

Magdalena's defense played a big role, limiting Cloudcroft to just two field goals the entire first half. Both came in the first few minutes. Magdalena's full-court pressure and stifling half-court defense kept Cloudcroft from scoring from anywhere other than the foul line for approximately 15 minutes of the 32-minute game.

"We had great help. We made them have to push the ball up the floor and wore them out," said Sanchez.

The Bears' field goal drought ended when Jorden Scott made a

too, had to be assisted off the court and did not return.

Rogers and Alvord are two of Cloudcroft's tallest players, and with them out of the game the Bears had a difficult time matching up inside.

Asked about the physical nature of the game, coach Ward said, "It's not like the way games are officiated in our part of the state. But credit Magdalena; they played aggressive."

Magdalena's coach pointed out that the referees were penalizing his team for its aggressiveness. Ten of the game's first 12

has always been a strong point. Lately it's been pretty much nonexistent, but they were definitely back tonight."

Cloudcroft failed to take advantage of the foul discrepancy, making just 13 of 31 free throws (42 percent). Magdalena wasn't any better. The Steers made just four of their 12 free throws (33 percent).

Armijo scored 20 points to lead all scorers, while Keanda Chavez added 15 for the Steers. Scott scored nine points to pace the Bears.

—T.S. Last



Submitted photo

Cottonwood Valley Charter School recently completed its winter golf season at New Mexico Tech Golf Course. Many of these kids will go on to play for the high school team and enjoy the sport for the rest of their lives.

Comeback: Steers were down by one point with 2:11 left to play

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ly depends on how well it fares on the perimeter, Magdalena did much to write its epitaph in the first half.

Outside specialist Dre Montoya struggled to get in sync, a rut that proved not so much contagious for the Steers as pandemic.

They missed their first 11 3-pointers, as Prep built a double-digit lead.

"A lot of those were just throwin' 'em up in traffic — desperation shots," Mirabal said. "I wasn't happy that we ended up not taking the shots we should

have and ended up taking ones we shouldn't have."

Meanwhile, all the Blue Griffins did was sink shots.

Guard Joey Lambert hit four 3s to stake the Blue Griffins to a 42-24 lead at the half.

On the inside, Steers' center Miles Parscal had difficulty contending with the versatility of Prep big man Will Lenfestey, who fashioned his points in various ways but went to his bread-and-butter fading hook shot when the Blue Griffins most needed points.

And there would come a point when Prep needed them.

Magdalena's run began innocently enough.

Montoya's trey with more than four minutes left in the third quarter finally ended the Steers' 3-point woes.

Prep's misadventures, though, were just beginning.

It wouldn't score over the final 4 1/2 minutes of the quarter, as Montoya's shot sparked a 16-5 quarter for the visitors.

Montoya, who finished the year with 65 3-pointers, hit another big bucket as the buzzer sounded to cut the Blue

Griffins' lead to 47-40 entering the fourth quarter.

The Steers continued whittling away at the lead, when Montoya again dialed up from long distance with 2:10 left to bring it to 55-54.

That's when Lenfestey essentially said, "That's enough."

The Prep sophomore capped a industrious, nine-point fourth quarter by drawing a three-point play with fewer than two minutes. He missed the free throw, but it gave the Blue Griffins a 57-54 lead it wouldn't relinquish.

Following Lenfestey's bucket, the Steers dribbled down court and Tyle Julian took a contested 3-pointer that was way off the mark.

Prep's D.J. Casados drew a foul and converted a pair of free throws on the ensuing possession to stretch it out to 59-54, essentially throwing the kibosh in the Steers' comeback.

"It's just too bad it's over," Mirabal said. "I thought with this group we'd come out with a win. But they made some plays down the stretch. You've got to give them credit."

Ditto for the Steers.