

Lightning remains electrifying



Andrew Coppolino
Kids in Sports

Girls basketball got a big boost 15 years ago

Fifteen years ago, after his daughter Amy's Waterloo Collegiate basketball team was humbled in a game against a strong St. John's Brantford team in the Central Western Ontario Secondary Schools Association (CWOSSA) championships, Roy Dahl got together with Al Haehn and Brian Henry with a plan to elevate the level of local girls basketball.

"They got absolutely throttled. At that time, Brantford had one of the top programs for girls' basketball in the province," says Dahl. Out of the Brantford ashes, KW Lightning girls basketball was born, and it's stronger than ever 15 years later.

Within the first couple of years of that Brantford game, the trio explored where they wanted to take a new program. The decision, of course, was to grow the program with more players and teams, coaches, executive, administrative resources, and more volunteers. "We approached the house-league that was run by the Youth Basketball League, and now the Lightning run that program," according to Henry.

Together the triumvirate became the point-guards who were instrumental in quickly improving women's basketball in the region. "Five years after the defeat," Henry recalls, "the same kids from our team played the same Brantford team and beat them."

"To be competitive," Haehn adds, "we had to start our girls at a younger level and get them into the Ontario Basketball Association. We had tryouts and selected 15



DAVID BEBEE, RECORD STAFF

Al Haehn (left), Brian Henry and Roy Dahl founded Lightning girls basketball. It is considered to be one of Ontario's best basketball organizations.

players and that was the beginning of the Lightning organization."

Using local house-league basketball as a foundation, the group, supported by other dedicated volunteers like Larry Hooper who joined the club about four years in, built strong rep-level teams. Today, the Lightning has 140 players on 11 rep teams competing at the provincial level in novice to junior age groups, while maintaining a robust house league of 160 kids.

What the three observe when they look back is one of the province's best basketball organizations in its own right. Lightning alumni include May Kotsopoulos, who as a Vermont Catamount earned America East All-Confer-

ence Second Team honours in 2007-08.

Another Lightning alumnus and an assistant coach at the University of Waterloo, Kate McCrae, daughter of former University of Waterloo men's basketball coach and women's national coach Don McCrae, played at UW and has been assistant coach with the Ivy League Yale Bulldogs in New Haven, Conn. Henry's daughter Brianne is now teaching and coaching basketball at Jacob Hespeler Secondary School.

Jennifer Lennox, a 6-2 veteran Lightning player, is a member of Canada Basketball's National Elite Development Academy and is part of a pool of players attempting to crack the lineup for 2009 Interna-

tional Basketball Federation under-19 women's world championships scheduled for July 23 to Aug. 2 in Thailand.

As he sums up the experience up, Roy Dahl, a retired Bluevale Collegiate teacher, is impressed by the club's progress. "We're getting more girls playing and getting better coaching and more exposure to the game, so that's been a really positive development. As a result, we've seen girls' basketball in our region become pretty solid."

The proof is in the pudding: this past weekend, the Waterloo Collegiate Vikings won the girls Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations quad A bronze medal.

While as a weather phenomenon lightning follows a straight

line as it strikes, the basketball club's energy comes full circle as former players are involved with coaching younger players and many of them in the Lightning program. That's a point of pride for Dahl and his colleagues Henry and Haehn.

"When we look back at the first years, the really neat thing is we have so many of those players giving back to the game as coaches. That's just continuing the growth of women's basketball."

For more information about the Lightning, visit www.kwlightning.com.

Andrew Coppolino's column appears Wednesdays. He can be reached at andrew@tablescraps.ca.

PGA Tour tinkers with FedEx Cup again

By Doug Ferguson

The PGA Tour revamped its FedEx Cup race yesterday for the third straight year of its existence, this one geared toward making sure the winner of the \$10-million US prize is decided at the Tour Championship.

"We have great expectations for the future of this competition," PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem said.

Based on the excitement level of the first two years, the FedEx Cup can only improve.

Tiger Woods was so dominant during the inaugural year in 2007 that he skipped the opening playoff event and could have skipped the Tour Championship and still won.

This year, Vijay Singh won the first two playoff events, building such a large lead that he mathematically clinched the title before the Tour Championship — he only had to complete four rounds.

Under the new formula, points that previously had been reset at the start of the four-tournament playoffs will not be changed until the Tour Championship, meaning all 30 players who qualify for the finale will have a mathematical chance to win.

Finchem said the top five in the standings at East Lake would win the FedEx Cup with a victory, while the next five in the standings also would have a reasonable chance by winning.

"I think we're moving in the

right direction," Finchem said.

The Tour Championship at East Lake will be played Sept. 24-27, providing a one-week break after the first three playoff events.

The break was created this year because of the Ryder Cup, and Finchem said players liked it so much that it will stay that way through the end of the television contract in 2012.

The change attempts to strike a balance between the regular season and the playoffs.

British Open and PGA champion Padraig Harrington was the No. 4 seed going into the playoffs this year, but he missed the cut in the first two events and failed to reach the Tour Championship, depriving East Lake of star power when it already was lacking drama.

In the new formula, he at least would have reached the final event — although with little chance of winning the FedEx Cup — because the points are not reset until the Tour Championship.

The playoff events — The Barclays, Deutsche Bank Championship and BMW Championship — take on additional meaning because the points are worth five times more than a regular-season event.

The majors and World Golf Championships are worth slightly more than regular tournaments.

The Associated Press

Vick pleads guilty

By Larry O'Dell

SUSSEX, Va. — Former NFL quarterback Michael Vick pleaded guilty yesterday to a state dogfighting charge, a move that could make him eligible to leave prison early and potentially speed up a return to pro football.

Vick, 28, arrived wearing wrist and ankle shackles with his grey suit, but the restraints were removed by the time he entered his plea. The one-time Atlanta Falcons star also pleaded not guilty to a count of cruelty to animals, but that charge was dropped under his plea deal.

He received a three-year suspended sentence — far less than

the maximum of 10 years he could have faced.

"I want to apologize to the court, my family, and to all the kids who looked up to me as a role model," Vick told the judge.

Vick's mother Brenda Boddie, brother Marcus Vick and fiancée Kijafa Frink walked in together and sat together in the front row of the gallery with other family and friends. Vick's mother declined to comment to reporters but Marcus Vick acknowledged the family was glad the ordeal was nearly over.

Vick was stoic throughout the approximately 20-minute hearing. Afterward, he turned to his young daughter and winked.



DONNA McWILLIAM, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dallas Cowboys wide receiver Terrell Owens celebrates after scoring against San Francisco on Sunday.

'Nothing I ain't done before,' Owens says of 213-yard game

By Jaime Aron

IRVING, Texas — Terrell Owens isn't satisfied.

He insisted yesterday there was nothing special about his latest outing, even if his 213 yards receiving were more than his previous five games combined, his most in eight years and the second-most of his career. It also happened to come right after he complained about the team's offensive system and it came against the team where his T.O. image took root.

Yep, no big deal.

"It was just a game," he said, defiantly. "I play and things happen. It's not anything unusual for me."

He hasn't even bothered watching the highlights.

"For what?" he said. "It was nothing I ain't done before. I had 283 one time. I'm telling you, I'm still not satisfied. Still not. . . I know what I do. My friends and family, they know what I'm capable of. So it's not anything new."

And Owens made it clear; there's more to come — as long as the ball keeps coming his way.

"I could've been doing it all year long," he said. "I'm not saying that in a negative way. For whatever reason, the opportunities didn't present themselves. Like I said, I know what I can do once I get the opportunities and I

get catchable balls."

Owens was averaging 50.5 yards per game before his breakout performance against San Francisco. He had five straight games of 38 yards or less, a stretch that included three games without quarterback Tony Romo.

Against the 49ers, Owens had catches of 75, 52 and 45 yards, three of his five longest all season. His seven catches matched a season high.

San Francisco might've helped by the way it defended Owens. Or, rather, didn't defend him.

Instead of jamming Owens at the line and having a safety take over once Owens works free — the approach most teams have used this season — the 49ers let cornerback Nate Clements play off Owens and chase him one-on-one. Considering the results, if foes weren't already convinced which strategy was best, this might clinch it.

Of course, Owens has faced jamming cornerbacks most of his 13-year career. The difference this season is that his poor numbers have prompted talk that he's lost a step.

"Being that I'm 34, y'all want to say I can't get off the jam. I understand that," Owens said.

Reminded that he'll be 35 a week from Sunday, Owens said, "OK, OK, it don't matter. I'm 34 and I just had (213) yards. Now what?

I'm just saying, how about that?"

Owens explained that a defence can commit itself to slowing any receiver. When it was suggested that as a highly paid receiver, he's expected to defy all kinds of coverages, Owens said that's not exactly the case.

"I get paid to catch balls," he said. "I guarantee you that if you were to get in front of me and got some help over the top, you probably could give me some trouble, too. . . I'm just saying, it's not that easy. Until you get out and play the game at real, live speed, it's not as easy as it looks."

837 POINTS BREAKS RECORD

NEW YORK — The 80 points scored by New Orleans and Green Bay in the Saints' 51-29 win Monday night put the NFL over 800 points in a weekend for the first time.

The total of 837 points was the most ever in a single weekend, breaking the mark of 788. That was done three times: Sept 5-9, 2002; Dec. 5-6, 2004 and Dec. 29-30, 2007.

An average of 45 points have been scored in NFL games this season. If that holds, it will top last season's average of 43.4 and the record average in the 31 seasons of a 16-game schedule: 43.7 points in 1983.

The Associated Press