

Area stars gather for VIA All-Star Classic

by MIKE FEIFEL
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Saturday brought the Lehigh Valley's best basketball players together to play in the 32nd annual Via All-Star Basketball Classic at Freedom High School.

Of the four games, two highlighted five players from the Parkland area: Erin Anthony, Amy Heffner, Ashley Yencho, Adam Block, and Jaime Pagliaro.

"It's a great honor," Block said. "There are a lot of great athletes out there. To be selected means a lot to me."

For Block, it's also another chance to play with familiar faces.

"It's great to play with Jaime (Pagliaro) one more time," Block said. "The rest of these guys I'm pretty good friends with."

Block would go on to score four points while Pagliaro would score six for the Lehigh Valley West squad in the 108-83 lopsided loss.

On the girls side, The trio of Trojans took it to the East squad as they lit up the scoreboard for a combined 50 points in the team's 82-61 lopsided win.

Erin Anthony led all scorers with

23 points, Yencho punched in 20, and Heffner added seven.

"It's so cool to play in games like this. You find it hard not to have fun," Yencho said. "Everyone is so unselfish it's so awesome to play basketball with some one who loves it as much as you."

The level of play and intensity rivaled in season games as things got a little rough at times.

"It's all out of love," Yencho added. "It's just so much fun. I don't think there are any hard feelings out there."

Lady Trojan mentor Patty Heffner, coming off another sparkling year, coached her girls one last time as the head coach of the Lehigh Valley West #3 girls team.

"I'm going miss her so much she's such a great coach," Yencho said of her now former coach. "We couldn't have even gotten close with out here."

"She's brought the program to what it is today. To be a part of it was really, really awesome."

GIRLS LV West #3 82, LV East #1 61 LV EAST No. 1

Calabrese (Freedom) 1-3-4-5, Berlin (Freedom) 5-2-3-12, Jacksits (Northampton) 1-0-0-3, Smith (East Stroudsburg South) 3-0-0-6, LoCasico (East

Stroudsburg North) 3-0-0-6, Gassler (Northampton) 4-0-0-10, Determan (East Stroudsburg South) 1-0-0-2, Lutz (Easton) 3-9-12-17, Reid (Nazareth) 0-0-0-0. Totals: 21-14-19-61.

LV WEST No. 3

Schneck (Pocono Mountain East) 0-3-4-3, Scheitrum (Emmaus) 3-2-2-10, Johnson (Pocono Mountain West) 3-0-1-7, Fretz (Pleasant Valley) 4-2-5-10, Heffner (Parkland) 2-3-4-7, Yencho (Parkland) 7-3-3-20, Anthony (Parkland) 9-5-6-23, Villacis (Whitehall) 0-0-0-0. Totals: 29-18-25-82

LV East #1 31 30 - 61
LV West #3 44 38 - 82

Three-pointers: E - Gassler 2, Lutz 2, Jacksits 1; W - Yencho 3, Scheitrum 2, Johnson 1.

BOYS

LV East #1 108, LV West #3 83 LV EAST No. 1

Viscomi (Phillipsburg) 4-0-0-12, Scattene (Bethlehem Catholic) 3-0-0-6, Castillo (East Stroudsburg South) 1-1-2-3, Nimmons (Easton) 8-2-2-18, Puchales (Easton) 4-0-0-8, Woolridge (Freedom) 10-2-2-23, Hill (Liberty) 6-4-8-16, Kempton (Phillipsburg) 0-2-4-2, Wubbolt (Freedom) 7-2-2-20, Dickison (Stroudsburg) 0-0-0-0. Totals: 41-13-20-108

LV WEST #3

Kinek (Emmaus) 0-0-0-0, Smull (Pleasant Valley) 1-0-0-3, Artim (Whitehall) 1-2-2-4, McCutcheon (Pocono Mountain East) 1-3-4-5, Vines (Pocono Mountain West) 5-1-2-11, Block (Parkland) 2-0-0-4, Brown (Central Catholic) 2-1-1-5, Carpenter (Emmaus) 2-0-0-4, Edwards (Dieruff) 2-0-0-6, Hunter (Emmaus) 12-3-4-35, Pagliaro (Parkland) 3-0-0-6. Totals: 31-10-13-83.

LV East #1 54 54 - 108
LV West #3 41 42 - 83

Three-pointers: E - Viscomi 4, Wubbolt 4, Woolridge 1; W - Hunter 8, Edwards 2, Smull 1. 2, Smull 1.



Amy Heffner (above left) and Erin Anthony (above right) went out winners in their final game together, leading the West girls to an 82-61 win.

Adam Block (top right) and Jaime Pagliaro (far right) weren't as lucky, winding up on the losing end in the boys game, 108-83.



MIKE FEIFEL/THE PRESS

J-Mac teaches students to keep dreaming big

By KATIE MCDONALD
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All Jason McElwain wanted was to be part of the team. What he got was more than he ever expected.

McElwain, the teenager from Rochester, NY, who achieved hero status as he sent the crowd into a frenzy by scoring 20 points in under four minutes during a high school basketball game in 2006, met with students, teachers, and special guests at Freedom High School to share his experiences. And, he shared those moments, before and since that magical night, as a person living with autism.

"I'm not the real hero here," McElwain said. "The real heroes are my older brother Josh, and my mom and dad who pushed and fought for me. The real heroes are my teachers who encouraged me. I especially thank my classmates in special ed who are and always were my best friends. We just want to be seen as ordinary kids."

McElwain never considered himself different, especially when it came to sports. But at 5-6, he realized he probably wouldn't make his high school basketball team and joined the team as a manager.

"I just wanted to be part of the team," he said.

In the meantime, McElwain worked hard at the sport he loved, shooting baskets in his driveway, participating in open gyms, going to the YMCA and to several basketball camps.

"I drove my parents nuts with basketball," McElwain said. "I'm very passionate about sports, and I don't like to lose. My senior year was a magical year. At our last game, which was senior night, I was told I could suit up, but I might not get in."

With 4:19 left in the fourth quarter, number-52, 'J-Mac,' as his friends call him, entered the game for the Greece Athena Trojans. The cheering crowd, holding signs and pictures of McElwain, witnessed what was to become the 2006 ESPY Sports Moment of the Year.

After missing his first three shot attempts, McElwain hit six three-pointers and a jumper to score 20 points in the last 3:12 of the game. In the first and only

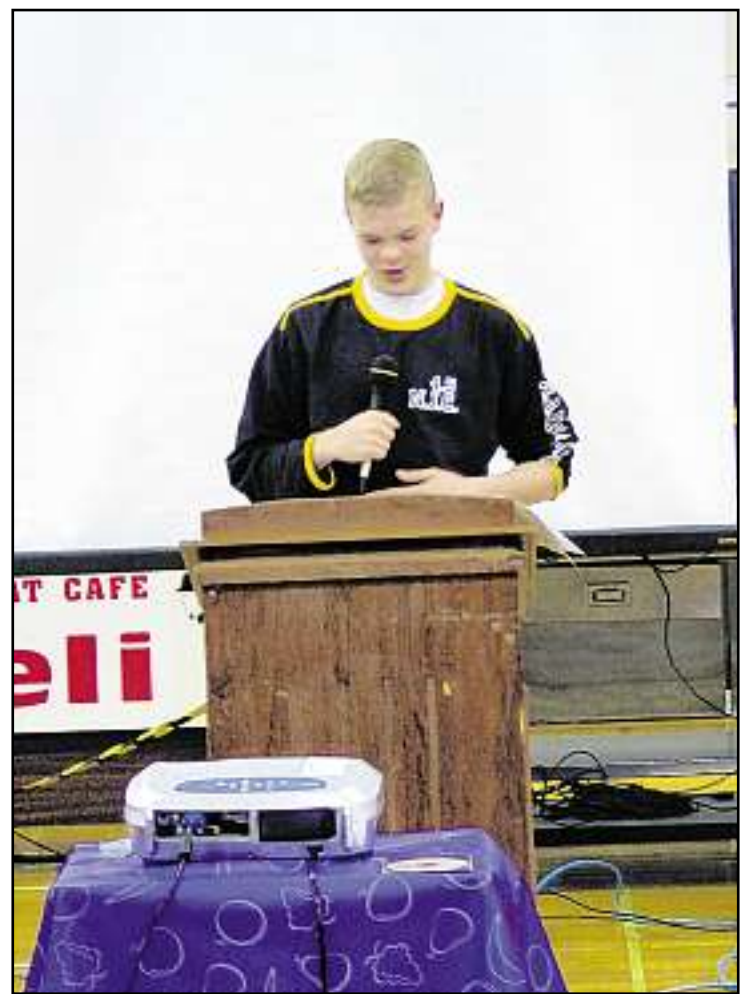
varsity game of his career, McElwain was his team's high scorer.

"A lot of positive things have happened since my magical game," McElwain told his audience at Freedom High School. "Since that game, I've been on CNN, ESPN, Good Morning America, and the CBS Evening News. I was invited to be on Oprah, and I met the President."

"It's no big deal, but I hope that more people have a greater awareness of autism and people with disabilities. What I do know is that everyone deserves a chance in life. You have to keep dreaming and strive for your dreams."

Presently, McElwain's dream is to go to college. In addition, Columbia Pictures has approached him about turning his life story into a movie.

In the meantime, McElwain hopes to continue to inspire people to set their goals high and achieve their dreams, which is more than he ever expected.



KATIE MCDONALD/THE PRESS

Jason McElwain wowed the nation last year by scoring 20 points in the final four minutes of a high school game last year in Rochester, NY. Last week, McElwain, who has autism, spoke to an assembled crowd at Freedom High School as part of the VIA All-Star Basketball Classic. Columbia Pictures is currently working on a movie based on McElwain's life.

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