

There's more to the game than basketball

Written by Bob Brooks

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There's more to high school basketball in the Metro than practicing and playing games. Cedar Rapids Kennedy and Jefferson have now led the way to join the Coaches vs. Cancer crusade with fundraising attached to basketball.

In fact, the program started Jan. 14 with the Kennedy-Jefferson boys game as the schools competed to see who could raise the most money for the Linn County Cancer Society and its Relay for Life program, chaired by volunteer Dave Martin.

Through raffles, the selling of T-shirts and the general solicitation, the J-Hawks and Cougars raised \$4,200. This week is Jefferson and Washington's turn. One of their projects has been a dance marathon, and they will donate the proceeds from their activities and autographed basketballs by the high school players to the cancer society (see above story).

And on Feb. 11, it will be Xavier and Prairie's turn to have their game and activities in the Coaches vs. Cancer campaign. So it is more than just fun and games for high school basketball in the Metro.

PART II: It would seem that the biggest improvement a high school basketball player can make is in what we would call now the offseason, that being the summer. With that in mind, a note to Cedar Rapids entrepreneurs about a basketball project at Ankeny.

A former warehouse building has been taken over and eight parquet basketball courts have been put in the building for use by players and teams in summertime competition. And along with the eight courts, there is a middle area with a platform where coaches, scouts and interested people can view the competition on all of the courts.

Also included, there is space for parents and friends to sit around the court area. It seems that Cedar Rapids could benefit from using something like this for boys and girls competition in volleyball and other group improvement activities.

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Just a note to be aware of that.

PART III: The passing of Joe Kenney brought to my mind the intense competition in basketball in the days of St. Patrick's and Immaculate Conception in the 1950s. I had a chance to broadcast a lot of those games at those high school gyms. The personality of Joe Kenney and the St. Patrick's teams was interesting to watch, because the gyms were filled and the competition tenacious.

And in the midst of an Iowa winter, my broadcast spot at St. Patrick's was next to some windows, and the gym would be so filled that the heat on the inside would form condensation and freeze the glass. My back was always against the glass, and consequently I had a frozen back.

And at Immaculate Conception's gym, my broadcast spot was on the stage next to the steam heater. Consequently the temperature during the game would get up to a rather unbearable level. So my recollection of the competition was, one place was frozen and one was overheated.

The Metro area has lost a man from high school athletics who coached baseball and basketball during his career at St. Patrick's, LaSalle, Washington and Jefferson.