

# Rams drop East in season finale

By Mike Sorensen

Deseret News sports writer

Whenever Highland and East get together for an athletic contest, it's a special occasion. It's something akin to a Harvard-Yale, USC-UCLA or Utah-BYU game.

The two city schools have maintained a strong rivalry unlike any other in the state ever since Highland opened its doors in 1956, taking a large bite out of the Leopards' east-bench studentbody.

Take that rivalry in a year when the two schools have what are considered to be the two best basketball teams in the state and you really have something special.

It was such an occasion Tuesday afternoon at Highland when the Rams inflicted East with its first league loss of the year, 79-69, and gave the Leopards their first loss since Highland beat them in a mid-December tournament.

Although East still won the Region Three title with an 11-1 record, the win was an important one for the Rams because it left them in sole possession of second place, a game ahead of Skyline. It had already been determined by a coin flip that if Highland had lost, it would have gone into the state tournament as the third place team. The second-place standing puts the Rams in the other half of the bracket from East.

Tuesday's game began as if the Leopards might

repeat their 96-81 beating of the Rams at East four weeks earlier. They jumped off to leads of 11-2 and 19-8 before Highland got cranking.

The Rams never panicked and were down just 21-16 when the initial quarter ended. They eventually went ahead 40-39 on two John Baucom foul shots after an attempted slam dunk. Baucom got his dunk a few minutes later and Highland went into the locker room with a 46-45 lead.

The second half was slow getting started due to a prolonged Ram pep club show and the replacement of a broken rim caused by Baucom's dunks. But the Leopards were even slower in getting started.

Highland lived up to its "third quarter is where ball games are won" slogan by outscoring the Leopards 15-8 in the key third period. East was never closer than eight after that as Mike Maxwell and Gordon Kener put in six points apiece down the stretch.

The intensity of the rivalry was evident in the final seconds when a brief shoving match between Highland's Bill Moon and East's Rich

Gremillion turned into a near-riot with both benches emptying and several fans coming down from the bleachers.

Ram coach Larry Maxwell said "everybody played well" but he had special praise for Moon, the 6-foot-2 center, who hit well above his average for 12 points and held his own against East's taller timber underneath.

Mike Maxwell led all scorers with 27 points while Kener aided with 18. Brad Boyle led East with 20 points, including 16 in the first half, and Gremillion added 17.

It's a shame that this great league rivalry will have to end when Highland moves down to 3A next season. But there's a good chance that the two rivals will meet again March 10 at the University of Utah in the state 4A finals.