Ex-GM Grunwald still involved with basketball

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and create new jobs so the community benefits," he said. "That's our hope and goal, advocating for things that will help the business community."

One of the projects Mr. Grunwald will be involved with is the merger of the board of trade and North York Chamber of Commerce.

As well, he will be making frequent visits to Ottawa to talk with federal government representatives on issues important to the Toronto business community.

He says his new and old jobs are as different as night and day. He's not living under a microscope he was with the Raptors.

'It's all a part of the game. I knew that my contract was up and we weren't doing well. It wasn't much of a surprise. But I'm still a Raptors fan and try to root for them. There's a transition going on right now, but they'll get things straightened out.'

Take 1998, when Mr. Grunwald addressed the crowd at Maple Leaf Gardens after the Raptors ended a brutal 16-66 season with a 29-point loss. "I understand your sentiments," Mr. Grunwald told the booing fans.

The high point was being a Vince Carter jumper away from the third round of the 2001 playoffs.

There's far less pressure in his new job, especially from the media.

"You don't have the same game-by-game, win-loss pressures here," he said. "It's not so focused on one thing — the game. And there's not as much travel as there was with the Raptors. Here (with the board of trade) though, we want to make a difference, to be successful to help the business community. There aren't a lot of people talking a lot about us on the radio or television."

NATIONAL PROGRAM

While Mr. Grunwald might be out of the professional basketball limelight, he still maintains a hand in the game.

He's on Basketball Canada's board of directors, including the committee searching for a new head coach for the men's team.

He's also a minority partner in a consortium installing seven indoor basketball courts at the Downsview Park hangar in North York.

"We intend to put in first class wood courts," he said of the project which is slated to be completed by May.

To be known as the Hoop Dome, Mr. Grunwald said the courts would be utilized for tournaments, youth league games and instructional camps.

A Markham resident when he joined the Raptors in 1994 as the club's vice-president of legal affairs and assistant general manager, Mr. Grunwald harbours no bitterness at how he left the team.

He still follows the daily fortunes of the team and remains optimistic the new regime under his successor, Rob Babcock, can right the ship.

"It's all a part of the game. I knew that my contract was up and we weren't doing well. It wasn't much of a surprise," he said of his firing. "But I'm still a Raptors fan and try to root for them. There's a transition going on right now, but they'll get things straightened out."

Living in Aurora along with wife Heather Bird, a former Toronto Sun columnist, and their two-year-old son Will, they will move to Whitchurch-Stouffville later this year.

Mr. Grunwald has already been a frequent visitor to Stouffville as his children from his first marriage, Emma, 11, and Gabe, 10, attend Whitchurch Highlands Public School. Playing house league hockey for the past two years in Newmarket, Gabe is also a first-year goalkeeper with the Stouffville minor peewee AE rep squad.

Having played basketball most of his life, Mr. Grunwald finds it refreshing to be a hockey parent.

"It's a lot of fun," said Mr. Grunwald, who at six-foot, nine-inches, is usually the tallest hockey dad in the rink. "The kids on the team are fun to be around. As long as my kids like it then I'll remain around."

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Obtaining dual citizenship in 2001 along with Emma and Gabe, Mr. Grunwald said they've enjoyed living in York Region. It's to the point now where he doesn't foresee moving in the near future.

"It's almost like Chicago in that you get cold weather in the winter time. It's a great place to live with so many great people and there's so many things to do."

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