

Chaparral breezes to 4A badminton title

Firebirds avenge lone loss to Sunnyslope

By CARY L. TYLER FOR THE TRIBUNE

"We don't even have a gym! We don't even have a gym!"

The chant from Scottsdale Chaparral coach Carrie Davis was in exultation, and it was followed by a fan response: "But you have a trophy!"

A season during which Chaparral had no home court ended on a high note Thursday night as the Firebirds swept top-seeded and defending state champion Phoenix Sunnyslope 5-0 in the state 4A team badminton championships at Glendale Independence High School.

Second-seeded Chaparral not only rolled through the match, it won in just 30 minutes, which surprised even Davis.

"In all my years of coaching I have never seen this happen in a state title game, ever, ever, wiping them up in five games," Davis said. "That's crazy. That's absolutely crazy. These girls wanted it."

Due to construction at Chaparral High School, the team had to practice in a nearby middle school gym and played all its games either on the road or at the middle school. Chaparral held its first practice at the school, albeit in the auxiliary gym, just this week.

"It was a pretty emotional year, lot of battles, things that high school students normally don't have to go through when they have a gym," said, Davis, in her 18th year of coaching at Chaparral and 27th year overall.

Sunnyslope had handed Chaparral its only defeat this season, 5-4.

"It was a great year and a hard-working season," Chaparral's Liz Hudson said. "Sunnyslope is a great team. Both teams have worked really hard. I couldn't be happier."

Hudson said the loss to Sunnyslope earlier in the season was a motivating force for the team, as was solid play against 5A schools at the Dobson Invitational earlier this month.

"We've been practicing really hard lately and driving home the fact everything counts and victory comes from the heart," Hudson said.

"We focused and we got it done."

The victory was Chaparral's fourth in five years, interrupted only by Sunnyslope's upset last season.

Hudson and teammate Leslie Appleton and doubles partners Sarah Plitt and Christina McGuire will have less than 24 hours to enjoy the team victory.

They are among the high seeds at this morning's 4A state doubles championships. Teammates Katie Conti and Joelle Fang will battle it out in the singles portion of the tournament.

Both portions are being played at Independence High.