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High-school hoopsters win charity game

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ST. GEORGE - They had all of about two hours together to prepare for their game against T.E.A.M.R.A.W. (To Educate And Motivate the Ready And Willing), but it wasn't what mattered most for Hurricane senior Cory Hinton.

Getting a last chance to play a good game of basketball with his teammates one last time was too good to pass up.

And when it came to a game-winning shot, the Tiger forward didn't forget what he needed to do.

Hinton got inside for a layup with 51 seconds left, and the Washington County Seniors Rec-N-Crew beat Team RAW 101-98 in the second annual March Mayhem in the Desert on Saturday at The Pit on the Pine View campus.

"It was fun to play one last game with my two teammates," Hinton said in reference to Ryan Smith and Gordie Dotson. "We practiced for about two hours on Thursday, and we weren't in basketball mode. I took my first shots in three weeks."

Not only did Hinton and the rest of the seniors have to adjust to picking up a basketball again, but they had to play longer, too. The game featured two full 20-minute halves.

For Dotson, the extra time - and extra chances to score - added to the enjoyment.

"We're not used to scoring this many points in Hurricane," Dotson said. "It was nice to have our coach tell us to shoot as much as we want."

The seniors made 13 3-pointers in the game and used a 13-2 run over the game's final three minutes to rally for the victory.

After Jace Melessa missed a free throw for Team RAW, Snow Canyon's Clark Anderson hit a layup and converted a three-point play with 21.4 seconds left that pushed the margin to 100-96.

"We're all good players and we all got to do our thing out there. No one had to worry about doing it by himself," Anderson said. "All I was thinking on the shot was 'just don't miss.'"

Anderson didn't, and the seniors held on.

The game was nearly a duplicate of last year's, which the seniors won 104-98 in double overtime. Neither team led by more than eight points, and there were 13 lead changes, 10 in the second half.

Although the game doesn't quite erase the sting of its loss to Juan Diego in the 3A state basketball playoffs, Hinton said Saturday's win took away some of the hurt.

"We leave with good memories and a little bit of justice. The win feels good," Hinton said.

For Team RAW, players like Dwayne Bright, who played at Dixie in his sophomore year and has participated in both editions of March Mayhem, got their chance to shine on a big stage.

"We got to entertain everyone, and I had a dunk," said Bright, who finished with 15 points. "This game was more fun than last year's and it was put together well."

For organizer and Snow Canyon girls basketball assistant coach Jack Rolfe, the game served its purpose for more than just the competition on the floor.

"The game was bigger and better, and that's good, but it's all about the kids and opportunities," he said. "Team RAW represented themselves well."

The strong turnout was another source of benefit for Rolfe, who operates the School of Life Foundation.

"We want to make more people aware of the organizations that serve the youth of Washington County. The turnout was great, and we couldn't ask for anything better."

The first game of the day featured a group of Washington County high school coaches against Tragedy Adult Services. Proceeds from the event benefit the Children's Justice Center and Washington County School District Foundation.