

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

Optimist All-Star basketball is a senior showcase and final game for noted area coach

BY JOE DAVIDSON

April 4, 2019

Rob Richards radiates good cheer.

He lives for basketball, until it felt like it was going to kill him, forcing a man who hasn't hit 50 to assess things.

Richards will coach his final game in familiar school colors Saturday afternoon, ready to unwind from the coaching grind. He'll formally bow out as the Antelope High School boys basketball coach following the Optimist All-Star Game festivities at Sacramento's Dave Hotell Pavilion in Oak Park.

There will be four games in this senior showcase for charity. It's the 42nd annual game for the large-school boys, which caps the day with a 4 p.m. tipoff, following the large-school girls game at 2 p.m. The 10 a.m. game is the North vs. South small-school girls, followed by the small-school boys at noon.

For once, Richards will bow into the spring season in full relax mode, not needing to reach for keys to unlock the gym, to reach for his phone to adjust a game schedule, or to plan for spring and summer workouts and games.

"You just know when it's time," Richards said before Tuesday's North Boys practice. "I'm content."

Fatigue, blood pressure concerns, the endless grind of coaching wore on Richards, the only varsity boys coach in program history. Antelope opened in 2008 and by 2010-11 was a regional power. The Titans won five league titles and two Sac-Joaquin Section Division II championships with Richards, including a 30-2 juggernaut in 2012.

His replacement will be on the bench Saturday in Mike Dresser, and they will look to Ty Burrell to lead the charge one final time. A 6-foot-3 guard, Burrell averaged 23.7 points and 7.6 rebounds as a highlight for an otherwise frustrating 6-22 season undone by injuries.

This is a game for charity, but it's also a game to show what one can do. Scores of college coaches, from the junior college ranks on up, will take a peek.

There are players who lit it up all season, some in relative obscurity, some without the joys of reaching the playoffs.

The North Large School team includes 6-8 forward/center Krey Kyncoy of Bella Vista, who averaged 23.3 points, 12.7 rebounds and 2.6 blocked shots; Foothill Valley League MVP Konner Baroni of Placer, who averaged 14.8 points and 6.9 rebounds for an 18-11 team; and two-time Capital Athletic League MVP Jake Paxton of Rio Americano, a guard who averaged 15.5 points, 3.3 rebounds and 3.2 assists for a team that went 22-9.

Rocklin won two CIF Northern California Division II playoff games under Cory Gohl and Evan Terry, and they also represent the North.

The boys South Large School team is coached by Robert Fields of Monterey Trail, which boasts of two stars in this game in guard Andre Crump, who scored 50 in a game this season, and center Bryce Fitzgerald.

Fellow Bee All-Metro members Leland Estacio of Franklin, Preston Hall and Trey Jones of Capital Christian and Sierra Foothill League MVP Drake Middleton of Oak Ridge are on the South.

That roster also features three cogs from the best team in Northern California this season in Sheldon: guards Justin Nguyen and Kaito Williams and center Josh Morgan, who missed much of the season with a knee injury. Nguyen was The Bee's Co-Player of the Year with Sheldon teammate Marcus Bagley, a junior who expects to be in this game next year.

The one guy who knows the Sac High floor and rims well is Sacramento guard Izayah Talmadge, who averaged 19.2 points and 6.7 rebounds for a 20-11 team.

The South Small School girls team is coached by Mike Ruble, who can relate to health scares. The longtime Bradshaw Christian girls coach missed part of the season after undergoing open-heart surgery. Ruble, 47, returned in time to help the Pride win his and the program's eighth section championship.

Ruble's assistant coaches who took over in his absence were Marissa Wimbley and Alex Williams, and they will assist Ruble in this game. Guards Jasalyn Brown and Cookie Marques of Bradshaw Christian are on the roster.

The North Small School girls team is coached by Jeff Wise of Center, and he has Hannah Boone, Maylene Hughes and Selah Kitchiner of Center on the roster.

Patrick Roth of Cosumnes Oaks coaches the South Large School girls, which includes CO players Jasmine Hess and Jordyn Rosette and three from Sac High that won the section Division II championship: Andriana Avent, Muirae Gomez and RyAnne Walters. All made The Bee's All-Metro teams.

Sydney Gatson of Whitney is coaching the girls North Large School team that includes Whitney stars Emily Brustman, Lada Lewis and Makenzie Macfarlane. Foothill Valley League co-MVPs are also on the roster in Meadow Aragon of Nevada Union (19.8 points, 12.1 rebounds) and Tyra Al Mujadidi of Placer (9.2, 3.7).

And then there's Dean Stark, the tireless coach at Sacramento Waldorf. A 614-game winner over 33 seasons at the small-school powerhouse, Stark will coach the North Small School boys team, including his players in Tyler Duncan and Christopher Olson.

And Stark plans to keep on coaching, all-star games or otherwise.

His opponent, the South, is coached by Michael Lawrence of West Campus, which will include his players in Jair Lang, Demetrius Marshall and Maurice Simms, all of whom helped lead the Warriors to a 23-8 season.

42nd Optimist All-Star Basketball Games

Saturday at Sacramento High School

10 a.m. — Small schools girls

Noon — Small schools boys

2 p.m. — Large schools girls

4 p.m. — Large schools boys

Rosters

North Large School boys: Konner Baroni, Placer; Jordan Bryant, Del Campo; Ty Burrell, Antelope; Yaadvir Dhaliwal, Inderkum; Cory Gohl, Rocklin; Krei Kyncoy, Bella Vista; David O'Looney, Nevada Union; Jake Paxton, Rio Americano; Jonah Roth, Rio Americano; Graham Spitzer, Oakmont; Evan Terry, Rocklin; Jaylen Solich, Roseville; Jack Welty, Del Oro.

Head coach: Rob Richards, Antelope

South Large School boys: Andre Crump, Monterey Trail; Aiden Doms, Davis; Leland Estacio, Franklin; Bryce Fitzgerald, Monterey Trail; Preston Hall, Capital Christian; Bryce Johnson, St. Mary's; Trey Jones, Capital Christian; Drake Middleton, Oak Ridge; Josh Morgan, Sheldon; Justin Nguyen, Sheldon; Seve Noncon, Pleasant Grove; Jalen Scott, Folsom; Izayah Talmadge, Sacramento; Kaito Williams, Sheldon.

Head coach: Robert Fields, Monterey Trail

North Small School boys: Cameron Anthony, Mira Loma; Elias Bonds, Center; Blake Clavelle, Marysville; Eric Chayka, San Juan; Tyson Duncan, Sacramento Waldorf; William Goebel, Foothill; Jan Guardamano, Mira Loma; Maxin Iurco, Mesa Verde; Jalen McGlothen, Encina; Christopher Olson, Sacramento Waldorf; Philip Polezhako, Futures; Daniel Radu, Mesa Verde; Illyaas Rafiq, Marysville; Dupree Taylor, San Juan; Skyler Tuttle, Foresthill.

Head coach: Dean Stark, Sacramento Waldorf

South Small School boys: Jayden Baroni, Liberty Ranch; David Corona, Woodland Christian; James Egan, Pioneer; Christopher Folk, Delta; Jaime Gonzalez, Liberty Ranch; Nate Gotgotag, Elliot Christian; Jair Lang, West Campus; Demetrius Marshall, West Campus; Jonele Sanders, Cordova; Maurice Simms, West Campus; Joseph Wood, Rosemont.

Head coach: Michael Lawrence, West Campus

North Large School girls: Meadow Aragon, Nevada Union; Emily Brustman, Whitney; Nailah Dillard, Inderkum; Jenna Duley, Del Oro; Delaney Keddie, Placer; Madie Law, Roseville; Jada Lewis, Whitney; Keegan Linke, Lincoln; Makenzie Macfarlane, Whitney; Devy Millett, Folsom; Peyton Mitcheom, Granite Bay; Tyra Al Mujadidi, Placer; Jessie Ruffner, Rocklin; Arianna Spann, Antelope.

Head coach: Sydney Gatson, Whitney

South Large School girls: Andriana Avent, Sacramento; Muirae Gomez, Sacramento; Jasmine Hess, Cosumnes Oaks; Deyliana Lewis, Bear Creek; Devon Lewis, Wood; Lindsey Moody, Vista del Lago; Michelle Ogunsuyi, Franklin; Cristina Oliva, Davis; Jordyn Rosette, Cosumnes Oaks; Sarah Ruiz, Bear Creek; Chance Sims, Christian Brothers; Jenessa Souza, Vanden; Tayla Thompson, Monterey Trail; RyAnne Walters, Sacramento.

Head coach: Patrick Roth, Cosumnes Oaks

North Small School girls: Hannah Boone, Center; Taiyion Davis, Highlands; Maylene Hughes, Center; Heidi Johnson, Sacramento Country Day; Selah Kitchiner, Center; Sydne Long, Sacramento Waldorf; Brenna Mellish, Western Sierra; Akeeya Powell, Natomas; Bernada Rreshpja, Valley Christian Academy; Lily Sween, Forest Lake Christian; Lizzie Whitehead, Sacramento Waldorf; Ateca Williams, Mira Loma.

Head coach: Jeff Wise, Center

South Small School girls: Jasalyn Brown, Bradshaw Christian; Rachel Everett, Vacaville Christian; Nevaeh Galindo, Aspire Langston Hughes; Lilliana Hammons, Pioneer; Pati Hernandez, Pioneer; Sarah Hinton, Delta; Rachel Loya, Golden Sierra; Cookie Marques, Bradshaw Christian; Maisy McCollister, Dixon; Rashida Myers, West Campus; Alissa Pascoe, Woodland Christian; Nokia Penn, Valley; Taylor Sexton, El Dorado; Carley Zaragoza, Union Mine.

Head coach: Mike Ruble, Bradshaw Christian