

SPORTS

Maui Summer Classic basketball tournament under way

BY WALTER CHIHARA

LAHAINA — The now-defunct World Junior Basketball Tournament that took place here on Maui over the last four summers left a sour taste and a negative impression on most who took part in the events. There was public squabbling between coaches and officials, unkept promises regarding activities and perks of the tournament, and a general lack of interest in any renewal of the program.

Enter AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) youth basketball promoter Mike Bradley of Tacoma, Washington, to sweeten things up and bring back a bona fide youth sports event to Maui, the Maui Summer Classic.

Bradley, 47, is a former standout basketball player at Austin-Peay University who also played professionally with the Phoenix Suns

and the Portland Trailblazers. Today he runs AAU basketball in the Pacific Northwest while also running a program called "On The Ball," which helps underprivileged kids get into college via their hoop skills.

"It's a free service that gives kids advice on how to get into college," Bradley explained last week. "It started out with us taking kids around in a van to different schools so that the coaches could get a look at them. Mostly, we funnel them into the juco (junior college) system and then from there to the Division I schools. We've been doing this for 12 years now, and some of the players that we helped are now in the NBA, including Jamal Crawford, Jason Terry and Michael Dickerson."

Today, Bradley is feverishly working to erase the sour experience of the past and promote the Maui Summer Classic that tipped off on Monday. The new tournament has drawn 36 teams to Maui, including 18 from Hawaii and 18 others from as far away as

Maine, Indiana, Illinois and Texas, to compete in the event and also to enjoy the beauty and aloha of Maui.

Rosters are made up of intermediate- and high school-age players divided into three brackets of teams that will compete in a round-robin format. The event will climax with championship finals this Friday at Lahaina Civic Center.

"We want to give the local kids a chance to play," said Bradley. "This should be their tournament, Maui's tournament. Our goal is to be a part of a successful tournament by getting the local people involved and getting their help of local resources. This is key, to get the local coaches, officials and community involved in the process."

"We are on a healing mission with this new organization," Bradley continued. "We're here at the Royal Lahaina Resort and this is our central base. The games will be played at the Lahaina Civic Center, Lahainaluna High School, War Memorial Gymnasium and Baldwin High School gym all week long. On Wednesday, there will be no games to let the



Bradley

players and their families enjoy some of the tourist activities, including a teen dance at the Alii Room with a local deejay. On Sunday, we'll have the opening ceremony at the Civic Center with Mayor Alan Arakawa and Deputy Parks Director John Buck followed by a luau at the Royal Lahaina Luau grounds."

All of the championship games will be played on Friday at Lahaina Civic Center, followed by an awards ceremony with entertainment and a barbecue dinner provided by Art Ortiz and the Kahana Outback Steakhouse.

Bradley expressed his appreciation to June Pagdilao and the Royal Lahaina Resort staff for their help in presenting a quality experience for the participating teams.

"I'd also like to thank the Maui County Parks and Recreation Department, the Lahainaluna and Baldwin High School staffs, as well as the Lahaina community for their help in getting this tournament back on track. I'm really impressed at how we have rebounded, and I look for a top quality event, with some of the top teams in the country coming here for the 2005 tournament." ■

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