

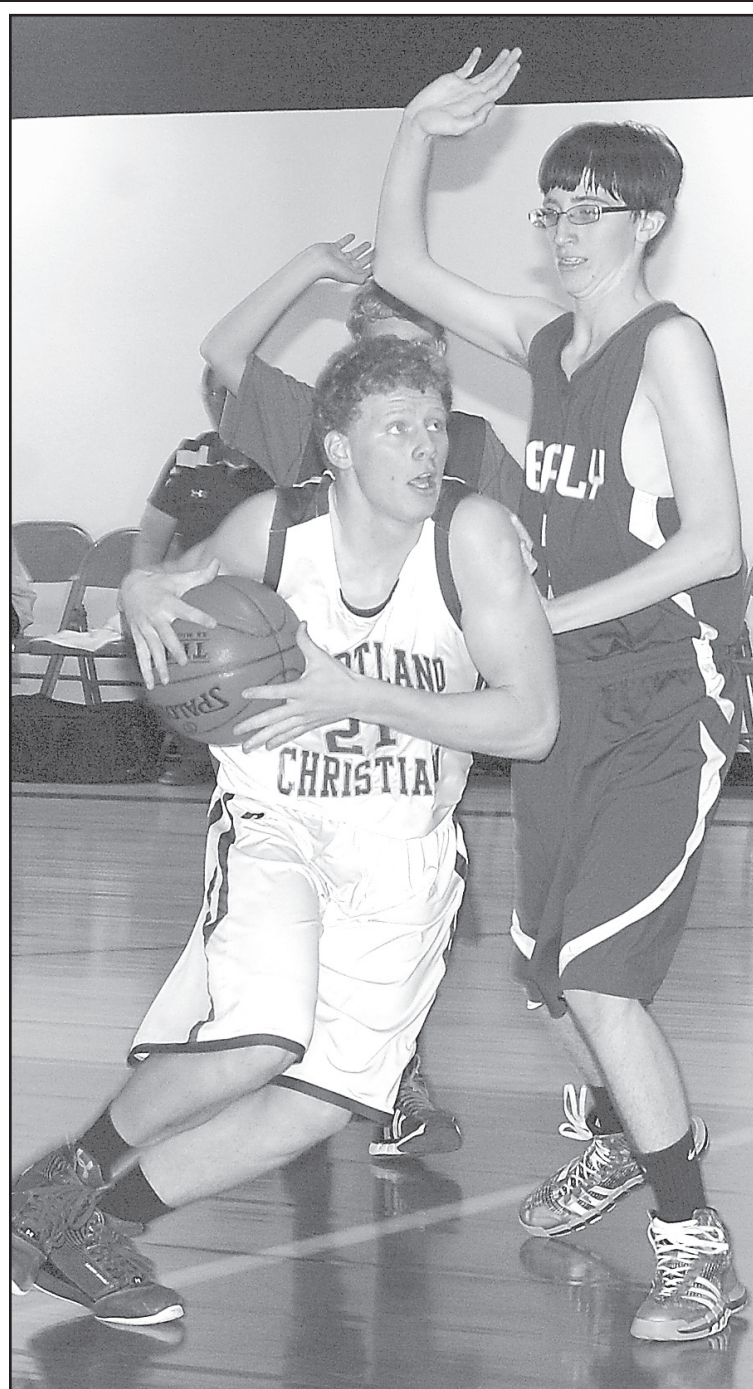
Crusaders swoop past Eagles for home win

By R.B. Headley
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A fast start and strong finish seemed like perfect gifts from the Heartland Christian Crusaders going into their Christmas break. The Crusaders delivered a shut-out first quarter to lead 13-0 over visiting Healy Tuesday evening. When the Eagles rallied a bit during those middle two periods, sophomore Corey Wertz's 12 fourth-quarter points helped put one final bow on Heartland's 49-32 victory. Enjoy your break time, boys, because coach Rueben Schneider will be looking for a little more intensity once the season resumes in January. "I'm proud of the boys. We're

building a legacy as caretakers of our school, our program and our faith," Schneider said. "But I also thought there were times tonight we got away with some lazy defense. If they didn't learn from it tonight, they will soon." The Crusaders (2-2 record) took charge quickly as sophomore Shawn Sullivant scored seven points during those opening eight minutes. Sullivant soared past some Eagles to grab an offensive rebound, then dropped in the putback for quick 10-0 Crusader lead. Junior Blaine Wertz also established his presence whether it was strong post play or speed that made him one of the Kansas Christian Activities Association's best running backs this fall. "Blaine's definitely a guy we

can turn to," Schneider observed. Healy didn't make a shot until just after the first quarter buzzer sounded — meaning this long three long-pointer didn't even count. The Eagles did recover to score 14 second-quarter points. They only trailed 19-14 at intermission and stayed within striking range through three periods. However, Heartland Christian made sure Healy never got too close. Corey Wertz tallied 12 of his game-high 14 points during that final period, and a long trifecta from junior Brennan Ziegelmeier ended any Eagle comeback hopes. "Corey just played basketball there at the end. He's a tremendous player who can be unstoppable," Schneider said. "And I also thought our second group of f the bench did a really good job." Indeed, the Crusaders featured eight different players hitting shots. Sullivant joined Corey Wertz in double figures with 10 points. The complete scoring summary: Heartland Christian (49) — Corey Wertz 14 points, Shawn Sullivant 10, Brennan Ziegelmeier 7, Blaine Wertz 6, Brook Ziegelmeier 6, Matt Wertz 4, Michael Maurath 2, Gabriel Schriener 2. Three-pointer: Brennan Ziegelmeier. Healy (32) — Freshman Miguel Gonzalez scored 13.



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press
Heartland Christian junior Matt Wertz drove around this Healy Eagle during their varsity basketball game Tuesday in Colby.

Colby girls win in league

Finishing with a victory was the theme for both Colby Middle School girls' basketball teams at last weekend's Great West Athletic Conference tournament. Both teams went 2-1 against league foes while capturing consolation titles. The seventh-grade girls whipped rival Goodland, 28-17, before losing a 42-10 semifinal showdown against Ulysses. However, the Eagles quickly recovered to edge Holcomb, 28-25, for third place among six league teams. Ulysses claimed the league championship by trouncing final foe Oakley, 29-9. The Colby eighth-grade girls scored a 23-14 first-round victory over Oakley on Thursday. They also moved on to face the eventual league champion in a Saturday semifinal. Holcomb downed the Eagles, 30-13, and then defeated Goodland 33-24 for the championship. Colby again came back to win a tough consolation final as the eighth-graders got past Scott City, 26-22. Colby Middle School basketball now takes a break until after the Christmas and New Year's holiday. The boys teams will begin their seasons in January and continue through this winter.

Rules made to drive basketball fans crazy

By R.B. Headley
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His arm hairs were violated, dang it, that has to be a foul! I'm about to write a column that should make me physically sick. Maybe it was the Christian school environment, where I once set a rebellious record for most detention time during a school year. I loved that Christian school, though, and I enjoyed spending four hours at a Heartland Christian basketball doubleheader Tuesday night. Many wonderful attitudes and faith that everyone should appreciate, never ridicule. Yet Heartland Christian couldn't stop a hateful spirit from engulfing me. A feeling of my life-long love for basketball gradually turning into aggravated hate. Basketball's being ruined. Ruined by rules. Ruined by decision makers who feel everything's got to be watched, everything's got to be fair, nobody can get hurt. Society is always on edge about something. So what are we learning from this once-great game now? How to stop everything and point fingers. How to march an endless parade into the free-throw area, where adults take control and make sure everyone does what they say. What was our last-second drama Tuesday night? After foul after foul after foul, Heartland Christian's boys still built an 18-point lead only to be whistled for one more foul. A foul with one second left in an 18-point game. Why? What's the point? Yes, I'm officially whining and I hate myself for it. Anyone still reading this can now start ripping despicable me until eternity. I don't care. I don't need more friends. I don't really even need any friends. I don't even like writing this, but I know a few fans who actually pay to watch this were having similar thoughts. There's no flow to the game.

There's hardly any freedom to play. Nobody even looks like they're having much fun. Isn't the game supposed to be fun? It's just a game. It's not going to change the world if a couple of calls aren't made. Let the players play. Then again, perhaps that's sort of the problem. For the past several seasons, it seems like full-court pressure and non-stop in-your-face defense have been all the rage. It's led to more bumping and tripping and scrambling which could be defined as ugly basketball on many occasions. After last season, important people with titles and too much time on their hands apparently decided all this must stop. And stop it right now! Now every hand check and little push seems to draw a foul. I saw Heartland Christian senior Amy Myers step into the lane and nudge a defender enough that her jersey might have wiggled. Tweet! Myers was removed from the game with her fifth foul midway through quarter three. Great. No more of the Crusaders' leading scorer, but we still have captivating free throws. It's ridiculous. It makes little sense. And it's not just high school basketball, I've seen this in every college game so far this season. I can understand football rule changes more than this. How many basketball fouls actually lead to physical injuries? Maybe the game does need a clean-up. It probably has gotten too wild and sloppy at times. Yet make the changes gradual, let some contact go, give kids time to adjust their styles. I'm not trying to incite a rebellion against basketball authority among those who might actually still be reading this. I'm not blaming the referees. They don't deserve it. This has nothing to do with yelling more at them. They're just doing what the new rules instruct them to enforce. But for crying out loud, let players play a little bit more or this will be one long winter. Merry Christmas, everyone!

Bulldogs' quest blocked at Castle Rock

By Judy Rogers
Golden Plains High School

The Castle Rock Classic tournament in Quinter featured three competitive days of western Kansas basketball as Golden Plains' varsity girls went 1-2. This early tournament allows

teams the opportunity to test their skills and evaluate not just their strengths, but also determine what areas they want to work on as the season progresses. "Overall, I thought we played well and stayed up with some great teams," Golden Plains senior team co-captain Jordan

Christensen said. "However, we definitely have things to work on." The Golden Plains Lady Bulldogs faced off against Rawlins County for the first round on Thursday. They jumped out to a 17-9 lead in the first quarter. The Lady Buffaloes came back to out-score Golden Plains in the second. The Bulldogs kept pace throughout the second half, scoring 11 in the third and 10 in the fourth to capture the 50-39 win. Leading the attack were sophomore Maddy Walz with 18 points and Christensen scoring 11. Senior Hailee Spresser (six points), Kynndra Rush (six), MiKayla Lobato (four), Kami Miller (three) and Rachael Ritter (two) also hit shot. The Bulldogs rebounded well for a total of 46 in the game along with 11 assists and 10 steals. "Although we didn't play the way we are capable of during this game, we were glad to get the win," Walz said. For the second round on Friday, Golden Plains faced the Ellis Lady Railers. This rough and tumble game

started out close throughout much of the first quarter, but the Lady Railers turned up the pressure in the second quarter to pull away 24-13 by the half. Golden Plains fought hard but the Lady Railers continued on pushing for the 60-37 win. Spresser's 14 points paced the Bulldogs followed by Christensen (eight), Ritter (five), Miller (five), Maddy Walz (three) and Kynndra Rush (two). The Bulldogs grabbed 38 rebounds, dished out 6 assists and made seven steals during this game. Golden Plains then played the Dighton Lady Hornets in consolation Saturday afternoon. The Bulldogs again worked hard and gave as good as they got, but the Lady Hornets claimed third place in the tournament with a final score of 40-33. Christensen dropped in nine points along while Miller added eight, Spresser six, Lobato five, Ritter three and Rush two. "These last two games were very tough," Spresser concluded. "We had good effort overall on Saturday; we just came up short."



JUDY ROGERS/Golden Plains High School
Golden Plains defenders (from left) Hailee Spresser, Jordan Christensen and MiKayla Lobato surrounded an Ellis Lady Railer during Castle Rock tournament semifinal action last weekend.

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