

Issue 29 – June 2010

Hi from the Front Desk!

The second round of Cluster Camps for 2010 was held in June with over 260 participants attending in the hope of being selected for the 2011 Koru Tour. Selections have now been made and congratulations to every one who has been selected. The third development cluster camp will be held August 7-8.

Last week our New Zealand U16 Men's and Women's teams competed at the U16 Australian State Championship in Logan, Australia. Both our Men's and Women's teams performed extremely well at this tournament. There were 14 Mens and 14 Women's teams in the tournament and we are proud to announce that our Men's team came 5th our Women's team came 7th.

Two weeks ago we sent four of our U18 Men to Germany to participate in an U18 three-on-three tournament in preparation for the upcoming Youth Olympic Games. Those athletes are James Ashby, Kirk Rangiawha, Te Ra Hodges, Michael Karena. We congratulate the boys for coming 3rd out of 15 teams. Next stop is the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore from August 14-26.

In preparation for more tours, an U17 selection camp took place last week in preparation for the FIBA Oceania Youth Tournament in New Caledonia late October/November.

Chris Duthie and Jordan Ngatai have recently returned from the FIBA Basketball Without Borders camp in Singapore. Among 50 other FIBA Oceania and Asia athletes, Chris and Jordan received specialist basketball training from NBA players and coaches during their time at the camp. This initiative by the NBA and FIBA is a global development programme, designed to create social change through basketball in the areas of education, health and wellness. We hope to have some feedback on the camp from Chris and Jordan in our next issue.

During June, NZ U17 National Championships were held in Palmerston North, NZ U19 National Championships took place in Wellington and the first round of WBC (Women's Basketball Championship) was hosted in New Plymouth. Well done to all participants and a big thank you to those associations that hosted tournaments. Results from all three tournaments feature later in this newsletter.

Once again, the NBL finals featured Wellington Saints and

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the Waikato Pistons. The Saints won the third play off winning two out of three games to take out the 2010 title. Congratulations to owner Nick Mills, Coach Pero Cameron and the team for a fantastic performance and to the Waikato Pistons for a nail biting finish.

Special acknowledgement goes out to Saints coach Pero Cameron, who won a championship in his first year as an NBL coach. A big thank you goes to Trudy Godwin, Nick Mills Jr and the NBL board who did a superb job running the league again this year.

Last month, American coaching legend John Wooden passed away. This issue features a tribute to Wooden and included is his famous 'Pyramid of Success'. I hope all our coaches who read this newsletter will find it inspirational and helpful in their coaching career.

Wishing you all the best,
Roslyn

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The NZ Tall Blacks have confirmed an extensive build-up to the 2010 FIBA Basketball World Championship in Turkey, late August.

With team trials scheduled for late July in Auckland, players will hope to impress coaching staff in the local National Basketball League. The build-up matches consist of tournaments and training camps in Croatia, Slovenia and Turkey.

The extensive schedule will see the Tall Blacks taking on Iran, Serbia and the home team in Istanbul in early August. A training camp in the same city will be followed by matches against Russia, Serbia and Slovenia in Maribor, Slovenia, with a training camp afterwards. Another mini tournament in Zadar, Croatia, will feature matches against Russia, Jordan and the home side.

"It's great to play the top European teams," says Dillon Boucher, a member of the Tall Blacks coaching staff. "To succeed at the world champs, you have to beat these teams. It's a great build up, especially playing in such hotbeds of basketball like Croatia, Turkey and Slovenia,"

Although New Zealand come up against some highly rated nations in their world champs pool at Izmir, Boucher says no one team has to be targeted or beaten. Every game is important.

"You have to beat teams to advance, no matter what pool you are in. There are no easy teams and they are all there with a purpose – to win."

Boucher is part of a three-pronged coaching staff with head coach Nenad Vucinic and his assistant, Nelson Giants NBL coach Chris Tupu.. Vucinic has been based in Turkey, coaching the Darussafaka team in Istanbul.

Teams in New Zealand's group at the world champs include reigning champions Spain (ranked third in the world), sixth-ranked Lithuania, France (15), Canada (19) and Lebanon (24), coached by former Tall Black coach Tab Baldwin. The Tall Blacks are ranked 13th and their first game is against Lithuania on August 28.

Tall Blacks Schedule

July

- July 23-25 Trials in Auckland, New Zealand
- July 26 Depart New Zealand
- July 28-August 5 Training camp in Istanbul, Turkey

August

- August 6-8 Tournament in Olympic Arena, Istanbul, Turkey (opponents – Iran, Serbia, Turkey)
- August 9-11 Training camp in Istanbul, Turkey
- August 13-15 Adecco Cup in Maribor, Slovenia (opponents – Russia, Serbia, Slovenia)
- August 16-18 Training camp in Rogla, Slovenia
- August 20-22 World Cup, Zadar, Croatia (opponents – Russia, Jordan, Croatia)
- August 24-25 Training camp in Izmir, Turkey

FIBA World Championship for Men 2010

Round One (Halkapinar Arena, Izmir, Turkey)

August 28 – September 2

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----|
| August 28 | New Zealand v Lithuania | 4pm |
| August 29 | Spain v New Zealand | 9pm |
| August 31 | New Zealand v Lebanon | 4pm |
| September 1 | Canada v New Zealand | 4pm |
| September 2 | New Zealand v France | 9pm |

Play-Offs, (Sinan Erdem Dom, Istanbul, Turkey)

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| September 4-7 | Eight-Finals |
| September 8-9 | Quarter-Finals |
| September 10-11 | Semi-Finals |
| September 12 | Finals |

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Saints Take Out 2010 NBL Title

Exodus Wellington Saints shut out an unlikely last-minute Waikato Pistons comeback to secure their first NBL title since 2003 with an 82-79 win.

Saints had levelled the best-of-three finals series in Wellington with a dominant 98-69 win the previous night, after a lacklustre effort in Hamilton the previous night saw the two-time defending champion Pistons outplay Wellington 80-74.

After a sluggish first half, Saints eased away in the last quarter and were cruising home in the final minute. But a 10-point lead disappeared on the back of three Hayden Allen three-pointers in the closing 30 seconds.

With the Pistons on shooting fouls, Saints' accuracy from the free-throw line was suddenly all that was keeping the game in their grasp. In front by only three and with just 13 seconds left, the Saints premature celebrations ended.

Former Waikato guard Eric Devendorf came to the rescue, sinking two from the free-throw line for Wellington to steady the ship and secure the win.

Waikato captain and former Australian international Tony Ronaldson signaled his team's intentions with a three-pointer to open scoring. Tom Abercrombie, who posted a game-high 32 in the first match, got involved early and ended a sterling night's work with 29 points.

His first three-pointer fell after barely two minutes and gave the Pistons an 8-0 lead.

Point guard Lindsay Tait kick-started the Saints game soon after, setting the tone for a game that saw him score 28 en route to a Most Valuable Player performance.

"This has been a long time for us," Tait told *Sky Sport* afterwards. "We've been close the last couple of years, but to come back this year win it — it's awesome."

Things didn't look too good for the Saints early on, as a focused-looking Pistons defence had them locked down and Abercrombie relished the open shot to send his team into the first break 28-23 up. Tait, again, was hugely effective for Saints, orchestrating their fast-running game and driving well to the hoop.

Waikato coach Dean Vickerman assigned Abercrombie to try and keep him in line, but Tait proved unstoppable and Saints edged closer to trail 41-44 at halftime.

Top scorer Devendorf tweaked his injured ankle in the second quarter, but was back on court as the third quarter began and Saints settled into the business of reeling in the Waikato lead. They hit the front with three minutes of the third stanza gone, Nick Horvath driving to the basket and drawing the foul on Alex Pledger, his fourth of the game.

Ahead 62-55 at the end of the period, Wellington stepped up a gear in the final 10 minutes. They moved the ball with speed and precision, swinging it round the keyhole as the final quarter closed down and Waikato scrambled for possession.

It was left to Allen to reignite — albeit briefly — the visitors' hopes with a treble of three-points in the space of 15 seconds. This is championship number six for the Saints who have won the title in 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988, 2003 and 2010.

Game Three Results (Thursday, July 1 at TSB Bank Arena)
 Exodus Saints 82 (Lindsay Tait 28, Eric Devendorf 17, Erron Maxey 13) Waikato Pistons 79 (Tom Abercrombie 29, Hayden Allen 20, Rashad Tucker 12)
Referees - Tim Brown, Dallas Pickering, Andy Thackray
 1Q: 23-28 HT: 41-44 (18-16)
 3Q: 62-55 (21-11) FT: 82-79 (20-24)



Congratulations Wellington Saints!

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Last month, 10 women's teams from around New Zealand participated in the opening round of the 2010 Women's Basketball Championship (WBC) in New Plymouth.

The WBC, a joint venture between **Basketball New Zealand**, teams and associations, consists of three three-day tournaments. Round Two is scheduled for July 22-24 in Waitakere and Round Three August 19-21 in Dunedin.

Round One Placings

Final

Oceana Goldrush 64 NZ Force Harbour Breeze 70

Third/fourth

Taranaki Trojans 66 Palmerston North Storm 49

Fifth/sixth

NZ Women's Academy 61 Waikato Wizards 74

Seventh/eighth

Wellington Women's Academy 71 Hutt Valley 63

Ninth/10th

NZ Force Cougars 60 NZ U16 74

Competition Points

NZ Force Harbour Breeze 20, Oceana Goldrush 18, Taranaki Trojans 16, Palmerston North Storm 14, Waikato Wizards 12, NZ Force Women's Academy 10, Wellington Women's Academy 8, Hutt Valley Flyers 6, NZ Force Cougars 6

NZ Force Harbour Breeze continued their domination of the Women's Basketball Championship, defeating Oceana Goldrush for maximum points in this year's opening round in New Plymouth.

Last year's final emerged top of their pools again and Harbour, under new coach **Angela Perrott-Hunt**, repeated their success 70-64 in a physical contest.

Tim Brown To Ref Women's WC

Tim Brown's latest refereeing appointment – to the FIBA World Championship for Women in the Czech Republic – will send him back to the drawing board to reconsider his officiating goals.

Meanwhile, fellow official Gavin Zimmerman will step way outside his comfort zone when he appears at the FIBA U18 European Championship for Men (Division B) in Israel, July 22-August 1.

"I was really pleased and excited to receive this invitation, and at the same time a little anxious, having never travelled further than Australia before," says Zimmerman.

For Brown (32), the world championship marks a new pinnacle in a career that has already seen him preside at Olympic and WC qualifying events, as well as in the Australian NBL.

"This is a huge appointment, not only for me, but also for Basketball New Zealand and FIBA Oceania," says Brown.

Born across the Tasman, Brown relocated to Auckland seven years ago to be with now-wife Jaimee, a former referee herself, a move that has probably accelerated his promotion through the ranks.

"People ask me if we would move back to Australia, but I am happy and settled in New Zealand, and feel privileged to represent New Zealand on the world stage," he says. "[In Australia], this opportunity would not have been available so early on in my international career."

Zimmerman's progress has been less meteoric, but includes 12 years in our national league and an IWBF badge to referee wheelchair basketball. His highest international appointment to date was the 2006 Tall Blacks v Qatar home series, but after achieving his FIBA license last year, the Christchurch-based ref took the court for the Oceania U17 championships in Brisbane.

"One of my life goals was to receive my FIBA badge," says Zimmerman (40). "Now that I have my badge, I suppose my next goal is to perform and do well in Israel, and hope that further appointments will follow."

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NZ U19 Men's Championship Results

Wellington, June 4-7, 2010

Final Placing	MVP
1 st Wellington 2 nd Harbour A 3 rd Waikato Gold 4 th Hawkes Bay 5 th Porirua 6 th Canterbury 7 th Rotorua 8 th Nelson 9 th Harbour B 10 th Tauranga City 11 th West Auckland 12 th Otago	Steven Adams (Wellington)
	Tournament Team Alonzo Burton (Hawkes Bay) Ambrose Curtis (Porirua) Brad Anderson (Harbour A) Dyson King-Hawea (Rotorua) Ethan Rusbatch (Canterbury) Michael Karena (Nelson) Ngarotata Bristowe (Waikato Gold) Scott Sharp (Wellington) Shaquille Hohipa-Wilson (Harbour A) Steven Adams (Wellington)



NZ U19 Women's Championship Results

Wellington, June 4-7, 2010

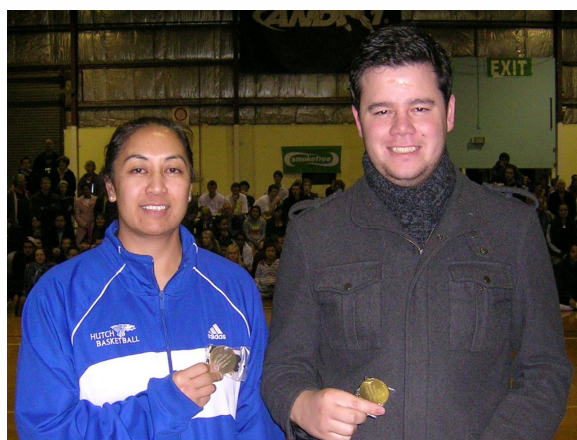
Final Placing	MVP
1 st Harbour 2 nd Waikato 3 rd Hutt Valley 4 th Waitakere City 5 th Hawkes Bay 6 th Tauranga City 7 th Wellington 8 th Palmerston North 9 th Otago 10 th Counties Manukau 11 th Gisborne 12 th Invitational	Anna Lacey (Harbour)
	Tournament Team Anna Cameron (Waikato) Anna Lacey (Harbour) Bayley Waitai-Ross (Hutt Valley) Freya Newton (Palmerston North) Georgia Agnew (Waikato) Hope Thompson (Harbour) Josie Stockill (Hawke's Bay) Kate Alemann (Waitakere City) Moengaroa Subritzky (Waitakere City) Shinae Blair (Harbour)

Finals Score: Wellington 98 Harbour A 75

Finals Score: Harbour 62 Waikato 53



Finals Officials: Scott Harris and Jan Snowdon



Finals Officials: Ione Lepaio and Paul Smith

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NZ U17 Men's Championship Results

Palmerston North
June 4-7, 2010

NZ U17 Women's Championship Results

Palmerston North
June 4-7, 2010

Final Placing	MVP
1 st Wellington	Terrence Lewis Jr (Wellington)
2 nd Harbour A	
3 rd Waikato Gold	
4 th Counties Manukau	
Red	
5 th West Auckland Blue	Aramis Dennen (North Harbour)
6 th Hutt Valley A	Ethan Flintoff (Waikato Gold)
7 th Nelson	Joshua Young (Counties Manukau)
8 th Otago A	Kurt Heatherly (Waikato)
9 th New Plymouth	Logan Botica (North Harbour)
10 th Palmerston North	Quentin Potts (West Auckland)
11 th North Canterbury	Tai Webster (North Harbour)
12 th Mid Canterbury	Terrence Lewis Jr (Wellington)
13 th Te Tai Tokerau	Tom Vodanovic (Wellington)
14 th Harbour B	Zach Young (Wellington)
15 th Tauranga City	
16 th Thames Valley	

Finals Score: Wellington A 94 Harbour A 78

Officials: Gareth Teahan and Andrew Ford

Upcoming Tournaments

July 16-18

BBNZ Open Premierships

Zone 1 West Auckland
Zone 2 Gisborne
Zone 3 Wellington
Zone 4 Buller

July 23-25

BBNZ U13 Premierships

Zone 1 West Auckland
Zone 2 Manukau
Zone 3 Wellington
Zone 4 Dunedin

July 30-August 1

BBNZ U15 Premierships

Zone 1 West Auckland
Zone 2 Tauranga
Zone 3 Napier
Zone 4 Invercargill

Upcoming Deadlines

July 21: BBNZ Junior Secondary Schools Premierships - Team Entry and Online Roster Due

July 21: BBNZ Secondary Schools A/AA Premierships - Team Entry and Online Roster Due

July 28: BBNZ Junior Secondary Schools Premierships - Entry Fees and Final Roster Changes Due

July 28: BBNZ Secondary Schools A/AA Premierships - Entry Fees and Final Roster Changes Due

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Referee Nominations For Tournaments

The **nomination and provision** of referees is important for tournaments to run smoothly and for officiating to be at an appropriate level.

BBNZ is concerned with the current practices severely impacting on our ability to provide adequate officials at tournaments. Some of the issues include:

- Nomination of referees who don't know they have been nominated, but are available
- Nomination of referees in name only – they have not been contacted and are not available
- No nomination
- Nomination of team members, including coaches, assistant coaches, managers and/or players
- Associations not aware of what referees are nominated
- Referees without any official referee grading/level
- Referees not of a suitable standard for the competition

BBNZ is considering automatic invoicing on failure to provide nominations. This failure may also result in your team being withdrawn from the tournament, more substantial fines for teams/associations who nominate referees that fail to turn up, along with some other measures to remind teams/associations that this is important.

There are limited referees who have time to commit to tournaments, particularly those occurring on work days, please respect that fact. When you fail to provide a referee, the Technical Commissioner is left with a gap in their roster and we could see a situation where one referee is available for your game. The fine money collected is used to help get referees to tournaments where we are short, some of it specifically targeted at nationals.

PLEASE, PLEASE ensure your referee is available, I coming and can officiate the entire tournament. We are asking you to help us help make your tournaments enjoyable, safe and memorable for all the right reasons.

GOOD BASKETBALL!

Call For Help – Referees

Every year, secondary schools struggle to get referees for their teams and, as a result, BBNZ struggles to cover those teams without referees at premierships.

We are making a plea to referees around the country to make themselves available to help local associations, BBNZ and, of course, schools make their tournaments enjoyable with enough competent referees.

If you are interested in officiating at secondary school tournaments this year, contact cath@basketball.org.nz. The secondary school tournament dates and venues are as below:

Tournaments that need referees

Jr Secondary School Premierships

August 28-31

- Zone 1 Rotorua (Rotorua Basketball Assn)
- Zone 2 Rotorua (Rotorua Basketball Assn)
- Zone 3 New Plymouth (New Plymouth Basketball Assn)*
- Zone 4 Nelson (Nelson Basketball Assn)*

* Tournament runs only till August 30

Secondary School Premierships

August 31-September 4

- Zone 1 Boys AA/A – TBC
- Zone 1 Girls AA/A – TBC
- Zone 2 Boys AA/A – Manukau (Counties-Manukau Basketball Assn)
- Zone 2 Girls AA/A – Tauranga (Tauranga City Basketball Assn)
- Zone 3 Boys & Girls AA/A – New Plymouth (New Plymouth Basketball Assn)
- Zone 4 Boys AA – Christchurch (Canterbury Basketball Assn)
- Zone 4 Boys A – Alexandra (Central Otago Junior Basketball Assn)*
- Zone 4 Girls AA/A – Nelson (Nelson Basketball Assn)*

* Tournament runs only till September 3

Associations please support your referees and encourage them to participate in these tournaments. By looking after referees and providing officiating opportunities, we are able to let them grow and up-skill themselves. All in all, it gives back to the sport and promotes GOOD BASKETBALL!

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In Memory Of John Wooden

On June 4, 2010, basketball legend John Wooden passed away.

Arguably one of the greatest basketball coaches of all time, Wooden had an extensive list of achievements as an athlete and a coach. Some of his biggest coaching achievements included 10 men's NCAA National Championships (seven consecutive titles), six NCAA Coach of the Year titles, winning 88 consecutive games from 1971-74 and 38 consecutive NCAA tournament games from 1964-74, both of which are records. He also made the National Basketball Hall of Fame as a player and a coach.

We were lucky enough to have John Wooden visit New Zealand in 1957 and many fond memories remain from his trip. Below are recollections from some BBNZ life members and friends who had the privilege to meet him.

"When John arrived in New Zealand in 1957, he must have been aghast at the facilities in which he was asked to coach, but if that was the case, he never, to my knowledge, let it be known. He just got on with the job, and put his heart and soul into teaching all of us everything we could absorb in the time available. He was so humble – no matter what the level of skills the players had, he coached and treated everyone as though they were potential stars. How fortunate we were in NZ, during those three months, to have this remarkable person, yet to become a universal basketball celebrity, so willingly give us the benefit of not only his coaching skills, but also his personality. Along with many other lucky people, I received a signed copy of his 'Pyramid of Success' and a friendship that led to a wonderful experience. I was with John every day during that stay and I pressed him from his fountain of knowledge, not just on basketball, but how to treat people and get the best out of them. I am so grateful for all that I learned from him." **Allan Bruce**

"Like many of my vintage, I recall very clearly the visit of John Wooden to New Zealand in 1957. Unfortunately, we were not included in his itinerary, but he was in Hamilton for the week of the National Championships and I did get to

meet him. We were disappointed not to spend time with him on court, but although we didn't appreciate it at the time, I think we gained at least as much value from our two or three hours listening to his thoughts on the qualities he looked for in his players. This is an aspect of coaching that is rarely given much attention. He was quietly spoken, but very sincere, and impressed on us the importance of industriousness, team spirit, loyalty, self control and competitiveness among the qualities to look for in your players and that he looked to develop in his teams. He emphasized that you never stop learning and one of his guiding thoughts has stuck in my mind to this day. I still have a copy of his Pyramid of Success". **Colin Agnew**



John Wooden 14.10.1910 – 4.06.2010

"I had the privilege of arranging a clinic in Lower Hutt in 1957 when he toured him and also attended a clinic in Wellington at the same time. He was not only a great basketball coach and player, but was highly respected in all walks of life, making him really unique. His trip to NZ was arranged by Sir Lance Cross through the sponsorship of the US State Department". **Cedric Cudby**

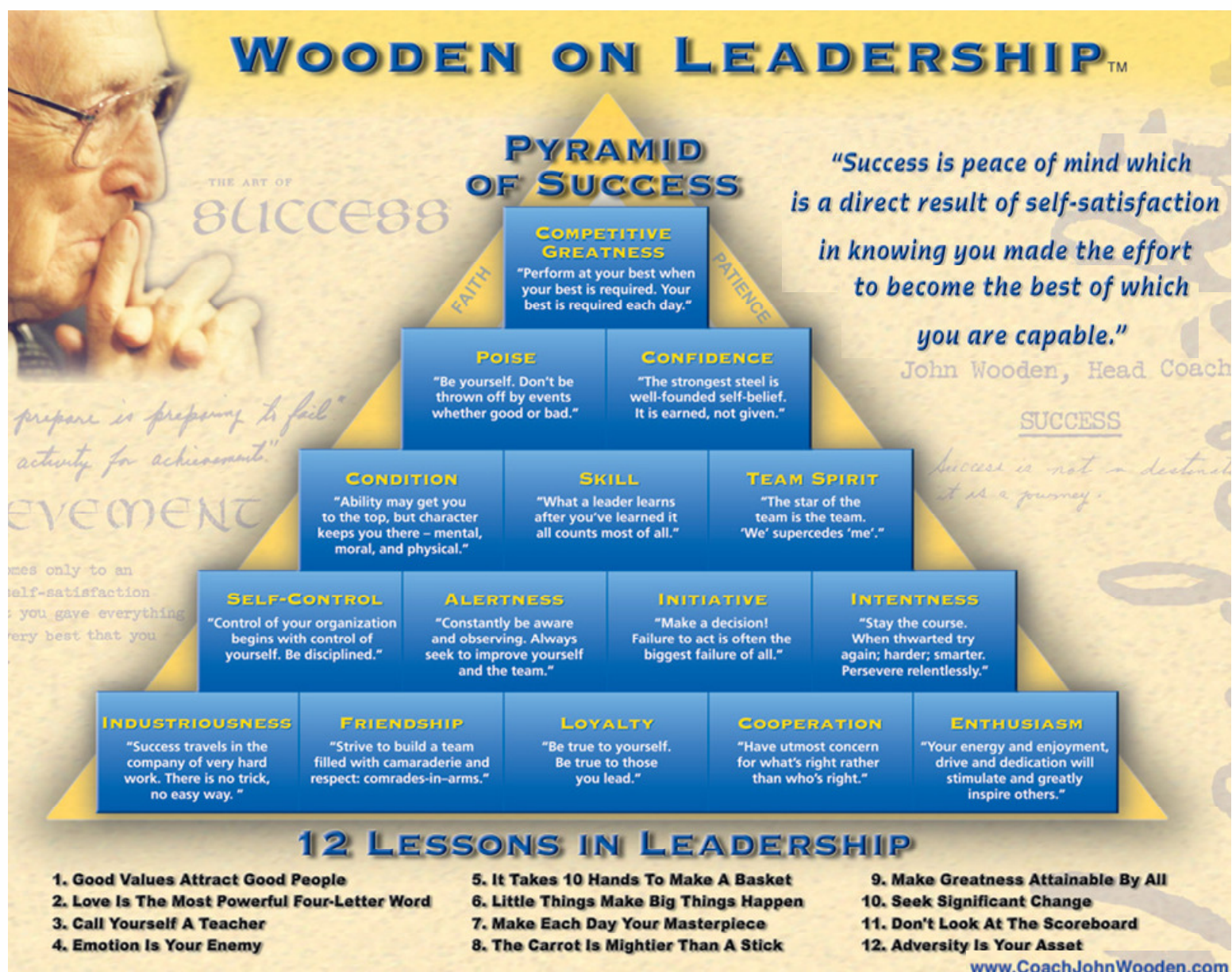
"I well remember the short time John Wooden had with us and the impression he made on us. He came to one of our practices and among many comments I could make about his manner and his enthusiasm, I remember two things in particular – he spent the whole time he coached us (about two hours) in a heavy overcoat and hat. After the comfort of air-conditioned stadiums in the US, he must have found us very primitive, but he never mentioned the conditions, apart from saying at the beginning 'I hope you don't mind, but I won't take my coat off just yet'. The other clear recollection I have is of him showing us how to pass when being closely guarded. He got Reece Mead, then one of Hamilton's and New Zealand's better guards, to guard him and then, with hat and overcoat presumably slowing him down somewhat, proceeded to zip the ball past Reece with ease, explaining all the time what he was doing and where he was going to pass! I can't say that I had the close association with John Wooden that Alan Bruce had, but I can say that of all the coaches I had during my career, on a per-minute-of-coaching basis, John Wooden was the most influential. And there's a kind of sneaky pleasure in thinking to yourself 'I was coached by John Wooden!'" **Warren Smith**

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John Wooden's Pyramid Of Success

One of John's most famous quotes is "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable". This quote is part of John's "Pyramid of Success", a tool he developed during his years of coaching. It consists of 15 habits that lead to success. The bottom layer of the pyramid sets the foundations for success. These foundations need to be strong before you can reach the top. Almost 60 years old, this "Pyramid of Success" has stood the test of time and is still used today by other coaches.

To learn more about John Wooden and his "Pyramid of Success", please visit his website www.coachwooden.com



Make each day your masterpiece – John Wooden

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FIBA TV Online

FIBA has launched the second generation of the FIBAtv.com on-line streaming platform, redesigned with a number of additional and improved features. The central new feature – the unique new Play Search function – enables users to search for clips of their favourite players within the ever-growing FIBA archive of games, according to a total of 17 play categories, including dunks, layups, three-pointers, drives and rebounds.

This unique service, which gives viewers access to and control of many of the greatest moments in the history of the international game, is completely free of charge. The archive will be constantly updated during the upcoming FIBA World Championships and prior to launch, FIBA had amassed over 45,000 clips, stretching back nearly 20 years of FIBA World and Continental Championships, as well as selected club competitions.

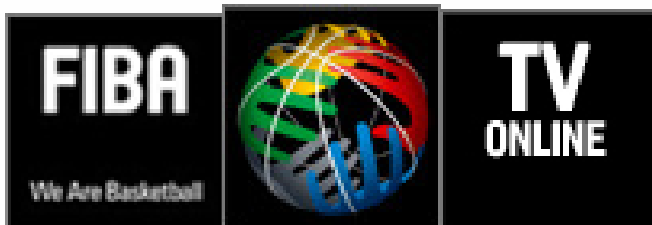
Featured players include Pau Gasol, Kobe Bryant, Luis Scola, Dirk Nowitzki, Andrew Bogut, Hamed Haddadi, Yi Jianlian, Hedo Turkoglu, Dejan Bodiroga, Shaquille O'Neal, and Toni Kukoc to name but a few. Stars from the women's game like Hortencia, Lauren Jackson, Lisa Leslie and Elena Baranova also feature in the Play Search archive.

FIBA secretary general and IOC member Patrick Baumann explains: "The concept of the FIBAtv.com online platform is to enable basketball fans wherever they are to access live and on-demand coverage of full games, as well as highlights and interviews."

Follow the 2010 FIBA basketball world champs online, and watch team games and highlights on FIBAtv online.

The FIBAtv.com online platform also incorporates FIBAAsiatv.com, FIBAAmericastv.com, FIBAEuropetv.com, FIBAAfricatv.com and FIBAOceaniatv.com.

To learn more, visit www.FIBAtv.com



Sparc Volunteer Coach Awards 2010



Recognise a great coach with a nomination in the SPARC Volunteer Coach Awards 2010 and win them great prizes. Coaches give up so much of their free time to benefit your sport and community. Show your thanks and appreciation by nominating your favorite volunteer coach.

Winning coaches receive product from awards sponsor Watties, coaching apparel from SPARC and one winner from each region also wins a coach development opportunity with SPARC. The coach development opportunity will take place over a weekend in 2011, and will include development workshops and attendance at a significant sporting event, travel and accommodation paid for by SPARC. Every nominated coach receives a letter of thanks from your local Regional Sports Trust and goes into a draw to win one of 17 \$100 sports vouchers.

Nominations can be made in three categories: The **student category** is open to school-aged coaches, while the **lifetime category** is for people who have devoted 25 years or more to coaching. The **general category** is for all other community coaches. Anyone who has coached as a volunteer at a club or school in any sport (not at a representative level) in the last 12 months can be nominated (parents, grandparents, teachers, students, club and school coaches).

Nominations can be made online by visiting www.sparc.org.nz/volunteers or by picking up an entry from your local Regional Sports Trust.

Nominations close midnight, September 8



AIR NEW ZEALAND



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The Dream That Never Died

They say “Dreams Are Free”, but try telling that to **Nick Mills**.



He was the guy you didn't see on television on Thursday night. He was the guy hugging his son, Nick Jr, behind the courtside DJ (Rodney Larkin), their game-night spot all year. Mills was the guy in the trendy suit – no tie – high-fiving Gilla The Gorilla, but resisting the urge to run through the tickertape and share the moment with his beloved Exodus Wellington Saints.

He's the guy who bought the team's singlets 28 years ago and has been emptying his pockets since.

“I'm actually a very poor man because of it, so if you measure it in dollars, I can't afford to do it, no,” Mills said a day after the club's sixth National Basketball League championship on his watch.

“It has to be way over a million dollars over the 20 years. Most people at my age would have baches and that sort of thing. I've got a reasonably nice home with a massive mortgage. It doesn't make sense, of course it doesn't.

“But it's a passion and I'm really lucky I have a family that love it and support it. My wife doesn't have a new kitchen ... some of the things she could have had because of basketball, but never once has she moaned about it, because she knows what it means to the city.

“I still believe basketball could be the greatest sport in New Zealand.”

The dreamer is also an eternal optimist and the optimist is a successful entrepreneur, bankrolling his obsession through the various pubs and night clubs that are his life blood. If there's a constant in the Saints' success, it's Mills.

In 1982, as a 23-year-old night club owner, he bought singlets emblazoned with Nite Site for his cousin's fledgling team. When they lost nine in a row, it was like a red rag to a bull. The rest is history.

They brought Kenny McFadden out, won second division,

went to the first division and made the final in the first year. It's an amazing story.

Nite Site became Exchequer Cabaret ... became Century City ... became Exodus Gym. When Mills bowed out to help raise his family from 1991-2001, Saints went titleless. Since he returned, they've added two banners (2003 and 2010) to the wall.

“What keeps me coming back? Success. Wanting to have a team that this City can be proud of, and that people can have a night out and enjoy and not cost a fortune. It's cheaper than going to the movies.

“What keeps me going? That alone, going to TSB and seeing all those people in the stands and giving them a chance to be part of something successful.”

Mills can't accept anything less. It's gained him plenty of critics in basketball circles. Imports and coaches have rolled in and out of his office at an alarming rate, and this year's title has been seven long years in the making. He's been labeled an overbearing owner by some – at training, on the team charter and in the coach's ear. If you've come for an apology, it's somewhere else. Sorry for demanding the best?

Forget it.

“If you compare the Saints to any other sport in Wellington, we lick them hands down,” he says. “What other sport here has done nationally what we have? You can't compare it.



“And yet we make The Playoffs every year except 2000 and everybody is saying, ‘you've only won two championships’.

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That's still 20%. If the Hurricanes had that, or the Phoenix, or the Pulse, who win one game and it's as big a deal as us winning a championship.

"That's the one thing that would make me walk away from The Sport – the pressure The City puts on you to Win every year. That's a huge frustration for me personally."

This is a guy who doesn't hide from the fact that he'd rather win titles than develop local talent. He told his own son Jordan, an Emerging Tall Black, that he'd have to leave town to get court time in the NBL. Jordan's dad owns the Saints and he plays for the Taranaki Mountain Ais.

"I don't make any apologies. At the end of the day, this city – this club – demands success. How much criticism do I get for changing coaches, changing imports? If the job isn't getting done, change it."

Then there's the softer side. Mills was in tears on his way to the final when he ran into a group of wheelchair-bound youngsters and their caregivers on Wellington's waterfront. You actually cried?

"When you see something like that at the moment you are stressing about a basketball game and chasing around a bit of leather, you just realise how blessed you are if you have healthy kids."

In fact the highlight of the year for Mills wasn't the title, but watching Nick Jr run the team and the Bartercard NBL out of his Courtenay Place office.

"We put a rookie coach in and he had to work with him. For all those years I did that, but this year I didn't go to practices or travel with the team – Nick did the whole thing, all the stuff for the league, the media releases, the stats, he was up to 3am most mornings."

Is he passing the baton?

"I don't know. Nick and I have completely different 'A' games. He's bookwork and paperwork, where I'm out there shaking hands. He'd be no good at bringing money in, asking someone for a dollar, whereas I have the worst knees in the world from begging. I've been through countless pairs of shoes from knocking on doors and asking for money."

So why weren't you on the court when they won?

"I'm a behind-the-scenes guy. You will never see me do that, never. They deserve the moment."

"They are close-knit group, as close as I've seen. A lot of old Saints will hate this, but that was the most talented team I've seen. They say you can't compare eras, but I think that team would beat the Saints from the 1980's by 20 points. I don't think we saw it in the finals, but we saw it in a few games, the athleticism and the depth of talent."

But Mills balks at the mention of a dynasty. He says anything can happen in an off-season. Star import **Eric Devendorf** would be welcomed back with open arms, but he could be NBA bound, **Lindsay Tait's** a priority, but everyone else will be chasing his signature.

It seems the only sure thing is that Mills will be there on game night, biting his nails and thinking about how the Saints can add another banner to the wall.

Toby Robson, Dominion Post (July 3, 2010)

Congratulations Dillon!



Congratulations to ex Tall Black and current Tall Black video technician coach Dillon Boucher and wife Nikki as proud parents of identical twin girls Sierra and Cassidy Boucher, born June 2, 2010.