

YRAA sports flourished under former SDSS coach

BY JOHN CUDMORE
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The argument that high school sports are mere fun and games won't fly in all corners of the athletics community.

Just as surely, staying on top of organizing these extra-curriculars is no small task.

In fact, when September breaks and the fall sports scene opens, it will be with 50 high schools represented on the York Region Athletic Association roster. That translates into a lot of fun and games.

For the past 10 years, it has been the role of Steve Shantz to oversee high school sports as YRAA's athletic co-ordinator. You think you have your hands full? Try juggling the hundreds of students who signed up to participate this school year in an array of sports.

A former physical education teacher at Middlefield Collegiate before moving to Stouffville District Secondary School from 2001-02 to 2003-04, then landing with the YRAA, Shantz served his final day in the job when the 2013-14 academic year concluded before moving his family later this summer to Qatar where he will become aquatics director for the American School of Doha.

Mark Arsenault, a veteran teacher and track and field coach at Bill Crothers Secondary School, succeeds Shantz as the fourth athletic co-ordinator in 16 years since the role was introduced.

"Sports is the same as drama or the arts," said Shantz, who points out that the recently ended school year featured 1,190 teams, or nearly 400 participating in each of three seasons from September to June. "It just so happens we have more kids involved in sport and more inter-school activities.

"It's the high percentage of kids participating in sports that is one of the things I'm most proud of. That and the recognition of sport being an important part of overall education and making education for kids more experiential."

Clearly, the 48-year-old Shantz is an advocate of the important role sports plays in the lives of students in all aspects of their lives.

"In the 1980s, people understood the intrinsic value of sports and arts in the overall educational value in school," he said. "We got arrogant in the 90s and stopped understanding how valuable that stuff was. I don't know where it happened but somewhere along the line it became focused on outcome."

At Stouffville Secondary, he noted former physical education teachers Dave Connell and Sheila Coleman set the tone for students to be actively involved in sports once the school bell sounded to end classes for the day.

"It was a real sporting school," he recalled. "Sports is what kept the kids in school."

He helped coach a couple of Spartan teams to YRAA titles and Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association appearances, working with Jim Fletcher in volleyball and rugby coaches Jamie Hewitt and Kevin Julyan.

He remembers the likes of student athletes Gavin Howe, who now teaches in the York Region District School Board, Shane Timms and Ben Bellissimo.

"There were a lot of fond memories and great kids," he said.

-with files from Michael Hayakawa



STEVE SHANTZ: Former York Region high school sports co-ordinator accepts job in Qatar.

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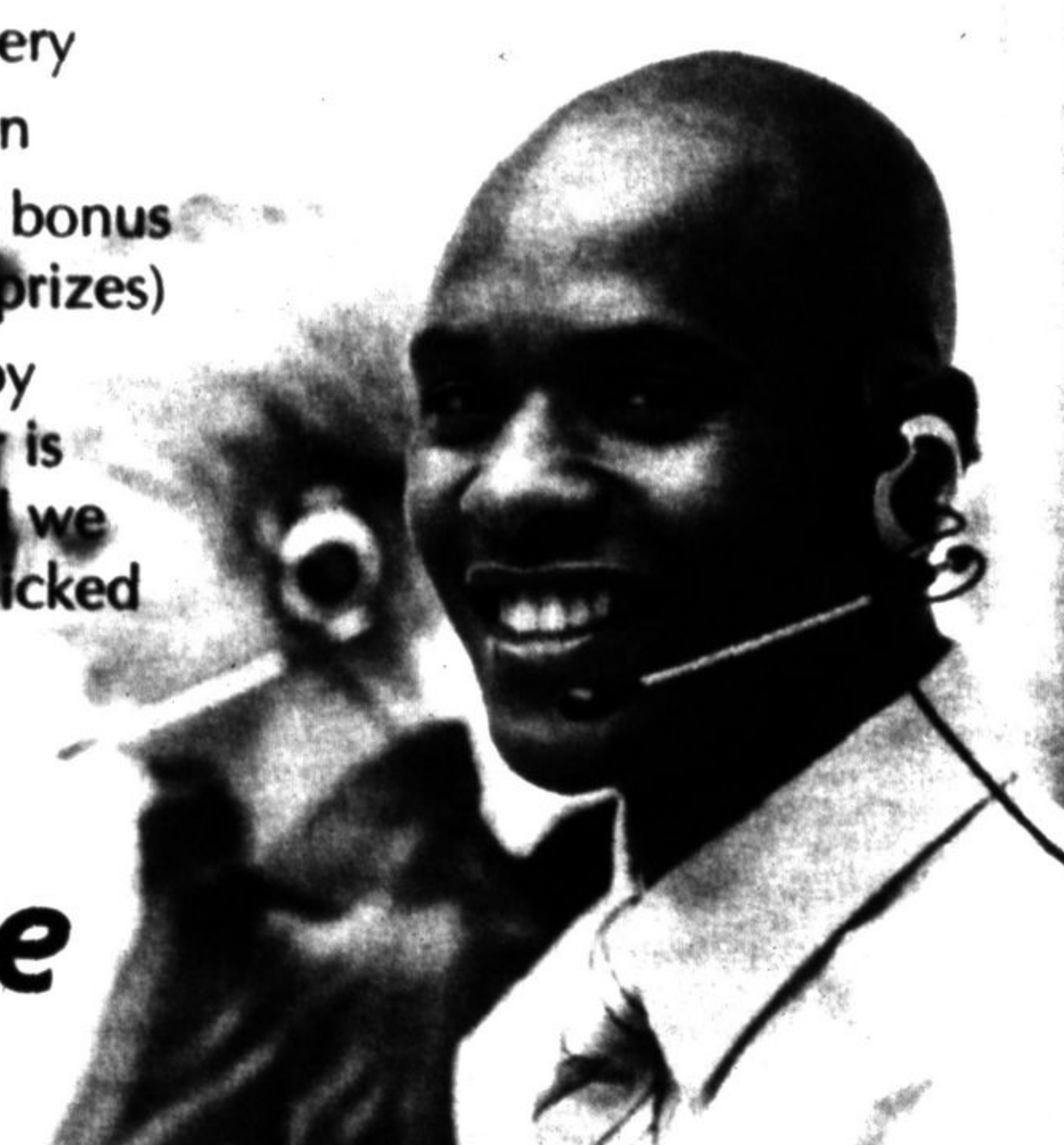
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