

Smashing success

Volleyball tournament comes up aces for ACS

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Family gave Brad Glouner his love for volleyball and now his love for volleyball is giving back to his family.

Glouner is the assistant boys' volleyball coach at Warwick High School and also the organizer of the Susquehanna Smash Volleyball Tournament which was held at Linear Park in Lititz Saturday and Sunday, July 31 and Aug. 1. The grass court volleyball tournament was played for the second-straight year, and it included players competing in 13 divisions on 51 courts.

Glouner, who grew up watching his father Dave play in open tournaments, starred as a high school player at Hempfield and also at St. Franics (Pa.). His father, now 64, still competes. Glouner began playing doubles in high school and continued to play in tournaments all over the East Coast, but there were no large volleyball tournaments in the Lancaster area. He was inspired by the Pottstown Rumble and started the Susquehanna Smash a year ago.

The tournament had a successful first run in 2009. A male and female student each received a partial scholarship to the college of their choice from the funds raised. But in the winter, Glouner and his family were hit with some disheartening news. That's when he decided to change the tournament's focus.

"Right around Thanksgiving, my uncle (Carl Hischman) was diagnosed with stage four liver cancer and a month later his wife (Marilyn Hischman) found out she had breast cancer," Glouner said. "My mother-in-law also died of pancreatic cancer. We were excited last year when we could raise money for scholarships for student-athletes. We liked that idea and the kids were very appreciative, but we decided to align ourselves with the American Cancer Society this year. Cancer effects more people."

That's why proceeds from this year's event, titled "Smash for the Cure," went to the American Cancer Society. The tournament also generated funds for the awareness-raising organization by holding a serving competition for prizes and a raffle drawing for AVP memorabilia with autographs from professionals and Olympic gold medalists Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh-Jennings.

The sport that Glouner loves has given him an outlet for raising awareness and funds for an important cause. Carl, currently undergoing chemotherapy treatments, but staying active by cycling, made it to the opening ceremonies Saturday morning. Wearing his "LIVESTRONG" T-shirt and a bracelet, he helped Glouner build support among the competitors.

"This tournament generating money for this cause is great," Hischman said. "Any fundraiser for cancer is a good thing. I like to see the cause being put at the forefront of an event like this because it creates a great deal of awareness. I've had a lot of great support. People stop and visit and call me on the phone. It really keeps me pumped up."

The American Cancer Society, which had a representative on hand to answer questions and hand out information, estimates that 11.4 million Americans had or have cancer and more than 75,000 new cases are expected in Pennsylvania this year. With those staggering numbers, many of the athletes at the tournament had personal experience with the disease just like Glouner and Hischman. One of the competitors was 59-year-old Ed Beasley, of Harrisburg, who was competing with Gary Gordon in the 45-and-Over Division.

"The connection with (the American Cancer Society) is fabulous," Beasley said. "My mother died of breast cancer and my father died of lung cancer, so it's a cause that's near to my heart. I entered the tournament to play in the division, but when I found out it was helping cancer awareness, I saw it as a tremendous opportunity to give back."

Beasley, who plays in as many as seven volleyball tournaments throughout the summer, represents another reason that Glouner and his army of volunteers put the hours into organizing the Susquehanna Smash.

"This isn't a sport that you just play for a little while," Glouner said. "Volleyball is a sport you can play for a lifetime. One of the reason's we've improved as a team at Warwick (High School) is because many of our incoming players are getting exposure to the game at a younger age. It's addicting. It really is a lifestyle."

Athletes at the event ranged from those competing in the 45-and-Over Division, to professionals, to former collegiate volleyball players, to weekenders, to high school hopefuls.

Jim Graff, a 43-year-old from Lincoln University, competed in the Men's B Division with doubles partner Mark Singh-Heuter. He's been playing volleyball for 20 years and doubles with Singh-Heuter for four years. He didn't pick up the game until after college, but like Glouner, he became addicted to the game.

"We don't collect stamps or build models. We play volleyball," Graff said. "We play in tournaments all around, about six each season."

At the opposite end of the age bracket was the twin sister tandem of Cassidy and Remington Sangry. The 16-year-old twins from Millersville were competing in the Girl's 16-and-Under Division for the second year in a row. During the school year, they compete for Penn Manor High School, but the Susquehanna Smash provides some practice in the offseason.

"I like it a lot," Cassidy said. "It's great competition for us, and we like walking around when we aren't playing and watching the high level players. We can learn a lot watching the best players here."

Glouner's friend and Warwick boy's head coach Nate Gajecki looks at the tournament like a true coach. Young players can improve and those that love the sport can continue to play it.

"Having these outside tournaments gives kids and adults just another way of playing," Gajecki said. "We teach the kids in high school that this is a sport you'll play the rest of your life. It's tough to play football beyond high school or college. We'll have some guys in their upper 50s and 60s and kids 10 and 11 years old playing with their dads."

Kids playing with their fathers is fitting, because at the Susquehanna Smash, volleyball and family go hand-in-hand.