For the second time this season, county rivals Holyoke and Haxtun met on the court to battle it out in the Phillips County Shootout held at HHS on Friday, Jan. 16.

Haxtun's boys' basketball team was ready to put up a fight against the undefeated Dragons, keeping the score tight throughout the game. Crowds on both sides of the court were on their feet for the final exciting minutes, cheering as loud as they could for their home teams. However, it was Holyoke who prevailed in the end, winning the game by eight points, 39-31, to give them a ninth straight victory.

"They played well," Baumgartner said of the Bulldogs. "I've got to give credit to Coach Gerk. They were prepared for us this time."

The coach added the Haxtun team came out ready to play in the first quarter, but Holyoke was looking a little sluggish. Five Dragons contributed 13 points, including three three-point field goals; still Haxtun had the one-point lead at the end of the eight minutes.

Second quarter action saw both teams struggling as they tried to find a way to the basket. This led to single digits being earned on both sides, with Holyoke adding only three and Haxtun five.

Down by three, 16-19, at the start of the second half, HHS returned with more intensity, especially on defense. A three-point field goal scored by Ryan Baumgartner, followed quickly by Austin Tharp's two baskets from the free-throw line tied the game up in the third quarter at 23 points. Two more threes thrown up by Tharp and Evan Swanson pushed Holyoke into the lead at the end of the quarter, 29-27.

Despite Haxtun's best efforts, the Dragons held on to their edge for the rest of the game by shutting down the Bulldogs' offense. With four of their last baskets coming from the line, Holyoke won the game by eight.

"Our defense during the second half kept us in the game," said Baumgartner, who pointed out the Bulldogs made fewer points in the whole second half than they did during the first quarter.

Some key outside baskets didn't hurt either. Out of the six field goals scored in the ending half, four were three-pointers. Still, added Baumgartner, the team had a hard time underneath the basket.

Turnovers were a problem for Holyoke's players Friday night, with the team losing 16 total—the most of any game they've played so far this season. "We did not take care of the ball," said Baumgartner.

Looking ahead to the rest of the season, the coach said his team needs to be more consistent offensively. "We need to get better on the inside because the season's not going to get any easier," he said.

Referring to Friday night's game, he added his players need to keep out of foul trouble as well, so they can be sure of staying in the whole game.

Tharp led the team offensively with 14 points. Holyoke made 12 of 37 attempts for a shooting average of 32 percent on Friday. Haxtun was 13 for 42 at 31 percent. At the line, the Dragons made 67 percent, while Haxtun shot at only 33 percent.

Defensively, Baumgartner applauded Michal Brown for "filling the hole on the inside." During Friday night's game he pulled down seven rebounds, blocked four shots and put up six points.

In other stats, HHS outrebounded the Bulldogs 32-25, and snatched 10 steals over Haxtun's eight.

Statistics

Holyoke 39, Haxtun 31

	2	3	FT	F	TP
			FG		
Tharp	0	3	5-6	0	14
Baumgartner	0	2	2-2	2	8
Carper	0	0	0-2	4	0
Wailes	1	0	1-2	0	3
Swanson	1	2	0-0	2	8
Brown	3	0	0-0	1	6
DeBoer	0	0	0-0	0	0
TEAM	5	7	8-12	9	39
Haxtun					
TEAM	10	3	2-6	14	31

Scoring By Quarters

Holyoke	13	3	13	10	--39
Haxtun	14	5	8	4	--31

Upcoming action

Holyoke Dragons also played Love Christian at NJC in Sterling on Tuesday, Jan. 20. Full coverage of that game will appear in next week's Enterprise.

On Friday, Jan. 23, the boys will host number-three ranked Sedgwick County. The Dragons edged out the team 49-48 in overtime before Christmas break. Games are slated to start at 4 p.m.