

The Seattle Times

Tuesday, November 25, 2008 - Page updated at 12:00 AM

Permission to reprint or copy this article or photo, other than personal use, must be obtained from The Seattle Times. Call 206-464-3113 or e-mail resale@seattletimes.com with your request.

Intramural sports offer as many memories as school sports

By **Sideline Smitty**
Seattle Times staff reporter

Let us now praise intramural basketball and the few high schools that offer it.

To me, it's a sign of vitality if a school offers intramural basketball for boys and girls. Sadly, my best estimate is that no more than 15 percent of schools offer it.

That's a shame because nothing is more fun to play than basketball and no other sport lends itself as well to intramurals.

I realize that gyms are booked full with school teams but hats off to the schools that find a way to make intramurals work. I saw it done at Lake Washington High School in the late 1990s when Roger Hansen was athletic director and my oldest son, Stuart, was there.

Out of curiosity, I went to one of his games. He was on a team whose starters were fellow football players or guys cut from the basketball program. The opponents were a team that called itself "The Immigrants" because that's what their parents and maybe some of them were. The jock team was bigger and more experienced, but once a lead was built the best players took a seat and the snowboard guys came off the bench. The game got more even.

I remember handshakes and smiles all around when the game ended.

Stuart is now 28 but I'm surprised how often he mentions his intramural basketball days. The championship game his junior and senior years was a long-awaited showdown.

Stuart and I bumped into a Lake Washington grad of his era a few weeks ago and I asked him later, "You know that guy from kid baseball or high-school football?"

"He was on our intramural basketball team," he replied.

We didn't have intramurals when I failed to make the basketball team at Bothell in the early 1960s, so a bunch of us formed a team we called the "Valley Rats" and scrounged for games. I remember playing the local Junior Chamber of Commerce chapter a couple times. A few months ago, I was in the rec room of a classmate, George Selg, and he showed me an out-of-whack finger with pride. He had suffered the injury 45 years ago when he jammed it into the concrete-like thigh of former Huskies football player Don McKeta while guarding him.

"I got that in a Valley Rat game," Selg proudly said, holding up the finger as if it were a Super Bowl injury.

Q: Is Bill Resler, the former Roosevelt girls basketball coach featured in the documentary "The Heart of the Game"

and who wrote the book "Heart of the Team" going to coach at another school?

A: Resler says no. He says he is into writing short stories these days. Resler, who teaches tax law in the UW graduate school of business, is one of the smartest people I ever have met. I'm eager to see what he writes. He traces his firing last year back to a small group of unhappy parents but says overall he has wonderful memories of coaching at Roosevelt and is friends with his replacement, Gregg Kalina.

Resler's 2004 team won the state 4A title. The star player, Darnellia Russell, was going to play for Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, this season but returned home to Seattle in September.

Q: Skyview High School in Vancouver won seven of eight championships in the Greater St. Helens League fall sports. Skyview finished second in the other sport, boys tennis. Have you ever heard of a school having a better season?

A: No. Skyview printed T-shirts saying "NBLC" for "Nothing But League Championships" a few years ago when Storm teams won five titles. It will be interesting to see what the school comes up with this time.

Q: I recently saw a high-school football game where a team was booed for its players not kneeling when an opponent was on the ground receiving treatment for an injury that might have been serious. Is there some new "football etiquette" that teams should take a knee when someone gets hurt?

A: This seems to be a trend in some leagues but it isn't universal. My understanding is that this all started with grade-school-age soccer and has spread.

I think it's unnecessary for a couple reasons.

Of course, common decency dictates that you don't rejoice or show a lack of respect when a guy is down, but I don't think you have to stop in your tracks.

Once the injured guy is up or being removed from the field, nothing demonstrates better sportsmanship than giving him a good-luck pat or saying encouraging things to him.

The length of time a player is on the ground isn't automatically related to the seriousness of the injury. Some medical folks are just super-cautious. I've seen guys be examined for several minutes then get up and almost jog off the field and later return to the game. I also know of a college trainer who used to get players to relax and smile by telling them, "Hey, we're on television right now. Let's milk this."

Q: Does it bother you that Ferndale had to travel to Vancouver, Wash., to play Union in a 3A quarterfinal last Saturday instead of playing the game at a neutral site?

A: No. Someone has to travel and you get bigger gates and more interest if the game is either at or near one of the schools. Skyline is trekking to Spokane this week for a 4A semifinal. In 2004, Orcas Island went all the way to Asotin in the far southeast corner of the state for a first-round 2B game. Orcas won.

Have a question about high-school sports? Craig Smith will find the answer every Tuesday in The Times. Ask your question by voice mail (206-464-8279) or snail mail (Craig Smith, Seattle Times Sports, P.O. Box 70, Seattle, WA 98111) or e-mail csmith@seattletimes.com

Copyright © 2008 The Seattle Times Company