

From Panthers to prep stars

Written by Metro Sports Report

Sunday, 20 February 2011 14:35 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 February 2011 19:40



Three area high school seniors who grew up together on a steady diet of basketball are winding up their senior seasons.

Alissa Oney (Washington), Kiah Stokes (Linn-Mar) and Kristin Kramer (Marion) were teammates on the AAU state championship Cedar Rapids Panthers team and played together for all six years (third grade through eighth grade) of the program.

The three won many 3-on-3 tourneys and were also 3-on-3 Iowa Games state champs in 2008. Their coach, Kathy Oney, gives all the credit to Mike Whited, who, according to Oney, laid the foundation when he started the program back in 1984.

“When kids came out of the Panther program, they had the foundation of basketball skills. We worked on fundamentals with repetition, ball handling, shooting, and doing things the right way. He taught me so much,” said Kathy Oney.

Each year Whited would scout parish leagues and local YMCAs to fill his 10-player roster. Whited did not believe in tryouts.

He had a knack for recognizing talent and basketball ability and liked to evaluate players at their league games without them realizing he was there. He scouted them at the second grade level.

“Holding tryouts tends to make players nervous. I liked to evaluate them when they didn’t know I was watching them so they could just relax and play,” he said.

Whited started with one team, and each year he added more until the program grew into a highly successful AAU girls basketball program well known in the Midwest and nationally. The

From Panthers to prep stars

Written by Metro Sports Report

Sunday, 20 February 2011 14:35 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 February 2011 19:40

girls traveled to many tournaments out of state.

“The competition was always good in those tournaments. Our focus was to win a state title and go to nationals,” said Whited.

According to Whited, also the catalyst behind the girls basketball Salvation Army league, the main goal of the program was to develop players for the high school varsity level. Many of the Panther teams played up one age level.

“We wanted to make sure we were playing challenging games and always trying to get better,” he said.

The total number of AAU state titles won by Panther teams is somewhere in the 70s, according to Whited.

Whited’s program has produced terrific local products such as Jaime Printy, Morgan Paige, Jade Rogers, Kristin Jennings, Brittney Fish, Mariah Duke, Rynne Ridge, Anne O’Neil, Stacy Frese, Ann Strother, Lindsey Meder, Shelley Sheetz, Amanda Zimmerman, Micha Mims, Kayla Klopfenstein, Kaitlin Armstrong, and Katelin Oney to name a few.

“Mike Whited created a family, a family of basketball players,” Kathy Oney remarked.

Being a Panther also opened up opportunities such as showcasing basketball skills each year at halftime of Iowa women’s basketball games and playing in the championship game at Carver Hawkeye at the Hawkeye Shootout.

Whited made sure that the Cedar Rapids Panthers program wasn’t all basketball. Each year he hosted a summer picnic, a Christmas party, and an end of the season pool party for the players. Memories and friendships were made that will last a lifetime.

From Panthers to prep stars

Written by Metro Sports Report

Sunday, 20 February 2011 14:35 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 February 2011 19:40

The three seniors entered different high schools but all had one thing in common. They left the CR Panthers with solid basketball skills.

All three of them have plans to play college basketball. Alissa Oney is looking for a basketball program that will be beneficial to her pre-med studies, Stokes will be off to UCONN, and Kramer is finishing up visits to Wayne State, Holy Family University, Lewis University, and the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs.

Whited retired from coaching in 2007 when this trio went off to high school. His contribution to girls basketball in Cedar Rapids will not be forgotten.