

SPORTS

Benson High Baseball Continues Success

Junior State Team Qualified for Tournament

Over the last four years, Benson High School's baseball program has put together winning summer and fall teams.

These teams have included more players, more games, and a higher return of success. Much of the rebuilding of the Benson baseball program and continued success has come with the creditable identity of sponsor Elmer's Flag and Banner.

This year, Benson's summer Junior State D2 team (freshmen) finished as a co-champion and qualified for the 16-team State Tournament. North Portland had some local involvement in Benson's run; Jake Chrest, Michael Mehrens, Jordan Rogers, and Jay Serhan were all huge pieces for the Techmen's post season push.

Under Head Coach Rob Herder, the Techmen definitely have upward momentum, finishing fifth the past three spring PIL seasons with very young teams.

"Our staff has simply tried to put together a stable program where we can win every year at every level. We knew that was a bold mission going into the Benson job, but realizing our goal of reaching the play-



Benson High School's Junior State D2 Team, pictured here, recently qualified for the State Tournament.

offs in the spring seems to be getting closer," Herder said.

In fact, many indicators are pointing just that way. In addition to the Junior State's team success, Benson's AAA American Legion

club posted wins over Southridge, Jesuit, Westview, Liberty, and league champ Beaverton.

"Playing against the Metro powers this summer made us even better," said Andrew Curtin, who is

dueling teammate Nick Breninger for "Top Gun" honors on the mound. Furthermore, Seth Weitzel and James Sowards supplied much of the offense in the potent Techmen line-up.

Assistant Coach Ryan Smith adds, "From day one we have preached that hard workers win in life and hard workers win on the field, and we work as hard as anybody."

Blazers to Form Hip Hop Dancers

The Portland Trail Blazers are holding tryouts for the first ever Trail Blazers Hip Hop Dance Team.

The team will perform at select regular season home games throughout the season and will represent the Trail Blazers at events throughout Oregon.

Dance team coaches Medora Cesarano and Mari Nakama will join a group of judges for the two-day tryouts. They will select a 12-person team.

Tryouts will be held Saturday, Sept. 10 from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the team's practice facility at 7325 S.W. Childs Road in Tualatin.

Cesarano has been a premier hip-hop dance instructor and choreographer in Portland for many years. With more than 25 years of dance experience, she has focused on hip-hop and funk as her primary style over the last decade.

Nakama brings a wealth of various dance backgrounds and styles to the team. Her expertise is wide ranging, including acrobatics, gymnastics, modern dance and hip-hop. For info email HipHopDanceTeam@blazers.com

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New Blazer Coach Faces Challenge

Takes on NBA team with youngest talent

(AP) — Nate McMillan is embarking on one of the most challenging jobs offered in the NBA this offseason: head coach of the Portland Trail Blazers.

It's a team that over the past five years has dealt with player misbehavior, personnel changes from the front office down, fan disenchantment and two years without a postseason.

McMillan comes to Portland after five years as head coach of the Seattle SuperSonics, where before that he was an assistant coach after a 12-year career as a player. He was so beloved he won the moniker "Mr. Sonic."

Blazers owner and Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen clearly coveted the 6-foot-5 former guard, waiting until McMillan was ready to venture beyond Seattle while rumors swirled about other candidates — including former Blazer Terry Porter and Suns assistant Marc Iavaroni.

On the surface, McMillan appears like the perfect solution for the Blazers. He is known for his strict rules, including bans on headbands and on cell phones on the team bus. He enforces a dress code.

"Character and talent are the things we're looking for in a player," he said. "It's important that the players understand they have to respect the game. They have to respect the league. And they have to respect the fans. You must be a professional at all times."

McMillan replaces Maurice

Cheeks, who was popular with the players and the fans. But as a "player's coach," Cheeks wasn't able to crack down on a team badly in need of discipline. Portland players had several brushes with the law.

Former Blazer forward Rasheed Wallace was suspended for seven games three seasons ago after threatening a game official on the loading dock of the Rose Garden. Former Guard Bonzi Wells had a couple of confrontations with Cheeks before he was traded to Memphis in 2004.

Then last year, Cheeks had a verbal run-in with forward Darius Miles during a film session. Miles was suspended for just two games, which many saw as a sign that team

over the past three years have come straight from high school — forward Travis Outlaw and guards Sebastian Telfair and Martell Webster. Miles also was drafted out of high school.

"We've got our work cut out for us. It takes four or five years to figure it out. Even Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Kevin Garnett — very few come in here and dominate quickly," McMillan said.

How long will it take?
"I don't know. I didn't come here to lose. I know I have to be patient and I know what I'm working with. But I don't like losing. I don't take it well," he said.

McMillan compiled a 212-183 record with the Sonics, who promoted him from assistant in No-

in team history.

"There's a guy who understands his strengths and weaknesses, and understands the importance of self-discipline. He wasn't the greatest athlete, but he worked hard and was able to overcome his shortcomings," said Bernie Bickerstaff, coach and general manager of the Charlotte Bobcats.

Today, McMillan's No. 10 jersey hangs from the rafters at Seattle's KeyArena.

McMillan said he's spoken to all of his new players, either in person or on the phone. He watched Outlaw, Telfair and Webster play in the Las Vegas summer league.

He has spoken with forward Ruben Patterson, one of the team's few remaining veterans who was

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"I didn't come here to lose. I know I have to be patient and I know what I'm working with. But I don't like losing."

— Blazer Coach Nate McMillan

management did not support its coach.

Cheeks was fired in March and Blazers director of player personnel Kevin Pritchard served as interim coach the rest of the season.

McMillan, who by NBA coaching standards is young at just 41, is taking on one of the NBA's youngest franchises. Three years of thorough housecleaning has resulted in a team with an average age hovering around 23.

The team's top three draft picks

ver 2000.

Not much was expected of the Sonics this past season, but McMillan led them to 52 wins and they took the San Antonio Spurs to six games in the Western Conference semifinals.

McMillan was originally selected by the Sonics out of North Carolina State with the 30th overall pick of the 1986 draft. In his 12 years with the team, the Sonics made 11 postseason appearances — and McMillan appeared in 98 playoff games, more than any other player

distraught when Cheeks was fired, and Zach Randolph, the NBA's Most Improved Player in the 2003-04 season.

The coach said he'll come up with new rules to usher in the new era as he goes along.

"I'll take a look at who we are and what we need to do to be focused. There are some things I demand: You've got to show up on time. You've got to work hard," he said. "And you have to respect who you work for, from the league to the fans."



Silver Bullets Finish Third in Oregon

The 18A Silver Bullets Girls Softball Team recently celebrated finishing third in the state of Oregon. Led by Coach Winston, the Portland team has student athletes that graduated in 2005 going to a variety of colleges. Tryouts for the upcoming season begin Sunday, Aug. 21 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Westview High School. Clinics are also held throughout the year. For more information, visit www.silverbullets.org.