

CLIPPER SPORTS

Chargers win provincial basketball bronze

By Jennifer Strassel

The 2023-24 basketball season was one to remember for the Lac du Bonnet Chargers as they defeated the Springs Christian Academy Eagles 78-77 this past weekend to claim provincial AA bronze.

The Chargers finished the divisional season with eight wins and no losses to claim the Sunrise Athletic Conference varsity boys banner. Losing the Zone 13 banner to Gabrielle-Roy, Lac du Bonnet played a provincial qualifier on March 2 in Winnipeg and ended up ranked No. 2 heading into the provincials in Russell March 14-16.

Lead by coaches Katherine Strassel and Jay Zarecki, the Chargers became the talk of the tournament as their heart, grit and determination carried them to nail-biter finishes.

A core group of loyal fans went to Russell to cheer on the boys in person. Many others watched the livestreamed games at home.

Their first game Thursday afternoon, against Cranberry Portage's Frontier Raiders, had a slow start, but soon became a back-and-forth battle for the lead. Player of the Game, Lachlan Cuthbert, continually put in three-pointers, keeping the Chargers in the game. At the end of four quarters, the game was tied 68-68, forcing a five minute overtime. In the final seconds, Hunter Rempel tipped in a rebound off a free throw to win 84-82.

The semi-final game on Friday evening was against Zone 13 rivals, the Green Valley Pirates. During the season, the Chargers had a 1-1 record against the Pirates, and knew they'd be fierce competitors.

The Chargers trailed through much of the first half, but came back to tie it up, in large part due to Player of the Game Jack Reynolds continually sinking baskets. The Chargers gave an intense effort, but ultimately couldn't beat the clock and suffered a heartbreaking 73-71 loss, knocking them out of the Provincial final.

Green Valley went on to lose the provin-



Photo by Alex Dancy

Lac du Bonnet defeated the Springs Christian Academy 78-77 to finish third in the province for AA varsity basketball.

cial title to Gabrielle-Roy.

In the third place game Saturday against Winnipeg's Springs Christian Academy Eagles, the Chargers came out strong in what was a close contest. Player of the Game Easton Gaffray played with heart, setting up plays and scoring opportunities. In the final minutes, the Chargers were up by three. A foul in the last seconds, and a free throw opportunity, allowed the Eagles another two points, but it was not enough as the Chargers won 79-78 to clinch provincial bronze.

For seven of the 10 players, this was their last high school basketball game, and they made it count.

During the medal presentation ceremony, Lachlan Cuthbert was named a Provincial All-Star and was given the Player's Choice award, having been voted most sportsmanlike by other team captains.

The last time Lac du Bonnet's varsity boys travelled to the provincials was with the three-peat dynasty of 1996-1998.

The current varsity boys' team had earned a wild card spot at the 2022 JV provincials and came home consolation winners. They missed out last year, but came back in 2023 with a solid season and their eye on going to the provincials.

When the high cost of transportation and transport options threatened their trip to Russell, sponsors and a 50/50 fundraiser helped the boys and coaches travel in style, pulling up to opening ceremonies in a stretch Hummer limousine.

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