

Fierce competition found on Night League courts

Insults and violence are simply facts of the game

by Max Minogue

With Night League underway, extracurricular athletes are once again proving themselves and their teams on the courts. And despite the friendly intramural label, the games are as competitive as ever.

Most of those who play Night League do it to have a fun time with friends. Senior Jacalyn Joseph, co-captain of "We Ain't Joaquim Around," said, "I don't think we're super serious about it-- especially because none of us actually play basketball. We just play to have a good time, but of course it's always fun to win."

However once the game starts, players leave it all on the court, and

the only focus is the game. With such strong competition, aggressiveness is taken as a fact of the play.

Junior Myles Knight said, "I used to get nicked up from players due to their aggressive nature, but now I'm past that and take preventative measures. For example, now I tape my socks up."

Despite that, Knight said, "It helps me encourage my friends to do something important in their lives."

Junior Dylan Santacruz agreed about the intensity of the game. "A lot of teams [play Night League competitively], especially in our grade," Santacruz said. "All teams have fun whether they win or lose, but most teams come to win." However, Santacruz said that he has never been injured during Night League.

There is no less competition in the girls' Night League games, according to senior Victoria Tucker. Tucker said, "Me and my team have

never experienced anything we can't handle, but there are definitely some aggressive girls out on the court."

She went on to talk about the "serious tripping issue" apparent in most games and also remembered a specific injury.

"One time in particular, I was going in for a rebound and a girl stepped on my foot. I fell to the ground and got elbowed in the face on my way down. To recuperate, I had to sit a play out," Tucker said.

Senior Madeline O'Dwyer said, "I have definitely been pushed and shoved around throughout almost all of the games. I've also been punched once and had my eye scratched."

O'Dwyer never approached a game expecting for it to get scrappy, but agreed with the others. "We are there to play basketball and the expectation is that people are going to be trying hard."

The one thing that everyone



Each team's desire to win contributes to the competitive atmosphere | Archives

reasserted was that injuries come with the territory.

Junior Nolan Mabie said what draws him to Night League is "the adrenaline rush that comes every time I step on the court." Mabie played basketball for the New Trier team up until this year and said, "Night league is at least 6 times more intense [than the team]," citing not only injuries, but also verbal attacks and insults being thrown around on the court.

Despite people referencing intense games and an aggressive environment, students have little complaints about Night League, as this is the environment that the players are looking for.

The overwhelming opinion of the competitive atmosphere was summed up by Tucker: "It wasn't anything we couldn't handle, but it's definitely not an extracurricular for the weak."

Boys Varsity Swim team endures vigorous schedule



The boys varsity swim team won three consecutive state titles in 2010, 2011, and 2012 | Varsity Views

The team has come together in aspiration of a common goal

by Madeline Hultquist

At the Boys Varsity Invite at Evanston Township High School on Saturday, Jan 9, the New Trier Boys Varsity Swim team won the meet against both Neuqua Valley High School, from Naperville, and Arrowhead High School from Wisconsin.

After the strong finish, the Boys Varsity Swim team is on track for a run to state. Junior Patrick Drake said, "We had a lot of best times and we pulled off the win against some great teams."

Drake's teammates seemed to agree, as senior Will Kinsella said, "I think we all had some really solid swims. I think almost everyone executed their races perfectly."

The wins are a sign of the team working well together. The season started with practices in November and the first meet in the beginning of December.

However, every season, talented seniors leave the team and a new group is thrown together. Varsity Head Coach Josh Runkle said, "Every year is different, every team unique. For the most part, individuals are different from season to season."

This results in a different dynamic that each individual must adjust to. Senior Charlie Scheinfeld said, "While some standout

swimmers graduated last year, the team this year is very well rounded."

"After taking some time early in the season, I feel that we are starting to round into form," Runkle said.

Now that the team is working well together, they are more able to focus their energy on their goals.

Runkle said, "The obvious ones are to win all our meets and defend our conference and sectional titles." Similarly, Scheinfeld said "One of our main goals every year is to place very well at the state meet in February."

The team's aspirations are the same nearly every year, but to achieve them is always a challenge.

With the state meet looming in the distance, practice time is very intense. The team usually practices twice a day, four days a week, and once a day, twice a week, not including the swim meets.

While some students may find this schedule challenging, the swimmers are very dedicated. Junior Jack Walter said, "It really is a great opportunity to build great relationships with your teammates."

Runkle added many practices are necessary to achieve their goals. He said, "When you are in water, it's more difficult to move. To cover the same distances as, say a runner would, it would take a swimmer about four times longer to do so." Therefore, more workouts are required to strengthen the individuals and improve their time.

Because of this, swim practice is regular and intense. However, the boys have adapted to it, and it is

now part of their regular schedule. "I know everything I need to get done in the week and I plan accordingly," Kinsella said. "The less organized a swimmer is, the less sleep he gets, and the worse he performs in practice."

Recently, students got two weeks off of school for winter break. While many used this time to catch up on sleep, the team's swim practices continued.

"We all want to get better and we're all willing to make sacrifices to do it," Drake said.

Teammate Kinsella agreed and said, "Aside from the necessity of just continuing practice, it's a good way to take two weeks to focus completely on swimming."

This kind of positive thinking is evident throughout the team. "They're competitive athletes who know all the hard work will pay off in the end. They have a great bond with each other and support their teammates," Runkle said.

The team looks to the intensity of their practices as a way to continuously improve their skills and boost their rankings in the state. Last year, they finished the state meet in fifth place. The year before, they were sixth. The last time they finished first was in 2012, following their first place wins in both 2010 and 2011.

"At the end of the year, we want to put ourselves in a position to compete for a state championship," Runkle said. "As far as each individual, we hope they are prepared to perform at the highest level they are capable of."

The fight to be the worst of the worst

Why do teams in the NBA intentionally lose games?

by Charlie Burton

"Tanking" is a team's intent to deliberately play poorly. Despite being rare, controversies regarding professional sports teams "tanking" have risen over that past few months. One of the most frequently accused leagues is the National Basketball Association (NBA).

All aspects of "tanking" go against an athlete's competitive instinct. It is human nature to want to win, and this is only amplified in professional athletes. However, in the NBA there always seems to be a fight to come in last.

Why would a team ever intentionally try to lose? The answer can be summed up in two words: lottery draft. The lottery draft, established in 1985, gives teams players' rights in the league. Whoever has the worst record from the year before has the best chances at getting the number one draft pick.

Certain struggling teams aim for the worst record in the hopes of acquiring the next superstar, and they're not totally wrong. LeBron James, Shaquille O'Neal, Tim Duncan, Dwight Howard, and Derrick Rose are all players who were the number one overall draft choices.

According to Draft Express, the average No. 1 pick has career averages of 15.5 points, 7.1 rebounds and 2.9 assists. Also, forty-three of the 66 picks (65.2 percent) to go No. 1 have made an All-Star Game. The numbers don't lie; obtaining the number one draft pick can turn a struggling franchise into a successful one.

Unlike the NFL, NBA coaches have a longer leash and are given a couple years to rebuild a losing team. Sometimes the players and coaches simply can't win from a lack of talent. In these cases, the pressure to win falls mostly on the shoulders of the general manager.

The general manager's job is to acquire players that will give the team the best opportunity to win. Every decision by the general manager is scrutinized throughout

the season, and often they become the scapegoat for frustrated fans. Considering that the average general manager gets fired after only four years, there is a lot of pressure on them to win, and win fast.

Most coaches and players play to win. It goes against their ethics and morals to purposely throw a game. The scandal of tanking revolves mainly around the general manager's decisions to put a team on the court that cannot compete. In their eyes, it is far better to be awful for one year than consistently bad for a long duration.

Although other sports are also accused of "tanking," the NBA is most heavily criticized. Unlike other sports, the NBA is a star-oriented league. Tuning into the game, the announcers constantly say, "Lebron James and the Cavs" or "Steph Curry and the Warriors." NBA teams revolve around the star players that the general managers are always searching for.

Furthermore, basketball is the type of game where one player can significantly determine the results. There are only five players on the court, and star players can average up to 40 minutes a game.

In the NHL, there are 20 players on the team and star players, such as Patrick Kane, only average nineteen minutes a game.

Some teams are even accused of having a yard sale and trading all the high paid players in order to make room for the messiah. According to Basketball RealGM, the average first round draft pick makes 4.5 million dollars a year.

Even college basketball has been influenced by the NBA draft. In the 1980's and 1990's most players stayed more than one year to develop their game. Now, there is a new crop of freshmen every year with plans to enter the draft when the long season ends, in hopes of being a first rounder.

There is no proof of "tanking" in the NBA and there never will be. No coach or general manager will ever admit to purposely losing games.

However, there are a lot of advantages to coming in last, and the public may never know what is happening behind the closed office of the general manager.