

Press Clippings 1/18/2018

NOTE: There were no U46-related news stories in the January 18, 2018 newspapers.

SPORTS SECTION

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Elgin-Larkin alumni games a smashing success

BY JERRY FITZPATRICK



Brandon Grissette, left, an Elgin High School alum, and Sherick Simpson, a Larkin High School alum talk on the baseline. Grissette organized the event. Simpson played 10 years in professional basketball and is in the Elgin Sports Hall of Fame. John Starks | Staff Photographer

If an event is judged by the number of smiles it triggers, Wednesday's Elgin vs. Larkin alumni basketball event at Chesbrough Field House can only be considered a rousing success.

Many of the players who starred on either side of town over the last three decades came together on a cold January night in front of a big crowd to test themselves and their sure-to-be-sore-in-the-morning hamstrings, all for the benefit of the Elgin Boys and Girls Club, thanks to organizer Brandon Grissette, a 2007 Elgin graduate.

"My main goal is not to tear anything," joked Larkin 2004 graduate and current Streamwood coach Paul Kowalyszyn. He didn't need to worry. Kowalyszyn still had some razzle dazzle in him, as demonstrated by a personal 7-0 run in the second half of the Old School game.

In fact, most of the players in both the Old School game and the New School game which preceded it showed they still had a lot of game left in them.

There were some memory jogging moments in the New School game. There was Elgin's Arie Williams and Larkin's Quentin Ruff matching each other 3-pointer for 3-pointer at the outset.

There was Elgin and Eastern Illinois graduate Jeremy Granger driving and dishing just like he did when he led the Maroons to a sectional championship.



Elgin High School alum Isaiah Butler glides past Larkin High School alum Ryan Smith at Chesbrough Field House at Elgin High School Wednesday night. John Starks | Staff Photographer

There was Larkin's JD Darke and Charles Sanders banging inside with Elgin's 6-foot-5 center D'Angelo Stewart from Elgin's 2008 sectional championship team.

Told he still had the touch in the paint, Stewart said 'Yeah, but I don't have the wind.'

There was former Wisconsin-Whitewater national champion running back Dennis Moore dropping 3-pointers just like the one he hit to beat Neuqua Valley in an Elgin Holiday Tournament semifinal when he was a senior.

"It was a great time," Moore said of the event. "It's cool getting back on the court with former teammates and guys I never actually got to get on the floor with that started before us and paved the way. And this new court is awesome, too. It was a great experience."

The Old School Players took it just as seriously if not more so, led by Illinois Basketball Coaches Association hall of fame inductees on either side: Larkin's Sherick Simpson and Elgin's Jessie Henderson.

Fans could take their pick of fun moments in the Old School game, like when Henderson stripped Simpson before he could attempt a 3-point shot. Or when Simpson drained a long second-half 3-pointer. Or when Henderson flipped a ball in over his head with his back to the basket. Or when Larkin girls basketball coach Steve Knapp buried a 3-pointer to the cheers of his team in the crowd. Or when Larkin's Nick Edwards drained a long 3-pointer to beat the halftime buzzer.

Larkin won the Old School game 65-57, but no one kept a scorebook and the final scores will be forgotten quickly if they haven't been already.

The real winners were charity and the kids who came out to watch Elgin's basketball history on display.

"It was beautiful," Simpson said. "It was good to see the community come out for an event like this. It's always big. It's rewarding to give back to the community and let the young kids see the old talent that paved the way for them. To see everyone come out like this is priceless."

The players hugged each other after the game like old friends, not the rivals they used to be.

"It's not about wins and losses," Henderson said. "It's to show the young people how we paved the way for them and to just give back. I haven't seen a lot of people. I live in Algonquin, so this is a blessing. I just went out there and played smart. I'm older now. I'm going to have a lot of aches and pains, but I've got my Advil in the car."

When it was all over, Grissette, who organized the event partly to show his 7-year-old son Christopher some of the great players in the city's history, breathed a sigh of relief and tipped his cap to the Elgin and Larkin basketball communities.

"I thank everyone for coming out," Grissette said. "Great turnout. It was bigger than I expected. I appreciate everybody that played a part."

Then Grissette walked away with Christopher at his side, flashing the biggest smile in the gym.