series title behind him in just his first year of competition, Nate is now entertaining the idea of venturing into mountain bike racing, and has even thought of training for the Olympic Games.

In November of 2007, with a borrowed bike in hand, Nate participated in his very first Arizona Triathlon Championship Series event and finished second overall in the 15-to-19 age group. He enjoyed the event so much, he went out and bought his own bike with money he had earned and now set his sights on winning a State Championship title.

According to his Mom, Cyndi Ruehl, Nate established his own training schedule, a regiment that included two-plus

hours a day, six days a week, sometimes running, sometimes swimming, sometimes biking and sometimes lifting weights.

With "Coach Mom" by his side, or tailing behind in the pickup truck, Nate stuck to his rigorous training schedule all through 2008 and competed in five more sprint triathlons, each one consisting of a 250-meter swim, a 12-mile bike, and a three-mile run. He won each race, netting him his first Sprint Triathlon Championship award.

"I'm so proud of him," Cyndi says of her son. "He set his own goals, then devised the steps to achieve them, maintained the discipline needed to stay focused, and he carried it all the way."

see **Nate**, page B-3