PROUD BUNCH: St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai's basketball team emerged winners at a recent tournament

Dribbling to victory

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Former football player and coach Bear Bryant had once said, "It's not the will to win that matters — everyone has that. It's the will to prepare to win that matters." This quote highlights tenacity, aggression and discipline. These are qualities that are integral to any sport. It is with this mindset that SaintZ — the basketball team of St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai — train day in and day out, under the guidance of their coach, Christopher Chandra.

Recently, our school beat Delhi Private School, Sharjah at the final round of the GEMS Modern Academy Interschool Basketball Tournament in the under 14 category. The final score was 112-31.

Now, let's rewind a little bit. The tournament had begun two weeks prior. 32 schools battled it out on the court in the group stage. We defeated The Millennium School, Dubai in our first match.

Our second match in the group stage was against Our Own High School, Dubai. St. Mary's took a lead in the first half itself, eventually winning the game. We won our final game as well, against Delhi Private School, Sharjah (DPS Sharjah) in the knockouts. This meant that both DPS Sharjah and St. Mary's went through to the next round.

In the quarterfinals, SaintZ beat New Indian Model School, Sharjah by a great margin. Then, we advanced to the semi-finals to play against St. Mary's Catholic High School, Muhaisnah. We continued our winning streak and secured a spot in the finals.

Meanwhile, Delhi Private School, Sharjah eliminated the home team, GEMS Modern Academy, Dubai in the semi-final round. And that's how the final contenders were decided — St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai and Delhi Private School, Sharjah.

The undefeated SaintZ began scoring from the moment the whistle blew, using full court press and denying the ball techniques in order to amass more points. We owned the first quarter with a lead of 24-6 and passed the 100-point mark in the fourth quarter with three minutes to spare.

The prominent team players of the event were Kien Aclan, who scored the most points for the St. Mary's Dubai team with 34 points, followed by Lenon Ramos with 24 points. A team player should focus on a collective win rather than their individual victories, and these players did just that.

The most exciting part was that we set a new UAE inter-school basketball finals' record with a total score of 112 points. It was indeed a great moment for our school. **YT**