

S P O R T S

Prep southern zone tourney underway

■ Bonanza, Bishop Gorman, Valley, Cimarron-Memorial all advance to second round.

By Lee Brown

Sunset Division title winner Durango and Sunrise winner Las Vegas, both had byes Wednesday as the first round of the Class AAA Boys Southern Zone Tournament got underway with four games on tap at Durango High School.

Defending state champion Durango (24-5 overall) clinched the Sunset Division by squeaking by the highly-rated Bishop Gorman Gaels (21-9 overall) 56-54 in a thrilling division playoff game before a crowd of over 2,500 last Saturday at Cimarron-Memorial High School. The game came down to the wire as

Durango point guard Jared Call fired a pass between two defenders to Tyler Kidd who scored at the buzzer.

The Trailblazers forced the playoff game by handily defeating Gorman 67-56 the night before on the Gaels' home court, leaving both teams with 13-1 divisional records.

Las Vegas wrapped-up the Sunrise Division crown last Friday with an easy 74-60 win over Basic. Mario Finley paced the Wildcats (19-7 overall, 11-3 division) with 18 points in the contest.

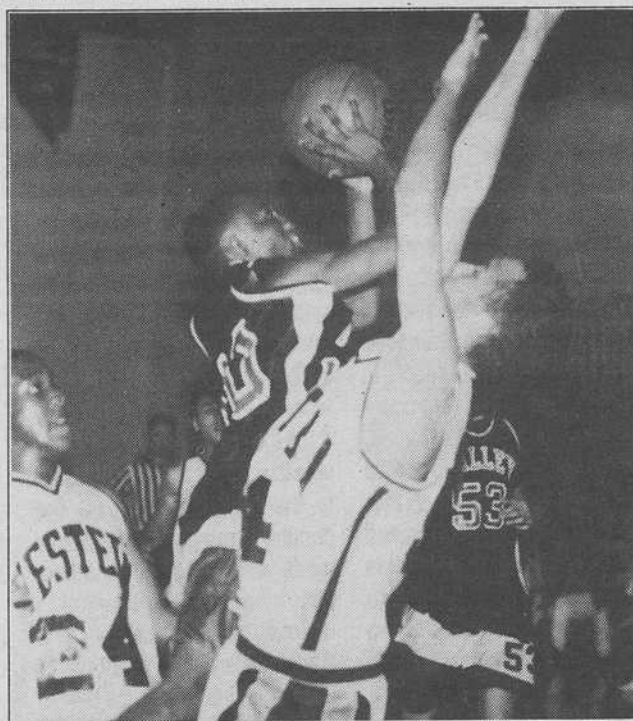
With the wins, both Durango and Las Vegas earned automatic berths to the state tournament, in addition to first and second round byes in the zone tourney. These automatic

berths leave just two additional spots open for the state tournament. Vying for those spots were Bonanza, Rancho, Chaparral, Bishop Gorman, Valley, Western, Cimarron-Memorial and Green Valley.

Wednesday's opening round was action-packed as three of the four games came down to the last few ticks of the clock.

In the tournament opener, and a surprise to many, Bonanza upstaged favored Rancho 65-51. The Rams, who led by as many as 10 points late in the second quarter, took a three point halftime lead, before falling apart in the second half.

"We just flat ran out of gas," said Rancho head coach Tony Hopkins. "We just didn't come out with that same intensity in



LaRontae Johnson goes up for two of his game-high 19 points in Valley's 61-55 win in the opening round of the southern zone tournament.

Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice

the second half."

Forward Matt Wall's led Bonanza with a game-high 19 points. Rancho was paced by John Trotter's 15 points, as Arthur Ireland and Orlando Spears scored 13 and 12 points, respectively.

In the afternoon's second contest, Bishop Gorman got a scare from the Chaparral Cowboys as it took a last second shot to give the Gaels a 56-53 win.

With the score knotted at 53, the Cowboys had an opportunity to take a 2 point lead, but missed two crucial free throws with seven seconds remaining. On the second miss, the Gaels rebounded the ball and pushed the ball up court to Mo Terry who drained a running 25-footer at the buzzer to give Bishop

Gorman the win. The Gaels were lead by 6-5 senior Jim Roban who finished with a game-high 18 points.

In the next game, Valley withstood a late fourth quarter rally to upend the Western Warriors 61-55.

In what started out as a fast-paced, action-packed game, Western's height and speed seemed to give the Vikings some trouble early on.

"They're a big team, and we may have a little trouble with their height," Valley coach Paul Aznarez said before the game. "We may have our hands full." But Valley managed to stay in the game in the second quarter, as the Warriors took only a 24-22 halftime lead.

Valley then came alive in the third quarter, taking a 42-30 lead

late in the period, before Western scored six-straight points to end the quarter. The momentum then shifted again in the fourth period, as Western's full court press caused Valley to turn the ball over on several occasions.

Western's Jimmy White nailed a 3-pointer with 1:30 to go to close Valley's lead to two (54-52). The Vikings scored two more points, then with 30 seconds remaining, Western's Leonard Banks hit a 3-pointer to knock Valley's lead down to one. Finally, it was Valley's 6-8 center, J. Johnson, who scored 5 points in the final 11 seconds to give the Vikings the win.

LaRontae Johnson led Valley with 19 points, as J. Johnson added 17 and Jevon Banks had 16. Leonard Banks poured in 18 for the Warriors.

In another nail-biter, and the final game of the day, Cimarron-Memorial stunned highly-favored Green Valley 67-63 in overtime.

Cimarron-Memorial's Nate Westmoreland, Matt Schroeter and Ike Olekaibe, all scored within the final 1:20 of the overtime period to give the Spartans the win over the defending zone champs. Cimarron's Jesse Prieto led all scorers with 19.

In quarter-final action Thursday, Bishop Gorman will take on Bonanza at 5:45 p.m. and Valley will go up against Cimarron-Memorial at 7:15 p.m. The winners of those games will move on to play division champs Las Vegas and Durango in semi-final action Friday evening, with the Southern Zone championship finals being played Saturday at 7:15 p.m. All games will be played at Durango.

Unpredictable Rebels stop Irvine, keep tournament hopes alive

Sentinel-Voice

Just when you thought they were down and out, the unpredictable UNLV Runnin' Rebels shocked the Big West Conference Monday when they defeated first-place UC Irvine 63-60 at the Thomas & Mack Center.

Before a season-low home crowd of just over 4,600, UNLV squandered a 10-point half-time lead before managing to pull away from the Anteaters in the final 2 1/2 minutes of the game.

Despite the low turnout in this and other games, UNLV coach Bill Bayno still expressed the team's appreciation for those few loyal fans.

"I think they (players) really appreciate what the home crowd does for us," Bayno said. "They've really stayed with us this year."

The win, the Rebels' second victory in three days, helped to keep their faint Big West Conference Tournament hopes alive, while the loss knocked Irvine, 9-5 in Big West play and 13-9 overall, out of first place in the conference standings. UNLV improved to 6-9 in conference

play and 9-14 overall, and will likely have to win its remaining three games — two of which are on the road — to make it to the Big West Tournament in Reno on March 8.

Junior starting point guard Kevin James was the unlikely hero down the stretch for UNLV as he had two key assists, a rebound, and sank a crucial free throw in the final 2 1/2 minutes of the game. James, who averages only 1.9 points per game, finished with a team-high five assists while grabbing six rebounds.

The Rebels were led by Warren Rosegreen's team-high 17 points and 7 rebounds. Clayton Johnson, who sprained his right ankle on the last play of the game, added 14 points and guard Sunshine Smith had 13.

"When you're in our house, anything's possible," Rosegreen said of the surprising win.

Once again, the Rebels shot poorly from the field (39 percent), 7.7 percent (1-13) from 3-point land, and a mere 52 percent from the free throw line, but did manage to commit only one turnover in the first half, however.

BIG WEST CONFERENCE

	Conf. W-L	Overall W-L
Long Beach State	10-5	15-9
UC Irvine	9-5	13-9
UNR	8-6	15-9
UC Santa Barbara	8-7	11-12
Pacific	7-7	11-11
Utah State	7-7	13-13
San Jose State	6-8	7-15
New Mexico State	6-9	9-14
UNLV	6-9	9-14
Cal State Fullerton	5-9	6-16

For the game, UNLV committed just three turnovers.

Last Saturday, UNLV ended a three game losing streak with a 68-59 win at home over Cal State Fullerton. Rosegreen again led the way for UNLV with a game-high 18 points and 11 rebounds, while Smith and Johnson added 18 and 12 points, respectively.

UNLV's next game will be Saturday night against New Mexico State in their final home game of the season.

In their first meeting last month, The Aggies, who have an identical record as the Rebels, defeated UNLV in a close 68-66 game in Las Cruces.

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