

'Being a Team Player' Scores on Coach Cornett's Court

By Leslie Rott

Basketball was the name of the game August 10 and 11 when Sam Cornett and his family from South Haven came to Mackinac Island to teach players, ages five to 18, the skills of the game.

Children were split into two camps, those in grades seven and under met in the morning, and those in grades eight and up met in the evening. Both groups learned the basic fundamentals of basketball.

Baskets in the gymnasium at Mackinac Island Public School were lowered to eight feet and the Cornetts brought smaller balls with them, known as "peanut" balls, to make ball handling easier for younger players.

"Technique at this age is so important," said Rita Cornett. Success is the key to teaching, she added, and making changes to accommodate younger players allows them to make baskets, while learning appropriate ball handling techniques.

To improve on footwork, colored tape was placed on the floor, showing players exactly where to place their feet.

Balls rolled and baskets were missed, but learning was the mission at camp.

"Allow yourself to make mistakes, it's okay," Coach Sam Cornett told the students.

Getting the kids to understand



Colton Fisher marvels at the basketball after making a lay up shot.

that even if they did not make a basket, their technique is what matters.

Mr. Cornett emphasized that all of the skills being taught at camp could and should be practiced at home by the children every day. Shooting, he said, is the number one skill in basketball.

During the camp, games were played and trophies were awarded to those players who performed well. On the first day of

camp, trophies were awarded to Zola Murray and runner-up Colin Armstrong in a free throw contest, and to Jessica Beaune and runner-up Thomas Rilenge in a spot shooting contest. On the second day of camp, trophies were awarded to Zola Murray and Thomas Rilenge for being consecutive free throw champions, Morgan Brodeur-Bunker and Graham Young for being around the world champions, Katie Cornett and Sammy Cornett for being short corner/elbow champions, Jessica Beaune and Todd Cornett for being pig champions, and Morgan Brodeur-Bunker and Tyler Cherwonka for being Lakers den champions.

In the three-on-three team championship, the winners at the upper elementary level were Graham Young, Mark Cornett, and Sammy Cornett. Morgan Brodeur-Bunker, Zola Murray, and Colton Fisher won the middle elementary level and Jeremy Hepker, Katie Cornett, and Dominic Murray won the lower elementary championship.

A boy and girl Camper of the Week were crowned based on

effort, following instruction, and "coachability." Campers of the Week were Jessica Beaune and Tyler Cherwonka.

Mr. Cornett's children, who were helpers during the camp, were disappointed that they were not eligible to win trophies in the contests on the first day. The Cornetts daughter, five-year-old Katie, is a basketball playing machine and sinks nearly every shot she takes.

For Coach Cornett, basketball is a family affair. Where he goes, his family goes. His children are home schooled to accommodate a busy travel schedule. Mrs. Cornett said that if her children went to public school, they would not be able to travel and would never see her husband and their father.

This is Mr. Cornett's 10th year teaching at summer sports camp, which have been held in Covert and South Haven. This is his second year teaching a camp on Mackinac, and he expanded it to accommodate returning campers. He hopes to do the camp again in the future, as he and his family enjoy the Island

and make a vacation out of coming up here for camp.

Mr. Cornett was born and reared in Ypsilanti. He attended Eastern Michigan University, where he received a bachelor's degree in education. He also has taken graduate courses at Western Michigan University. He coached varsity boys basketball at Franklin Road Christian School for two seasons, varsity girls and boys basketball at Covert Public Schools for seven seasons, and is a coach for South Haven Public Schools. As a coach, Mr. Cornett has led his teams to four district championships, three regional championships, two final four championships, and in 2001, he led Covert to the state championships.

Mrs. Cornett said her husband runs his practices like college, and that is easy to see with a look at the camp schedule. Everything is planned to the minute, so, as Mrs. Cornett said, no time is wasted. Mr. Cornett and his team also pray before and after every practice and game they have.



The Cornett family includes (back row, from left) Sam, Mark, and Rita; (front) Todd, Sammy, and Katie.



Tymon Horn practices dribbling two basketballs simultaneously.

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