

Ranger Gameday: Senior Night Edition

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Last Meeting - December 6, 2010: Rincon/University 51 Ironwood Ridge 40

IRONWOOD RIDGE NIGHTHAWKS (13-11)
Vs.
RINCON/UNIVERSITY RANGERS (14-12)

Tonight's Matchup:

Most years, this matchup would be about postseason positioning. Both the Rangers and Nighthawks are perennial state tournament participants and normally would have clinched berths by this time. This year, Rincon still needs big wins tonight and tomorrow while Ironwood Ridge is out of the playoff picture. However, expect them to be motivated all the same. This marks the last game of the season for the Nighthawks and they look to end their campaign on a high-note with a win to makeup for the Rangers victory on their home court in December. The player to watch for Ironwood Ridge is Freshman big man Mitch Lightfoot, who is already drawing attention from college recruiters. However, he matches up against the best big man in Tucson tonight.

Rincon 76 Desert View 63

After a close contest at Desert View earlier in the year, the Rangers made this one a little more comfortable, building a big lead early in the fourth quarter and coasting to the victory. The Jaguars, who roster no one over 6'2", had absolutely no answer for Asha Esprit who finished with 35 points, including the rare And-2 through an intentional foul from a frustrated Jaguar. Kevionte Alexander also had a big night, scoring 21 points and coming close to a double-double, grabbing 9 rebounds. Desert View's Estevan Cota still scored 18 points despite Ranger defense focusing on him. He is averaging 20 points per game and is probably underrated citywide, failing to get notoriety because of the team he plays on.

Rincon 55 Marana 22

Tuesday night in Marana, Rincon handled their business and put the Tigers down early and kept them down for 32 minutes. Michael Miranda started it off right with two 3-pointers in the first couple minutes. He finished with 11 points. The Rangers again were led in scoring by Asha Esprit, who had 23, but more impressively grabbed a season-high 17 rebounds. Marana will finish the year as the last place finisher in Division I Section II but their future seems somewhat brighter as their best player Ryan Swan, who scored 10 in this contest, is only a sophomore. The Rangers will likely not play the Tigers next season as they have been realigned into the other Tucson section. Tonight's opponent, Ironwood Ridge will also be in the other section next year.

Playoff Hopes

The Rangers currently sit on the outside looking in. Rincon is at 27th in power points while 24 teams make the state playoffs. The Rangers will fail to make sectionals for the second straight year but like last year, may slip into state. If Rincon manages to win these last two games, they likely will move up to right around number 24. Unfortunately, the Rangers would then be on the cliff of being bumped if a lower team wins a game in a weaker sectional and secures an automatic berth. The end story; however, remains that despite some tough losses earlier this year, Rincon remains in the playoff hunt with two days left in the regular season: a senior night matchup tonight and a trip to Sunnyside tomorrow.

