

Sheboygan Falls News, August 30, 2006

Falls native Gosse aims to raise the bar for good sportsmanship

by Jeff Pederson
Sheboygan Falls News Editor

As an athlete, coach, referee and a sports lover at heart, Sheboygan Falls native Bill Gosse has witnessed the good, the bad and the ugly when it comes to the wide range of human behavior inside the world of competitive sports.

As both an active participant and a passive observer, Gosse has seen parents, coaches, athletes, fans and officials make complete spectacles of themselves in the heat of the sporting moment. As the pressure to win at all costs continues to escalate while the standards of sportsmanship plummet to new depths at all levels of sports, Gosse believes it is time to step in and do something about this troubling trend.

Along with co-founder Robert Brooks and fellow-director Walter Fick, Gosse recently founded TeamScore Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to teaching sportsmanship to adults, and parents in particular.

After years of thought along with months of planning and organization, TeamScore Inc. celebrated its official launch in early July and Gosse says the new endeavor is now off and running at a steady pace.

"With my background in sports as an athlete, coach and referee, I had been thinking about this for quite a long time," Gosse said. "I witnessed parents berating officials, and coaches who were micro-managing young student-athletes.

"I have talked to many people who say that the sports environment today is insane. Many kids today fear the ride home after an athletic contest because that is when their parents belittle and criticize them, that's sad."

Gosse, who operates TeamScore Inc. out of his home office in Wayside, grew up in a simpler time when sports were more about fun, camaraderie and learning than victories, defeats and statistics.

He was born and raised in Sheboygan Falls playing football, basketball, baseball and golf

during his high school years. Gosse earned nine athletic letters in high school before graduating in 1980.

After continuing his education at Marquette University, Gosse made the most of a memorable two-year stint as a walk-on member of the Marquette men's basketball team during the 1981-82 and 1982-83 seasons.

"I got to play on the last teams that Hank Raymonds coached and Rick Majerus was the assistant coach at the time," Gosse said. "It was a thrill to play for them and also be on the same team with Doc Rivers. Until the mid-1990's, I could say that I was on the last Marquette team that played in the NCAA Tournament."

Gosse, who lives with his family in Wayside, was also a standout member of Marquette's baseball team for four seasons before graduating with a liberal arts degree featuring a major in German and a minor in computer science in 1985.

"The whole Marquette experience was pretty incredible," Gosse said. "I got to travel on planes for the first time and see the country. I also got to see the business side of college sports and how the magnetism of alumni groups and groupies shapes big-time college sports programs. That was back in the early 1980s, now of course everything has escalated to a much grander scale."

After graduating from college and entering the insurance field, Gosse stayed involved in sports as a high school football referee and a coach. He worked at Heritage Insurance in Sheboygan between 1985 and 1988 while also coaching the Sheboygan Falls freshman boys' basketball team.

In 1988, Gosse moved to the Green Bay area to take a job at Employers Health Insurance. While continuing to serve as a football referee, he eventually returned to the coaching world as a youth coach for his sons' basketball and baseball teams.

In his roles as an official, a parent and a coach, Gosse viewed things in the sporting arena that continued to disturb him.

"I have five sons between the ages of 2 and 13, so I do know what it is like to be a parent of a young athlete," Gosse said. "However, I saw more and more that officials and coaches were deciding to leave their positions based solely on sportsmanship-related issues. In the inner city of Milwaukee and the larger

metropolitan areas, some officials and coaches often fear for their lives based on the extreme words and actions of parents. It is not just the larger cities either; every town has similar kinds of problems."

After corporate downsizing led to the elimination of his job at HSA Bank in Sheboygan in January, 2006, Gosse decided it was time to take his professional life in a much different direction.

"I had been working up to making a move like this," Gosse said. "When my job was eliminated earlier this year, I knew it was a sign for me to do this full-time."

Gosse's fondness for public speaking developed in 1994 when he served as a loaned executive for the United Way.

"Working with the United Way gave me a chance to speak in front of groups, help companies with various campaigns and make presentations in front of large audiences," Gosse said. "I found that I really enjoyed that and right then I think it planted a seed in my mind."

After having his position eliminated, Gosse spent the next several months deciding where to go with his plans to launch his own full-time business endeavor. A meeting in March at the state basketball tournament with WIAA Communications Director Todd Clark helped things fall into place for Gosse.

"Things really started to get rolling when I met with Todd Clark at the state basketball tournament," Gosse said. "I told him about the idea I had for teaching sportsmanship to parents. He really liked the idea and thought that there was no one teaching sportsmanship to parents on a full-time basis in Wisconsin or the entire country."

From there, I really started to devote myself to the idea and in July we launched TeamScore Inc. as a non-profit organization. The TeamScore Inc. logo features five hands coming together in the spirit of sportsmanship with each hand representing players, coaches, fans, officials and parents. The organization's motto is "When Sportsmanship Prevails, We All SCORE." In turn, Gosse says SCORE is short for-Sports Creates Opportunities to Respect and Encourage.

"People ask me all the time why I started TeamScore Inc. as a non-profit organization," Gosse said. "I always tell them it's

because my goal is not financially driven. I feel that with this, I am out to accomplish a mission.”

Gosse says the prevailing thought that winning is the only thing that matters in youth sports needs to undergo a major adjustment through education.

“My goal is to teach parents that athletes learn through success *and* failure,” Gosse said. “We don’t succeed at everything we do. We need to reinforce the idea that it’s okay to make mistakes.”

“I have read studies where 70 percent of youth athletes drop out of sports by age 13 because of burnout. That burnout is a direct result of parental influence.”

Gosse started his public speaking itinerary at an athletic code meeting at Shawano High School Aug. 3. He plans to have many more similar engagements in the coming months including appearances at the WIAA Sportsmanship Summit in Stevens Point in October and the Wisconsin Athletic Directors Convention in November.

“We are just getting this thing going and the possibilities are pretty exciting right now,” Gosse said. “We have received many positive reactions. I really enjoy having a chance to go back to the small and mid-sized communities and talk to groups of people about these issues.”

TeamScore Inc. recently completed a study in conjunction with the WIAA in efforts to gauge the perceived sportsmanship environment at every high school in the state. Gosse hopes TeamScore Inc. can continue to work with the WIAA on future sportsmanship-enhancing projects.

“We sent out a survey to every athletic director in the state and we have been putting together the results in the past few weeks,” Gosse said. “The preliminary results show that 80 percent of all schools in the state have indicated an interest in working to improve the level of sportsmanship in their communities.”

As for the future of TeamScore Inc., Gosse says the sky is the limit.

“Right now, we are talking to a few possible corporate sponsors,” Gosse said. “We have been meeting with heads of banks and corporations, but we don’t have a major sponsor as of yet. I have been contacting many different people with Sheboygan Falls and Marquette ties as well as people in the business world and beyond to see who would be interested in

helping us get this off the ground.”

Gosse admits that starting a full-time venture such as TeamScore Inc. might seem like a long shot, but that is a position in which he is quite familiar.

“People told me that I had no chance to walk-on to the Marquette men’s basketball team,” Gosse said. “I managed to stay committed to that goal and played on the team for two years.”

“I have a vision for this which would advance it to a national and maybe even an international level. The possibilities of writing a book, a television documentary and a teaching video are all things I would like to pursue. Sports has given me some lifetime memories that really matter. To me, those memories and experiences will always be much more important than wins, losses or trophies.”

For more information about TeamScore Incorporated contact Bill Gosse by phone at 920-864-2678 or e-mail at bgosse@teamscoreinc.com.