

# Sports

Gannett Newspapers/Monday, January 13, 1997

## NBA's Thorn enjoys being Dad and a fan

### His daughters continue family's basketball tradition

**By Leslie Feffer**  
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Just what was Rod Thorn, the NBA senior vice-president of basketball operations, doing at Rye High School's girls basketball game during the holidays?

He was in the bleachers, intently watching his daughters' Rye team competing in the championship game of the Rye Rotary Holiday Classic. Instead of reviewing NBA game tapes to monitor the conduct of players, coaches and officials, he was cheering the home team.

"I think it's important to be as supportive as I can," said the father of twins Jessica Thorn and Amanda Thorn, seniors at Rye.

His busy schedule limits him to attending games on weekends and nights, but it doesn't curtail his pride and enthusiasm.

Amanda, a forward, and Jessica, a guard, have been playing varsity since 10th grade. Jessica is recuperating from a surgically repaired right knee and has been on the sidelines, keeping game statistics while she anxiously awaits clearance from her doctor to return to action. Her father has been very encouraging about her recovery progress and eagerness to return, probably later in the month.

"He's very optimistic and reminds me that I'll be back into it soon," she said.

The Thorn family is best-known for its basketball accom-

plishments. Older brother J.J. Thorn plays at West Virginia Wesleyan College. Rod was a former NBA star (with the Baltimore Bullets, Detroit Pistons and Seattle SuperSonics), a coach of several teams, and general manager of the Chicago Bulls (Michael Jordan was drafted during his tenure).

The twins also play tennis and lacrosse. They currently are applying to Duke, Georgetown (both have been accepted there), Stanford and Virginia, with hopes of playing lacrosse.

That's good thinking, according to Rye basketball coach Mary Henwood, who also coaches lacrosse.

"They know they can't play Division I basketball, so they really turned on to lacrosse," she said. "Their father has developed a strong interest in lacrosse and attends as many games as possible."

Henwood praised the girls for their academic accomplishments — both are in the top 10 of the class — and their hard work on the court. She said their closeness is an advantage for the team, as they work well together and always seem to know where the other is on the floor.

Rye won the Rotary Classic title, has a 5-2 record and is ranked No. 4 in the Gannett Suburban Newspapers Conference III poll.

"We get along really well,"

Amanda said. "I know Jessica better than other people do and I know just when to pass the ball to her."

Jessica commented there really isn't any competition between them, as they play different positions.

"It's more of a help relationship where she'll need me to give her an assist, or vice versa," she said. "I can always turn around and find where she is."

The sisters have been playing basketball since the seventh grade, crediting their father and brother for sparking their interest.

"It just seemed like a really fun sport, so I decided to try it," Jessica said. "We've always been around basketball, so it was a natural that we'd take it up."

Their father believes it's important for him to be as supportive as possible and to place a high priority on their enjoyment.

"There has not been any pressure on them, from either my wife or me, to play," he said. "They just play because they want to have a good time."

"I try to make my critiques positive and appropriate. The only thing I try to emphasize is to make sure they're having fun, working hard and trying as hard as they can. Athletics teaches kids lessons about how to compete and to hang in there when things aren't going well. I think both of them do that very well."