

Hanes Hosiery ready to get new basketball season started

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

When Hanes Hosiery Gym Recreation Center kicks off its 2001 basketball season on Jan. 2, more than 225 kids ages 7-18 will participate in the center's three leagues.

The program has become so popular that director Art Blevins now has a waiting list of players who want to join the league's teams.

The 2001 season will begin with three weeks of practice before teams play their first game. Hanes Hosiery Gym is one of a very few quality youth athletic organizations that are free of charge to all kids.

Blevins said the program depends on donations and sponsors to help cover the cost of replacing and furnishing jerseys and awards for hundreds of kids.

"It's hard, but with the good

Lord's help, a couple of sponsors, a few parents and high school coaches like Howard West of Reynolds, Andy Muse and Dennis Ring of Mount Tabor, Marty Stanley of Glenn and Robert Wynn of Carver, who help out with their old jerseys that they are no longer using, we get the job done," Blevins said. "That is a great help for the program."

Blevins said the program is currently seeking donations and sponsors to continue the program. He also needs volunteers and a supporting cast, because he has only one full-time staff member and a part-time worker assisting him.

"We have a great supporting cast of volunteers who also serve as coaches and scorekeepers," Blevins said.

The volunteers this year include: Carl Witherspoon, John Harris, John Allen, Jerry Posey, Gene Washington, John Hughes, "Hurk" Shaw, Danny Harrison, Mark Worthy, Ray Mitchum, Darryl Flemming, Ann Chance, Isiah Hawkins, Kenny Ferris, Dan Alvarez, C.A. Hall, Richard Jones, Coach Jackson, Elton Koonce, "Jug" Jackson, Murriel Hilliard and R. Dunlap.

Blevins said he couldn't do his job without his volunteers.

"I truly appreciate their support and loyalty to the Hanes Hosiery kids," Blevins said.

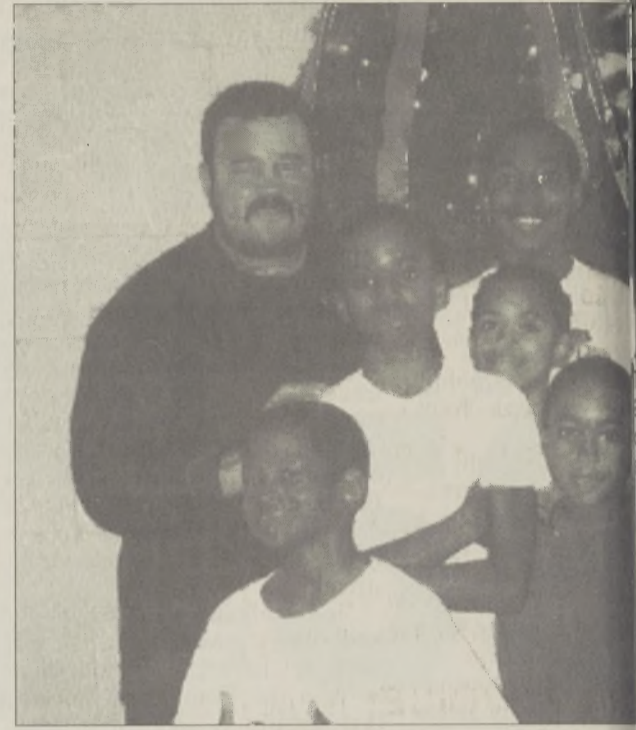
Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer, sponsor for a team, a league sponsor, or to make a donation can contact Blevins at 727-2428.



Hanes Hosiery Gym staff for Winter Basketball 2001: director Art Blevins (second right), assistants (left to right) Keith James, Carl Witherspoon and "Doc" Edmonds.



Hanes Hosiery Gym had 89 participants for its annual free throw shooting contest, held recently at the center.



Hanes Hosiery director Art Blevins with his free-throwers: Chris Brooks, Bianca Rice, Joseph Jackson, Chelsea Cromartie.

Black action the only way to get more black coaches

BY ROB PARKER
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Tony Dungy is wrong. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach, one of just two African American head coaches in the NFL, puts the onus on hiring more black coaches on management and ownership.

It's been left to them for nearly 80 years and the results have been horrendous.

In a league currently 72 percent black, there have only been four African-American head coaches in modern pro football. Apparently, we're good enough to play the game, but not coach.

Art Shell, a Hall of Fame offensive lineman with the Oakland Raiders, was their head coach from 1989-94. Ray Rhodes was head coach with the Philadelphia Eagles from 1995-98 and was fired last year in Green Bay after an 8-8 non-playoff showing in his first season with the Packers. Dennis Green has been the Minnesota Vikings' head coach since 1992.

"With head coaches, there are two people who can make those decisions, the general manager or ownership," said Dungy. "There are 62 people who can change that. The players can't do it. The fans can't do it. Media can't do it."

"If we're going to get more, those 62 guys are going to have to step up. There's no other way to get around it. To answer that question, you have to talk to those 62 people."

The only people who need to speak to those 62 people are the players. Honestly, they are the only ones who can cause change. They have the power. There is strength in numbers.

The owners will do nothing they aren't forced to do.

It's simple. The players should demand and expect that African Americans are a part of the interview process.

Sadly, it hasn't always been the case. Plus, players need to speak up and push for black assistant coaches who would make ideal head coaches. Currently, unless you're personal friends with an owner or married to his daughter, the chance of getting a job without ever being interviewed still remains slim to none.

And that's the worst part about the lack of black head coaches in the NFL. It would be different if a team owner interviewed five or six guys and one or two just happened to be not of European descent. Then after some time and debate, he'd pick one. Most could live with that process, even if a black coach didn't get the job.

But too often the black assistant coach never gets interviewed. That's wrong. And we're not talking about token interviews or quotas or affirmative action. No one wants to be handed anything. It's just about an opportunity.

The lame excuse, of course, is that they need more experience as offensive and defensive coordinators. Like a minority being a third base coach in baseball, you don't see many blacks in those jobs.

"They need to get more exposure as coordinators," said Chuck Schmidt, the Lions' executive vice president. "When they do, they'll get considered. He (Dungy) has been given an opportunity, and he's done a heck of a job."

Let's not forget, though, that it took Dungy 15 years to finally get a shot. That's how long he was an assistant and defensive coordinator at Pittsburgh, Kansas City and Minnesota before the Bucs hired him in 1996 at age 40.

With a new trend sweeping the NFL - passing jobs along to friends - some black assistants might have to wait even longer than that. This past off-season, we saw Jimmy Johnson hand his coaching job to friend Dave Wannstedt. Bill Parcells wanted to hand his Jets' coaching job to friend Bill Belichick. But Belichick took the gig in New England instead.

"It's disturbing, and I'm frustrated," said Dungy about the low number of black head coaches. "Frankly, you just feel like there are some guys out there who'd do a great job, if given the opportunity. You would like to see that opportunity come."

"You know there are only 31 jobs. Not all of them change hands. They're tough to get, these jobs. By the same token, you know there are some guys out there who can do a great job."

That's where the players come in. They must take an active part in changing things. It's their futures we're talking about. It seems crazy to have so much impact in an industry, yet have no control when it comes to post-play careers. It seems as if the majority of head coaching jobs and TV and radio jobs all go to their white counterparts.

The same way the NFL pulled out of Arizona for the Super Bowl in 1993 when the Martin Luther King Jr. Day wasn't a paid state holiday, the players should threaten not to play until some changes are made. Only they can cause change.

Rob Parker, based in Motown, is a sports columnist for The Detroit News.

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