

SportsWeek

Gators

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gan, who coached his son at Gate of Heaven. And the floor has to be cleaned, "especially if they had something greasy for lunch," he joked.

Most of the new state champions enjoyed much less success in their Gators days. "We never had the greatest team, but it was always fun," said Matt Flanagan, who scored more than 1,000 points as a Gator.

Josh Aciekewicz has a more painful memory. During a seventh grade game, in only his second year playing basketball, he dribbled to the wrong end of the court — twice in the same game. "It was embarrassing," he said last week.

Fortunately he didn't shoot.

Then, when his eighth grade team got to the league championship game, "I missed every single shot I took."

Josh took up basketball for the most mundane of reasons. "I didn't have anything else to do," he said, after playing travel hockey through the fourth grade. So he took the advice of others who suggested his height would be an advantage in basketball.

Tim Crossin, whose 31 points led the Queensmen to the state title, played on the best Gate of Heaven team in recent years. His 2001 eighth grade team won the league and diocesan championship, earning a berth in the state playoffs, where they won three of four games.

When he began developing a deadly outside shot in the seventh grade, Crossin decided to stop playing baseball to concentrate on hoops. His O'Reilly teammates are glad he did; Crossin hit three of five three-point shots in the championship game, and scored 12 of the Queensmen's 22 fourth-quarter points as O'Reilly held off a charge from Sewickley Academy to win 70-54.

Ironically, only two of the five Gate of Heaven graduates ever played on the same team before joining the O'Reilly squad. Gate of Heaven teams are by individual grade, and only Crossin and Judge were in the same class.

But once they came together on the O'Reilly floor, things just clicked.

"Everyone has taken the team concept, and we play together," said Crossin, a junior.

Aciekewicz credits coach Mark Belenski, as well. "I was horrible when I first came to O'Reilly," he said. But good coaching and lots of practice paid off for the 6'-5" sophomore.

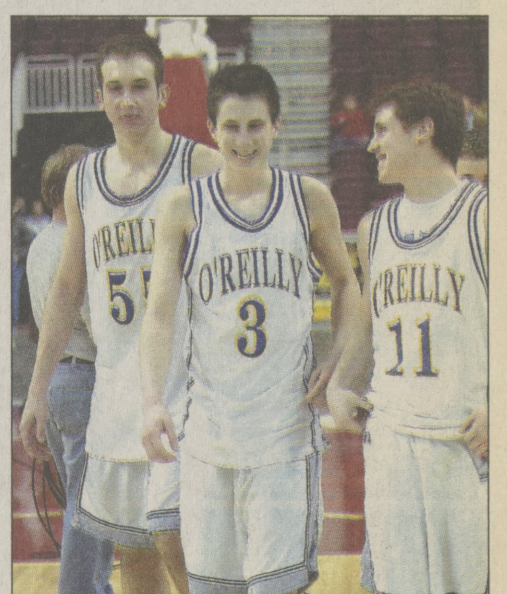
Some of the practice came from close to home. His father, John, played for Nanticoke in the mid-1970s. "We still shoot around in the back yard," Josh said. "I couldn't beat him when I was in the eighth or ninth grade; now I can take him."

Matt Flanagan, a senior, is also known as a workhorse. His father recalls the winter day he sent Matt out to shovel the driveway. After about five minutes, he began to hear the sound of a basketball banging against a backboard.

"He had shoveled out just enough to practice," Art Flanagan said.

Ann Lohin's four boys played basketball throughout their Gate of Heaven years, and at O'Reilly. A teacher at Gate of Heaven for 15 years, she said the GOH family is basking in the glory of the state championship.

"Oh my, everyone is so ecstatic," she said.



FOR THE POST/PETE G. WILCOX

Scenes from the championship game. Left: Josh Aciekewicz (55) went up against Ryan Bradford of Sewickley Academy in the PIAA Class A Boys Basketball State Final. Aciekewicz finished with 12 points and eight rebounds. Top: O'Reilly's Tim Crossin dribbled past Sewickley Academy's Matt Palmer. Crossin led all scorers with 31 points, including some clutch free throws down the stretch.

Above: Aciekewicz, Crossin and Chris Kester were all smiles after winning the PIAA Class A Boys Basketball State Championship at the Giant Center in Hershey. O'Reilly defeated Sewickley Academy 70-54 in the title game.

Former Gators lead Queensmen to victory

By DAVE KONOPKI
For The Post

HERSHEY — Tim Crossin scored a game-high 31 points, and a tenacious zone defense by the Queensmen forced Sewickley Academy to shoot 30 percent from the floor, as O'Reilly captured the PIAA Class A state championship with a 70-54 victory against the Panthers March 19. The game was played in front of 6,602 fans at the Giant Center.

The Queensmen finish the season with a 30-4 record, and have Wyoming Valley Conference Division III and District 2 Class A championships to

go along with their state title. O'Reilly also became the first boys team from the Wyoming Valley to win a state championship since the 1961 Nanticoke squad.

"Everyone on this team shows a lot of heart," said Crossin, a silky-smooth junior guard. "We hit a little road bump in the middle of the season, losing three out of four, and we had to show a lot of heart to get through that."

"Today, we got up by 21 and (Sewickley) started coming back, so we had to show some heart again. It's carried us this season."

Although zone defense has become

their trademark, the Queensmen started the game playing man-to-man against the District 7 champion. Sewickley (26-5) attempted to pound the ball inside to 6-foot-6 forward Corey Diethorn and 6-5, 220-pound center George Raftis. That failed.

After a collapsing Queensmen defense thwarted the strategy, the Panthers went to their perimeter game. And that failed miserably.

Sewickley shot 24 percent from the floor in the first half, including an 0-for-7 performance from three-point range.

"We went man-to-man early to get out all of the nervous energy," said

O'Reilly head coach Mark Belenski, who is assisted by coaches Joe Darling and Paul Guido. "We wanted to get the kids moving. Once we went to the zone, we shut down their inside. Once they started to struggle from the perimeter, we decided to stay in the zone."

After taking a three-point lead at the end of one quarter, the Queensmen opened the flood gates in the second quarter using a 13-0 run during a four-minute span.

Sophomore center Josh Aciekewicz, who finished with 12 points, started

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Arris Engineering captures DYB 5-6 girls championship

Arris Engineering defeated Bishop Photo 22-18 in the DYB 5th and 6th grade girls championship game. Dominique DeAngelo led Arris Engineering with 12 points.

Shannon Brobst added 6 points. Dana Krawetz and Amber Mulhern each scored 2 points.

Shown in the picture are the Arris Engineering team members.

From left, first row: Brittany Takacs, Chelsi Hunter and Shannon Brobst. Second Row: Coach Donald Brobst, Amber Mulhern, Ashley Napierkowski and assistant coach Sharon Krawetz. Third row: Demetra Szatkowski, Dana Krawetz and Dominique DeAngelo.



March Madness for kids, parents

The ninth annual Back Mountain Basketball Shootout will be held Sunday, March 28 at Dallas Middle School, starting at 12 noon.

There will be competition in three-point shooting, free throws and layups for boys and girls age 7-16 in multiple flights. There will also be a parent/child team shooting competition. Registration and warmup at noon, competition starts at 12:30 p.m.

The program is sponsored by the Kingston Township Recreation Commission. For more information, call 675-0066.

Youth soccer registration

Back Mountain Youth Soccer Association will hold registration for the fall, 2004 intramural season on Saturday, April 17, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Dallas Senior High School cafeteria. Age groups U-6 through U-18 will be accepted. Eligible players must be at least 5 years old before August 1, 2004. Social Security numbers and proof of age are required.