

# Seen & heard

Casey Crowe and Michael J. Cravens Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Tuesday, January 19, 2010

Officially free

There was no holiday pay involved for the 15 officials at Monday's MLK Basketball Classic.

In fact, there was no pay at all.

Each referee that worked at McKale Center did so on a volunteer basis. And while AIA Area Commissioner Steve Ganson normally assigns two refs to a game, Monday's overwhelming number of volunteers allowed for a three-person crew.

"We could put five on a game and still have people wanting to get in," Ganson said. "Some of us just want to give back to the game and volunteer our time."

By the numbers

160 Regulation minutes of high school hoops played on Monday. Overall, the event lasted around 570 minutes, or 9 1/2 hours.

They're big fans

A handful of UA basketball players, including Solomon Hill, Derrick Williams and MoMo Jones, popped their heads into McKale throughout the day to observe the action.

"It's a great experience (for them) to come here and play in front of our crowd on our home floor," the Bronx, N.Y.-born Jones said as he watched from the northeast tunnel. "Coming from where I come from, it's not really nothing new, but for kids in Tucson to actually be able to come here and play on this floor and have us come in and watch - it's a great opportunity."

Several local high school standouts watched from the stands as well.

Sabino's Matt Korcheck, Palo Verde's Bryce Cotton and his entire team, and Cholla's Ajak Magot sat in the same section on the west side of the arena. Pueblo's Michael Perez joined them after his game ended.

"This is exciting; it's a lot of press that high school games don't usually get," Korcheck said. "And it's kind of a chance to see what it would be like to play at the next level."

Tuned differently

A stream of bands rolled through McKale on Monday.

Tucson High School's band stuck to the classics, going with the Doobie Brothers and 'Takin' It To The Streets' and the theme from 'Rocky,' among others.

Amphi's electric guitar-laced crew, which blared Rage Against the Machine's 'Killing In The Name,' was a crowd favorite. Santa Rita's contingent was the largest and the loudest, showing up for the final contest of the night.

However, the classic was mascot-deficient however. Sahuaro's Joe and Josephine Cougar made an appearance during the first game. There was not another mascot sighting until 7:30 p.m., when Santa Rita's Eagle made his presence known.

By the numbers

164 Number of human inches crammed into two McKale Center seats, one-behind the other. Six-foot-9-inch Sabino center Matt Korcheck sat directly behind Cholla's 6-11 center, Ajak Magot, to watch Monday's action.

Blocked off in blue

McKale Center normally holds 14,545 spectators, but the inside of the building felt much more intimate Monday.

Large, blue curtains hung down from the ceiling on the north, south, and west sides on the arena, blocking off a substantial portion of seats and providing a cleaner background for shooters.

Only the east side of the building was uncovered, allowing spectators to climb to the main concourse and take advantage of an open concession stand.

By the numbers

10 People recognized for their contributions to diversity as MLK Honorees, one from each participating team.

Casey Crowe and Michael J. Craven