

CROSSTOWN CHAMPIONSHIP

The
MONTANA STANDARD

Hudson Luedtke drives to the basket during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown boys basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.

LOU MASON,
FOR 406 MT SPORTS

Butte Bulldogs vs Butte Central Maroons

Tuesday, Dec. 23, 2025 | Girls: 6 P.M. | Boys: 7:30 P.M. | Civic Center

Preview to the 2025-26 Butte and Butte Central seasons

BRIA MANNING
406 MT SPORTS

BUTTE — It's that time of the year when the Butte community begins gearing up for one of the largest sports events in town: the crosstown championship basketball game. This year technically will have seen two crosstown games as last season's was held after the new year and this season's game falls one day before Christmas Eve.

But there is something special about the game being held right before the holidays. Former Butte or Butte Central kids, home from college for Christmas, can watch their alma maters square off in a historic matchup. Festive spirit is high in the air, and then kids get their Christmas break.

"I think that the twenty-third is nice because you get this game with this atmosphere and the rivalry and everything like that, and then you kind of decompress over the break," Butte boys basketball head coach Matt Luedtke said. "So it's always nice to have a big game like that as the last game right before Christmas."

Luedtke's Bulldogs team has a new look this season, both on the staffing side and on his varsity roster. Two of Luedtke's most senior coaches in Paul McCarthy and John Magnus, volunteer coaches the past few years, retired. Manny Rodriguez is in as the freshman coach, Jake Parish as sophomore coach and Kenley Leary is up from an assistant JV coach to varsity. Overall, the coaching staff has gotten a lot younger.

As for the players themselves, Luedtke has nine seniors but returns just two players who had significant varsity playing time last season: his son, senior point guard Hudson Luedtke, and sophomore Brady Hanson.

Three-time All-State player Hudson will be one of Matt's three captains, along with seniors Mike Verlanic and Cayde Stajcar. Verlanic played for Matt his freshman and sophomore years and Stajcar his freshman year, but Matt is confident their athleticism and leadership will help drive the Bulldogs

to success this season.

"The thing about Hudson is he led the AA in scoring assists last year," Matt said. "He could have easily shot a lot more than he did. He's just such an unselfish person, ideal point guard to have. Adding those other two guys that didn't play last year, last two years, is really big because those guys are very athletic. They're tough, super competitive."

Meanwhile, on Brodie Kelly's Butte Central varsity squad, there sits just one senior in Ryan Peoples after the Maroons graduated three. But there are still a few returners, including junior two-time All-Conference guard Josh Sutton, who has been playing varsity for Kelly since he was in eighth grade.

"He already has a lot of experience under his belt, and he was one spot away from being All-State," Kelly said of Sutton. "Last year we had a super talented conference, so he just missed out on that, but kid just continues to get better. Literally every day he's a workhorse, so expecting him to have a great year."

Peoples, like Sutton, has been another All-Conference selection for two years and has a lot of offensive skill, Kelly said. The chemistry amongst Peoples and Sutton with the rest of Kelly's starters in GG Fantini, Jaxon Hiatt and Cade Kelly will be huge in helping the Maroons get back to their identity — a major goal amongst the team this season, Kelly said.

Last season was just the third time in 21 years that Butte Central didn't make the state tournament and the first time the team went 0-2 at the divisional tournament. It was a disappointing way to end the season, to say the least.

But it was back to work in the spring and summer, and both Kelly and the team know the importance of getting back on the rails this season.

"I think I made some poor decisions on how I thought we should play," Kelly said. "It just led to a little too much getting away from our roots. We played a certain way for a long time. Last year we strayed a little too far, and this year



LOU MASON, FOR 406 MT SPORTS

Butte and Butte Central girls basketball tips off during the crosstown basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.

we're getting back to the core of what our program has been for a long time."

The straying away wasn't a cultural shift, Kelly said. It was more in the Maroons' style of play. One underlying philosophy for them this season is to fix what they do instead of changing what they do. The Maroons are recommitting to who they are and who they've always been.

Girls

Over on the girls teams, Butte head coach Bryan Arnston graduated four seniors from his varsity squad so he is looking for some of the younger players to step up this season. The biggest importance of those early season games is seeing which rotations work best with this team and where each player fits.

Arnston will not have a shortage of players stepping up to the plate, though. His biggest returner is All-State junior Cadence Graham.

"She's going to be the focal point of everybody's defense," Arnston said.

"I think we have quite a few girls that can score the ball," he added. "I think we have a good balance of kids that can shoot it, kids that can drive it. But I really think, all in all, it's going to be our defense and our consistent effort on that end that's going to help us be successful."

The Bulldogs are coming off a season in which they had a good finish to the year. They secured a huge victory against Helena Capital to win the play-in and move on to the state tournament, where they fell in the first round to eventual state champion Bozeman Gallatin. Butte then battled its way through the loser-out bracket to defeat Bozeman and Billings Skyview before losing out to Missoula Big Sky, earning fourth place at the state championship.

Arnston has seen his players motivated by their finish last season and that determination carry on into their season this year.

"From a commitment standpoint, we have a lot of kids that love to be in the gym, love to work on their game and build that bond through some summer tournaments," he said. "We had a great offseason. We have a lot of kids that are begging to get in the gym all the time and working to get better, which is always a good thing as a coach and trying to build off of last year."

Besides leadership transitioning amongst the players, another potential hurdle for the team this year is their size. Arnston knows he doesn't have the biggest team, but he nor his players use that as an excuse.

That is one big part of their game the Bulldogs will hope to

work on this season: being able to rebound, keep opponents off the offensive board and playing at their own tempo.

Quinn Carter has a different situation on her Butte Central squad this season. She didn't graduate any seniors and returns all of her players. While they are a young team — two seniors and three juniors — that leaves plenty of room and years for Carter to continue developing her players.

Carter's two seniors — Arika Stajcar and Caden Tippet — are both fourth-year varsity players and have a wealth of experience to help lead the team while improving the development of the younger players.

Add in the fact the team is still riding off the high of reaching the divisional tournament last year, and things are looking bright for the Maroons this season.

"It's really built some great momentum," Carter said off the team's finish to the season. "We had a great summer, played a ton of basketball, really strong commitment within the whole program and I think that's really prepared us to have a really great start."

Her team has taken great strides in improving their basketball IQ, Carter said. This season Carter is confident she will see her players improve week-by-week so that come February and early March, the Maroons will be playing their best basketball.

That was the trajectory that the team followed last season, and Carter foresees that playing out again, but on an even deeper level as the girls continue to develop and grow their chemistry while building off their experience from last year.

It helps that Stajcar and Tippet aren't the only playmakers that Carter can rely on. There are also sophomores Zayonna Otherbull and Kenzie McQueary along with junior Rylee Forbes, all who were All-Conference selections last year.

Bria Manning is the sports editor of The Montana Standard. Contact her at bria.manning@406mtsports.com

BOYS BUTTE CITY CHAMPIONSHIP ROSTERS

BUTTE HIGH BOYS ROSTER			
#	Name	Height	Grade
1	Cayde Stajcar	6'3	12
2	Kaleb Celli	5'11	12
3	Rhett Arntson	5'8	12
4	Hudson Luedtke	6'2	12
5	Mike Verlanic	6'	12
10	Brady Walsh	6'	11
11	Josh Liston	6'1	12
12	Beau Henderson	5'10	11
14	Matt Weldon	6'4	11
15	Koda Schleeman	5'11	11
20	Howie Pearston	6'3	12
21	Brayden Giopp	6'1	11
23	Kendel Noctor	6'4	12
24	Raeder Grey	6'	11
25	Troy Samson	5'7	10
30	Matt Marsenich	5'8	10
32	Brady Hanson	6'9	10
34	Kodye Kjersten	6'1	10
40	Noah Powers	6'1	10
42	Ryan Hanson	6'9.5	12
BUTTE CENTRAL BOYS ROSTER			
0	Noah Sutton	5'10	9
1	Ryan Peoples	6'2	12
4	Cade Kelly	6'3	11
10	Henley Mansanti	5'10	9
11	Joshua Sutton	5'11	11
13	GG Fantini	5'11	11
22	Burkley Lakkala	6'2	11
23	Jaxon Hiatt	6'0	10
35	Gunnar O'Brien	6'0	11

Below: Butte's Cadence Graham dribbles down the court during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown girls basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.



Above: Butte Central's Joshua Sutton guards Butte's Hudson Luedtke during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown boys basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.

LOU MASON, FOR 406 MT SPORTS

GIRLS BUTTE CITY CHAMPIONSHIP ROSTERS

BUTTE HIGH GIRLS ROSTER			
#	Name	Height	Grade
2	Stella Callaghan	5'7	10
3	Allie Becker	5'7	11
4	Cadence Graham	5'7	11
10	Ellie Yates	5'7	11
11	Elli Graham	5'5	9
12	Reese Johnson	5'5	11
13	Saege Grey	5'8	9
14	Autumn Clary	5'7	11
21	Franki Salusso	5'6	12
24	Evie Smith	5'10	10
25	Avery Barsness	5'7	11
40	Emma Johnson	5'10	12
50	Kendallyn Schad	5'9	11
BUTTE CENTRAL GIRLS ROSTER			
4	Evyn Smith	5'8	10
5	Caden Tippet	5'7	12
10	Marly Mansanti	5'7	11
11	Kenzie McQueary	5'7	10
12	Zayonna Otherbull	5'10	10
13	Rylee Forbes	6'1	11
14	Natalie Osterman	5'9	10
15	Braelynn Schelin	5'8	10
20	Lucy Fantini	5'6	8
21	Jordyn Samson	5'6	8
24	Arika Stajcar	5'9	12
32	Jaedyn Maldonado	5'8	11



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BUTTE CITY CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORY

BUTTE CENTRAL VS. BUTTE HIGH RIVALRY BOYS

Butte High leads series 101-79-1
2024-25: Butte 62, Central 51
2024: Butte 76, Central 67
2023: Central 76, Butte 47
2021: Central 65, Butte 37
2019: Butte 61, Central 57 (OT)
2018: Central 57, Butte 39
2017: Butte 46, Central 36
2016: Butte 53, Central 46
2015: Butte 62, Central 56 (2OT)
2014: Central 69, Butte 56
2013: Central 49, Butte 41
2012: Central 49, Butte 41
2011: Central 48, Butte 27
2010: Butte 59, Central 54 (2OT)
2009: Butte 49, Central 47
2008: Butte 63, Central 45
2007: Butte 61, Central 50
2006: Butte 53, Central 51
2006: Butte 62, Central 42
2005: Butte 54, Central 37
2005: Butte 68, Central 49
2004: Butte 54, Central 34
2004: Butte 51, Central 42
2003: Butte 55, Central 34
2003: Butte 72, Central 46
2002: Central 52, Butte 51
2002: Butte 55, Central 37
2001: Central 66, Butte 60
2001: Butte 45, Central 28
2000: Central 54, Butte 43
2000: Central 56, Butte 42
1999: Central 71, Butte 60
1999: Central 68, Butte 53
1998: Central 71, Butte 68
1998: Central 58, Butte 50
1997: Butte 77, Central 65
1996: Central 81, Butte 75 (2OT)
1995: Butte 64, Central 60 (OT)
1994: Central 62, Butte 47
1993: Central 63, Butte 44
1992: Central 64, Butte 55
1991: Central 64, Butte 52
1990: Butte 67, Central 36
1989: Butte 77, Central 57
1988: Butte 77, Central 37

1987: Butte 63, Central 54
1986: Butte 76, Central 71
1985: Butte 78, Central 63
1984: Butte 59, Central 55 (OT)
1983: Butte 73, Central 52
1982: Butte 79, Central 70
1981: Central 53, Butte 51 (OT)
1980: Butte 77, Central 56
1980: Butte 80, Central 73
1979: Central 70, Butte 62
1978: Central 68, Butte 61
1977: Butte 62, Central 50
1977: Butte 89, Central 81
1976: Butte 74, Central 72
1975: Butte 72, Central 68
1975: Butte 53, Central 49
1974: Butte 59, Central 56
1974: Butte 59, Central 58 (OT)
1973: Butte 77, Central 53 (DIV)
1973: Central 63, Butte 46
1973: Central 68, Butte 59
1972: Butte 69, Central 61
1972: Butte 80, Central 64
1971: Butte 63, Central 51
1971: Central 62, Butte 49
1970: Central 62, Butte 61
1970: Central 60, Butte 56
1969: Central 59, Butte 49 (DIV)
1969: Central 75, Butte 65
1969: Central 83, Butte 67
1968: Central 70, Butte 66 (DIV)
1968: Central 58, Butte 54
1968: Central 56, Butte 55
1968: Butte 67, Central 53
1967: Butte 60, Central 47 (DIV)
1967: Central 65, Butte 57 (DIV)
1967: Central 72, Butte 71 (OT)
1967: Butte 45, Central 42
1966: Central 49, Butte 42
1966: Central 65, Butte 49
1965: Butte 75, Central 61
1965: Butte 66, Central 53
1965: Central 63, Butte 57
1964: Butte 67, Central 38
1964: Butte 54, Central 43
1964: Butte 52, Central 40
1963: Butte 54, Central 40 (ST)
1963: Butte 48, Central 30
1963: Butte 43, Central 33

1963: Butte 39, Central 28
1962: Butte 56, Central 46
1962: Central 53, Butte 49
1962: Central 56, Butte 43
1961: Central 54, Butte 49
1961: Butte 70, Central 55
1961: Butte 57, Central 50
1960: Central 57, Butte 53
1960: Central 56, Butte 30
1960: Central 40, Butte 34
1959: Butte 70, Central 58 (ST)
1959: Butte 43, Central 39
1959: Central 49, Butte 38
1958: Butte 55, Central 48 (ST)
1958: Central 59, Butte 58
1958: Central 50, Butte 46
1958: Butte 44, Central 43
1957: Central 57, Butte 48
1957: Butte 67, Central 57
1957: Butte 62, Central 55
1956: Central 63, Butte 58 (DIV)
1956: Central 63, Butte 55
1956: Central 57, Butte 41
1955: Central 53, Butte 48
1955: Butte 39, Central 38
1954: Central 80, Butte 68
1954: Central 58, Butte 57
1954: Central 78, Butte 59
1953: Butte 75, Central 63
1953: Butte 60, Central 52
1952: Butte 59, Central 44
1952: Butte 73, Central 43
1952: Butte 65, Central 38
1951: Butte 61, Central 56 (OT)
1951: Central 58, Butte 44
1950: Central 65, Butte 47
1950: Central 50, Butte 39
1949: Central 59, Butte 41
1948: Central 37, Butte 35
1948: Central 48, Butte 43
1947: Central 36, Butte 28
1946: Central 42, Butte 24
1945: Central 37, Butte 33
1944: Central 40, Butte 31
1943: Butte 30, Central 23
1942: Central 30, Butte 28
1941: Butte 32, Central 30
1940: Butte 35, Central 22
1939: Butte 42, Central 26

1938: Butte 40, Central 25
1937: Central 32, Butte 29
1936: Central 23, Butte 14
1935: Butte 17, Central 16
1934: Butte 26, Central 12
1933: Butte 34, Central 14
1932: Central 16, Butte 13
1931: Butte 23, Central 19
1930: Central 29, Butte 23 (DIV)
1930: Central 27, Butte 14
1929: Central 29, Butte 18 (DIV)
1929: Butte 19, Central 18
1929: Butte 29, Central 27
1928: Butte 23, Central 16 (ST CH)
1928: Central 20, Butte 19 (DIV)
1928: Butte 24, Central 23
1928: Central 22, Butte 20
1927: Central 31, Butte 13 (ST)
1927: Butte 10, Central 9
1927: Butte 11, Central 10
1927: Butte 4, Central 2
1926: Butte 17, Central 12
1925: Butte 25, Central 10
1924: Butte 17, Central 8 (ST)
1924: Central 13, Butte 9 (DIV)
1924: Central 21, Butte 16
1924: Butte 15, Central 9
1923: Central 11, Butte 4
1923: Butte 5, Central 5 (2OT)
1922: Butte 27, Central 20
1921: Butte 14, Central 9 (DIV)
1921: Butte 17, Central 5
1920: Butte 20, Central 8 (DIV)
1920: Butte 30, Central 6
1919: Butte 17, Central 15
1918: Butte 24, Central 9
1916: Butte 22, Central 10
1916: Butte 25, Central 17

GIRLS

Butte High leads series 39-18
2024-25: Butte 58, Central 16
2024: Butte 52, Central 26
2023: Butte 63, Central 32
2021: Butte 52, Central 40
2019: Butte 57, Central 40
2018: Butte 57, Central 51
2017: Central 57, Butte 32
2016: Central 47, Butte 40
2015: Central 56, Butte 38



LOU MASON, FOR 406 MT SPORTS

Butte's Autumn Clary drives against Butte Central's Evyn Smith during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown girls basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.

2014: Butte 60, Central 47
2013: Butte 55, Central 52
2012: Butte 63, Central 36
2011: Central 57, Butte 47
2010: Central 52, Butte 48
2009: Butte 62, Central 30
2008: Butte 61, Central 37
2007: Butte 69, Central 53
2006: Butte 47, Central 26
2006: Butte 50, Central 23
2005: Butte 46, Central 37
2005: Central 55, Butte 44
2004: Central 42, Butte 36
2004: Central 51, Butte 45
2003: Butte 55, Central 44
2003: Butte 45, Central 35
2001: Butte 39, Central 23
2001: Butte 38, Central 23
2000: Butte 57, Central 33
2000: Butte 34, Central 27
1999: Central 60, Butte 58
1999: Butte 43, Central 34
1998: Central 36, Butte 33
1998: Central 49,, Butte 39
1997: Butte 61, Central 40

1997: Butte 41, Central 37
1996: Central 52, Butte 45
1995: Central 56, Butte 47
1994: Butte 51, Central 47
1993: Butte 62, Central 50
1992: Butte 59, Central 55
1991: Butte 52, Central 30
1990: Butte 68, Central 25
1989: Butte 58, Central 25
1988: Butte 44, Central 24
1987: Central 55, Butte 52
1986: Butte 71, Central 30
1985: Butte 58, Central 34
1984: Butte 70, Central 36
1983: Butte 46, Central 37
1982: Central 51, Butte 44
1981: Central 53, Butte 44
1980: Butte 42, Central 41 (OT)
1979: Central 48, Butte 42
1979: Central 52, Butte 50
1978: Butte 45, Central 40
1977: Butte 71, Central 54
1976: Butte 58, Central 32
1976: Butte 62, Central 45

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Here's why Butte vs Butte Central is the best rivalry in the state

This 2025-26 season is the penultimate year of anniversaries for Butte's crosstown championship game – conveniently, for both the boys and the girls. Butte and Butte Central boys began competing against one another in this annual rivalry game in 1916, and the girls in 1976. That is 110 and 50 years, respectively, of one of Montana's fiercest rivalries being on display.



BRIA MANNING

So this year, I was curious to find out how much this game has changed throughout its history. Whether it's 50 years or 110 years, both are a hugely respectable amount of time for a night reserved for a rivalry.

After all, this game currently has no ramifications in the bigger scheme of the season because the schools play in separate classifications. Win or lose, no team involved gets the upper or lower hand in terms of conference standings. There is also always the risk of a star player getting injured in a game that has survived purely out of tradition.

So why – and how – has this game continued to be a marquee night on the Butte sports calendar?

For one, it is the oldest crosstown rivalry in the state of Montana. Yes, you have the Billings Central-Laurel rivalry, but



LOU MASON PHOTOS, FOR 406 MT SPORTS

The Butte bench celebrates during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown girls basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.

while those two schools reside in the same county, they aren't in the same city. And sure, you have multiple other rivalries of schools that do reside within the same city: Billings Senior vs. Billings West, Great Falls vs. Great Falls CMR and the newly minted Bozeman vs. Bozeman Gallatin.

Great rivalries, all of them, are beneficial for the state, its student-athletes and fans of Montana high school sports.

But Butte vs. Butte Central being the oldest of them all is truly something special. In a state where there is clearly no shortage of rivalries, the oldest has to be king of them all. And although they play in separate classifications now, they even played for the state championship in 1928.

The Butte boys hold a 101-79-1 all-time series advantage while the Butte girls have a 39-18 lead, but each team has had their moment throughout. The Butte boys won the first nine games from 1916 to 1922 before the Maroons forced a tie and their first outright victory in 1923. The Maroons went on a 10-game streak from 1944 to 1951 and the Bulldogs only topped that with 12-games straight from 2003 to 2010.

Even though the girls games have been going on for about half as long as the boys, it is still a relatively old rivalry compared to others in the Treasure State.

The Butte girls have a chance to match the longest streak in the series (1988-1994) if they can capture a seventh straight victory this year. The Maroons,



Butte boys coach Matt Luedtke cheers on the sideline against during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown boys basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.

on the other hand, have won three straight twice in their series from 2004 to 2005 and again 2015 to 2017.

Beyond adding the girls series in 1976, not much has changed in this annual game, another thing which makes this rivalry so special. In over a century of this crosstown game being played, little has changed. It speaks to the tradition of the town of Butte and how important it is to the community.

There was a time when there were two crosstown games a year, in which each team got to host. There were years when there was a crosstown game later in the season rather than earlier, as it is now. And as long as this series has been played, it has always been held at the Civic Center – except for one year.

The MAC Center had just been built in January 2005, so Butte Central hosted the crosstown game there in 2006.

As the story goes, there was controversy about the game being moved from the Civic Center to the MAC Center. Butte

ended up narrowly defeating Butte Central 53-51 because of a missed Maroon shot at the buzzer. It would be the last time Butte said it would play the crosstown game at the MAC Center, and the two schools agreed to play one game a season at the Civic Center.

That tradition has held up since. Next year, in addition to anniversaries for the boys and girls series, will be another milestone in the storied lore of the crosstown championship game in that it will be 20 years since that game at the MAC.

A long-standing fierce rivalry that has not swayed too much from tradition: that is what makes Butte vs. Butte Central truly the best high school rivalry in the state. It has carried the stuff of legend for over a hundred years now. It is my hope it continues to carry it for a hundred more.

Bria Manning is the sports editor of The Montana Standard. Contact her at bria.manning@406mtsports.com

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PHOTOS OF CITY CHAMPIONSHIPS PAST

Butte Central's Evyn Smith looks to pass against Butte during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown girls basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.

LOU MASON PHOTOS, FOR 406 MT SPORTS



Butte Central's Joshua Sutton drives against Butte during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown boys basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.



Butte's Autumn Clary cuts through the Butte Central defense toward the basket during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown girls basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.



Butte's Hudson Luedtke tries to drive past Butte Central's GG Fantini during the Butte High and Butte Central crosstown boys basketball game Jan. 4, 2025 at the Butte Civic Center.



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WALTER HINICK, 406MTSPORTS

Butte High School's Kash Kelly drives past Butte Central's Luke Heaphy for a shot during their Butte City Championship game Thursday night in the Butte Civic Center.



Butte's Laura Rosenleaf tries to keep control of the ball as Butte Central's Kathryn Lalicker defends Thursday during the annual crosstown rivalry game at the Butte Civic Center.

MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD



Butte High's Hattie Thatcher drives through the Butte Central defense for a shot during the 2012 crosstown rivalry game in the Butte Civic Center. Thatcher hopes to make it two wins in a row after Thursday's game between the rivals.

WALTER HINICK, THE MONTANA STANDARD



WALTER HINICK, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Butte High School's Sammy McGree jumps past Butte Central's Chandra McCurdy for a shot during the third quarter of their city championship game Thursday night in the Butte Civic Center.



GOOD LUCK

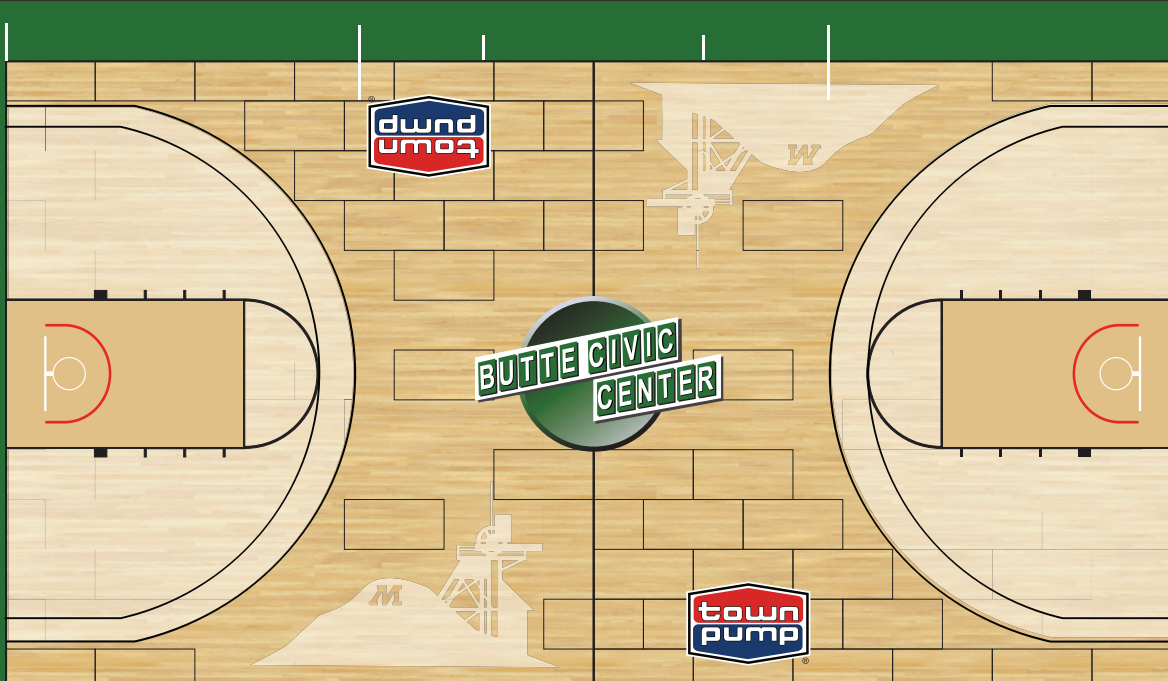
To our student athletes and coaches from Butte High and Butte Central!
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