

SPORTS WEEK

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Sports Columnist

NBA gets it right once again

Let me start by stating the obvious: the NBA bubble is working remarkably well on all fronts. I didn't think it was going to work out as well as it has, but the other leagues need to take notice and possibly adapt their season plans to include some sort of isolation for their season.

First off, the NBA's bubble has had its desired affect by keeping COVID-19 cases out. Since the return of the NBA, the league has not reported any new COVID-19 cases. This is great news for the league and hopefully it can continue, because surprisingly the games have been very entertaining to watch, even without fans.

I thought not having any fans in the building would make the games a little boring. We all love the crowd noise and chants of "defense" from the home fans down the stretch of a close game, but with the pandemic going on, we would have to do without.

To my surprise, I have not really noticed the absence of the crowd. The artificial crowd noise and the excellent job of many of the play-by-play and color commentators have made the lack of a crowd not that noticeable.

It seems the bench players are picking up the slack by becoming more animated throughout the game. I also like how some arenas will put pictures of the fans who are watching the game up on the jumbotron to give them a sense of inclusion. I don't think the NBA could be happier with the initial results of the resumption of their season. Their quick thinking and routine testing are most likely why almost all of their players have elected to play this season instead of sitting it out.

The same can't be said for all sports leagues. Major League Baseball (MLB) has started their season, but they have not fared as well as the NBA. MLB chose not to isolate their teams inside of a "bubble" and elected to use stringent testing measures to try to make sure the virus does not affect their season.

MLB has essentially struck out thus far, pun intended. So far there have been two teams with COVID-19 outbreaks. The Miami Marlins and the St. Louis Cardinals have thrown a monkey wrench into the season outlook for MLB. I know baseball was hoping for the best and assumed their players would take

See NBA on B4

The forgotten ones

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

Earlier in the pandemic, I wrote a column pertaining to how bad I felt for athletes who are losing a season due to COVID-19. In that column, I discussed multiple levels of sports from high school all the way to the professional level. This column will focus on those athletes who may lose a scholarship due to not having the chance to play their final season.

After several months of social distancing and quarantines, I have had the opportunity to have conversations with several individuals about this topic. What I have come to realize is some parents and athletes have not planned for a circumstance like COVID-19 and don't have a backup plan outside of where sports was leading them up to this point.

The best of the best in high school sports are not going to be affected that drastically by the pandemic. The athletes who most needed to have a backup plan are the ones who have not had the opportunity to start for their respective teams and this was going to be "their year," or the athlete that is a fringe Division II or III player and needed his final year to solidify his scholarship, or even the athlete that is recovering from an injury and needs to prove they are back to their original form.

The question that keeps coming to mind when I think about these athletes is, what happens to them when they don't receive a scholarship? Millions of athletes depend on athletic scholarships to not only get them into school, but to also prevent them from diving headfirst into debt from student loans as soon as they cross the graduation stage. Who looks out for these athletes now that



File Photo

they possibly won't have the opportunity to go to get that coveted scholarship?

It seems that there is COVID-19 relief for just about everyone, but I don't think many people have thought about these kids and how their futures are going to be significantly altered due to this pandemic. Since these kids possibly won't get scholarships, do they now take out high interest rate loans, or do they stay at home, get jobs at fast food restaurants, join the military or even turn to a life of crime? Where do they go and what do they do?

I can somewhat understand where some of these kids are coming from. If everything up to this point has shown that a kid had an opportunity to earn a scholarship, then of course they should go full force toward achieving that goal. And let's be honest, school is not easy for everyone, so for some of these athletes,

maintaining a high GPA is a struggle. What I can't understand is not planning for a rainy day, because they sometimes come when you least expect it.

I hate to admit it, but this situation applies mainly to the African American community, unfortunately. It's sad that we are still sending kids out with that singular mentality in this day and age. I think this is a major byproduct of the school system taking trades out of the high schools, leaving many to feel that college is their only option.

Trades are not only as profitable as a college degree, but in many cases they can be even more profitable depending on the trade, with less debt from loans. Mechanics, plumbers, carpenters and electricians were all trades that the baby boomer generation had the opportunity to learn, instead of going to a four-year university,

and they are still thriving avenues to this day.

Why are we still mostly pushing college for every high school student? A better question is, even if a student has athletic talent, why not have one of these choices as a backup? These professions are great choices for a budding entrepreneur as well.

It angers me that in 2020 we still have athletes and parents who are banking on sports as their "way out" of their current situation or as their lead option. I'm sure we all know the old saying that the only ways out of the "hood" are to play sports, rap, sell drugs or death. That is a sad outlook for anyone to have as the only means of improvement. We as a country should not be in the same situation as we were 40 years ago.

What about the mental state of some of these kids? How quickly are they able to shift focus from some-

thing that has seemingly been right over the horizon just to have it abruptly taken away?

I don't think this is a problem that can be solved from the federal level by initiating creative legislation from lawmakers. I think this needs to start at home and let our kids know at a young age that they are more than their respective athletic gifts. Yes, they are great to have, but those are not the only gifts they are born with.

My hope is that this pandemic can be used as a learning tool to not have our kids rely on their athletic talents. As we progress as a community, we need to retool our thinking process when it pertains to overcoming low-income situations. It is possible; we just have to use all of the assets that have been presented to us and not just rely on the obvious.

5 Demon Deacons set to compete in the U.S. Amateur Golf Tourney

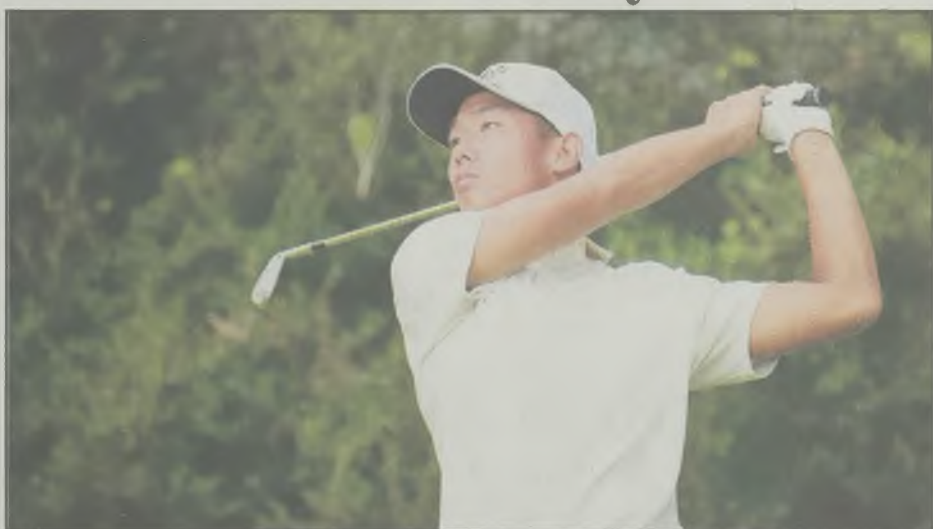
SUBMITTED ARTICLE

The Wake Forest men's golf team will have enough players for an entire college lineup at the U.S. Amateur in Bandon, Ore., this week.

Five Demon Deacons, returning senior Eric Bae, seniors Marco Steyn and Parker Gillam, junior Alex Fitzpatrick, and freshman Michael Brennan, will all be playing at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort. Mark Power was eligible but could not get to the United States in time to do the necessary quarantine and health checks before the event.

"To have a good program you have to have successful amateurs and we have that here at Wake," head coach Jerry Haas said. "It's always been my vision to have great representation at these events and this year we have five guys competing, six guys were eligible, so it's all coming together. I know Mark Power really wanted to be here, but he is back in Ireland. We're really looking forward to seeing our guys play at a high level with some of the best competition there is. Hopefully, it's a preview of what we will see if our spring season happens."

The player with the most competitive course time under his belt for the



Submitted photo

Eric Bae is one of five Demon Deacons that will compete in the U.S. Amateur Golf Tournament this week.

summer is also the newest member of the Demon Deacons. Freshman Michael Brennan has played in several summer tournaments, including the Western Amateur, where he was joined by seniors Parker Gillam and Marco Steyn. Brennan hasn't officially played a round for the Old Gold and Black yet, but was able to get moved in and quarantined on campus before the U.S. Amateur. Consistent practice and competitive play should bode well for the newest Deac this week.

Alex Fitzpatrick and Eric Bae will be making their first competitive appearances this summer at the event, although both have kept up their

practice schedules since leaving Wake Forest back in March. Fitzpatrick returned home to England where he completed the spring semester and practiced every day at home or at the course, when they were open and he could get there.

Bae returned home to Pinehurst to finish out the spring semester and continued to practice and play there as well, but recently returned to Wake Forest to begin online summer classes for his MBA at the beginning of July. He has continued to practice and play every day while being back in Winston-Salem.

Marco Steyn was able to play in the Western Amateur just a few weeks

ago and also the Northern Amateur a week before that. The South Africa native made the decision in March to stay in Winston-Salem to finish the semester online. He has continued to practice and play as much as possible while also completing a summer internship.

Parker Gillam did return home to Cary to finish the semester and continued to practice and play while he could. He got back to Winston-Salem as soon as he could this summer to keep improving his game. The Western Amateur was a good early test for Gillam, Steyn, and Brennan to knock off some of the competitive rust.

"Hopefully, it gives the

guys a sense of normalcy to be out on the course in a competitive setting with basically a whole lineup out there with you," said Haas. "It's one thing to play a couple rounds with the guys but to have five of them competing together but not as a team will be a great experience for them."

Wake Forest alums Arnold Palmer (1954), Lanny Wadkins (1970), and Jay Sigel (1982 & 1983) are past winners of the event, while Scott Hoch has finished as runner-up in 1978. Fitzpatrick's older brother Matthew is also a notable past winner of the event (2013) and current European Tour player.

Following the conclusion of the two-stroke play rounds, the field will be cut from 264 to 64 players for match play.

The round of 64 matches was held on Wednesday, rounds of 32 and 16 matches will be held today, Thursday, Aug. 13. The quarterfinals are scheduled for Friday and semifinals on Saturday. The 36-hole championship round is set for Sunday, August 16.

The Golf Channel and their free streaming service Peacock began broadcasting the tournament on Wednesday with the round of 64 matches.