



Extra Point

Jeff Bonato's world of sports

It feels like youth hoops club is on right track

Five no-doubt-about-it, etch-it-in-stone guarantees:

- Death.
- Taxes.
- The Cubs won't win a World Series in my/your/our/anybody's lifetime.
- The shortest distance between two points is a straight line.
- The quickest way to the heart of the guy writing these words is through his stomach.

Carl Belser, one of the area's youth basketball coaching gurus, knew about those guarantees — most importantly about No. 5.

And so, while we were talking youth hoops the other day — Note: around here, we always are talking hoops — he correctly surmised that the best way to keep the guy he was talking with focused was to show up with a Snickers bar in one hand and a package of peanut-butter M&M's in the other. Smart decision.

And actually, once you figure out what's going on with his B&B/Rising Stars Basketball Club — you realize that Belser and his partners in the project have their hearts in the right place ... Candy or not candy.

Here's hoping their effort works out, which will be a huge benefit to communities in Lake County that need it.

Here's the Cliffs Notes version of what is being attempted.

The B&B/Rising Stars Basketball Club is a not-for-profit organization that is designed to enhance and enrich the lives of young boys in the area.

The vehicle being used to get the boys involved is, of course, BASKETBALL.

If, for example, we all picked up and moved to Texas tomorrow, the B&B/Rising Stars would be a FOOTBALL club.

Basketball is the lure to get youngsters involved, with the hope that once the children are part

of the program, they'll greatly benefit from it whether they are good at basketball or not.

Basically, here's what's going on:

Belser, and others involved with the program — Joe Walls, Melvin Bobo III, etc. — understand that young boys in several parts of the county need additional guidance, support and, quite frankly, father-type figures in order to survive successfully in the real world that is 2011.

And they think they can reach these kids through their basketball club. Their plan has two arms:

■ Give boys a chance to play AAU-level travel youth basketball at a price much lower than is charged by some well-established travel programs.

■ Make sure that there is a special emphasis on studies and academics, while having players participate in community service so that all participants can become well-rounded student/athletes.

We're not going to dicker here about the merits of what it costs to play B&B/Rising Stars basketball.

It may be that you get what you pay for in travel hoops, and that B&B/Rising Stars, with a lower fee, is not as good as the high-end programs.

That's besides the point here.

Which is, that the club founders want to make a positive difference in youngsters' lives whether they ever play a minute of high-school basketball

WILL LAKES SUPPORT FIELD-HOCKEY TEAM?

What's your best guess on how many Lakes High School students will show up to support their unbeaten field-hockey team when it hosts state-power New Trier at 5 on Thursday? It's the first true test of how good the Eagles really are.



This was last year's B&B/Rising Stars Club. The goal is to double the number of participants this year. | SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN

or not.

And for that, they are commended.

The problem is that unless you have won the lottery, there's no way you can finance the basketball club, and there are hundreds of youngsters out there who can't afford the fee, whether we're talking hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Enter "sponsors."

In a perfect world — low interest rates on home loans and high interest rates on money you keep in the bank would be a start — some giant corporation would climb aboard the B&B/Rising Stars express and ride with the program across the finish line.

But in our county's real world, we pretty much have to sponsor young kids one player at a time.

And so, anyone who is interested in sponsoring a B&B/Rising Stars player can do so by contacting Belser at (708) 288-0062 or Walls at (847) 693-

8839.

Five people kicking in \$100 bucks each will combine to sponsor a player for the entire travel season.

The point is this: The more sponsors, the more kids can play. Tryouts are this weekend for boys/girls currently in school grades 2-8.

The goal is to not turn anybody away, with tryouts

actually to determine which level a player belongs at in terms of basketball rather than whether or not they can be part of the program.

It would be nice if every kid who wants to play can do that.

And if they have to, let the record show selling Snickers candy bars is always a good way to make some tuition dollars.

THE MISSION OF B&B/RISING STARS

The B&B Rising Stars Basketball Club is a not-for-profit organization that uses basketball as a vehicle to promote the personal and educational growth of its participants by providing healthy, challenging instruction and competition. Our goal is to initiate, stimulate and improve opportunities for competitive basketball, to prepare them for the next level of their basketball and academic careers, and to develop leadership, sportsmanship, fitness and academic and athletic excellence.

Our charge is to compete at the highest levels possible, while reinforcing positive values to produce productive citizens.

The priorities of family, religion and school will produce a B&B student/athlete who focuses on academics and service to the community first.

B&B/RISING STARS CLUB TRYOUTS

AT JOY OF THE GAME (Waukegan Rd. & tollway spur)

THIS COMING SATURDAY

- 2-3 p.m. — Players in school grades 2-5
- 3-4 p.m. — Players in school grades 6-8

NEXT MONDAY

- 7-8 p.m. — Players in school grades 2-5
- 8-9 p.m. — Players in school grades 6-8

AT COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY (Washington St. in Grayslake)

SATURDAY, OCT. 22

1-3 p.m. — Players in school grades 2-8

SATURDAY, OCT. 29

4-6 p.m. — Players in school grades 2-8

(Note: No cost to try out. Call 708-288-0062 for details)