



in the
redzone

Shaun Scott

A memorable night for two communities in East Pierce

There was a playoff kind of atmosphere in the air when the Sumner Spartans and Rogers Rams Special Olympics basketball teams faced off in front of a capacity crowd in the Sumner High School gymnasium.

Even though the Rogers Rams registered a 36-34 victory in a nail-biter between schools separated by less than 10 miles, it was much more than a basketball game.

It was a celebration.

Sumner co-coach Keith Ross was thrilled the "Pack The Gym" night became a reality this year. Ross said Rogers hosted a similar event a few years ago and the Sumner School District wanted to return the favor.

"I'm hoping we can make this a tradition here," Ross said. "This is something all of these kids deserve."

Sumner High School senior boys basketball player Casey Lafkas got goosebumps during the introductions when each member of Sumner's Special Olympics basketball team was announced by the public address announcer.

"This is pretty cool. They see us (varsity basketball players) experience this during all of our home games and now they get to do it too," Lafkas said as each player was introduced.

"They are on the center stage and are getting treated just like everybody else who plays high school sports. That's what they

"They are on the center stage and are getting treated just like everybody else."

CASEY LAFKAS
Spartans senior basketball player

want and deserve."

Throughout the 40-minute game both squads combined to make 35 shots in the contest.

One of the most memorable moments of the evening was when Sumner shooting guard Chad Gore drained three consecutive jumpers in the first half. On his third made shot in a row, the crowd was deafening with approval. After Gore's shot swished through the net Lafkas couldn't keep a smile off of his face from his post at the scorer's table.

"He loves to shoot the ball," Lafkas said. "This is awesome."

Ross said the event wouldn't have been possible if it wasn't for unbridled support of the entire community.

"It wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for the efforts of so many," Ross said.

The community came out in droves for the "Pack The Gym" night this year. I'm hoping this year's large contingent of attendees is a foreshadowing of things to come down the road for the program.

Reach Sports Editor Shaun Scott at 253-841-2481 ext. 316 or by e-mail at shaun.scott@puyallupherald.com.