

## Freshman basketball drums home a lesson

Written by Bob Brooks

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I think I have gone to more high school basketball games this year than ever before, and there is a good reason for that.

When you have a ninth grade grandson playing team basketball, it is likely your attendance will increase. First of all, I have always enjoyed going to high school athletics, whether in a professional manner or as a grandparent.

So Susie and I have attended some of the Metro games that give you a new perspective on the game itself. The thing that has impressed me about the ninth grade level is the sportsmanship of the players involved.

I think they are learning at this early age that being a member of a team, and the court conduct that goes with it, is as important as improvement in their skills.

It seems to me, too, that there is a difference in organization at the Metro high schools. Some programs are for participation, some are for player development, and you might be able to pinpoint the ones that are working on player development.

That is not a criticism, because developing a player to get him to the highest level possible for his individual talent is a great learning experience. But in the total picture, the most important thing to me is to see these young athletes learn about being a member of a team, representing a school and representing their family.

And in my view, based on what I have seen this season, I would give them an A-plus.

There also should be a note that these games are officiated by people who are qualified and paid. But they also have to have a commitment to developing the youth of the city. While all

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calls in the game can be questioned, the officials' mechanics and their level of trying to be right are exemplary.

At Cedar Rapids Kennedy, their ninth grade game had a halftime show of student participation. So it makes the winter go faster when you see these well-organized games.

I would also add that with today's youth, if you didn't have that organization I doubt you would have any pickup games that would help players' development.

It is, after all, a great learning tool, win or lose.

NOTE: Cedar Rapids Washington's swim team, while not as dominant as it's been in the past, is still on track to win its 48th straight district meet and qualify for state.

These swimmers have learned, too, what team is all about. We'll see if they get it done.