

AMHERSTBURG LEISURE

AMHERSTBURG, ANDERDON,
MALDEN, HARROW AND AREA



Mano Watsa, centre, conducts a basketball camp at his home off County Road 50. Sponsored by Converse Canada, the camp aims to promote Canadian basketball. "We've given the campers more of an understanding of the Canadian game," says Watsa. "We've been fortunate to attract hard-working kids interested in learning the basic fundamentals."

Basketball, the Canadian way

**Story and photo
by Frank S. Graziano**
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HARROW

In the most unlikely of settings, off County Road 50, an area icon is teaching kids about basketball — the Canadian way.

He is Mano Watsa, a Harrow native whose basketball talents on the court have brought him national recognition. His talents off the courts have also brought area kids closer to understanding the Canadian game.

"Canadian basketball does exist," says Watsa, who operated four camps out of his home this summer. "Having the CIAU division rather than the traditional NCAA division that's found in most camps has given the campers more of an understanding of the Canadian game.

"It creates awareness amongst the kids while hopefully increasing the in-

terest for the game."

The camps, geared towards players of both genders, ages six through 14, utilizes a unified, disciplined effort from its members. According to Watsa, all the drills are intentionally done in unison to help maintain a balance amongst the kids.

Building confidence

"By working together, the players can build more confidence from one another and help each other to learn the game," he says.

"It's sometimes a difficult concept to establish, but we have been fortunate to attract hard-working kids interested in learning the basic fundamentals."

The camp registration numbers would support his theory. Since its inception three years ago, registration has increased nearly 200 per cent.

His camp fielded 150 players this

summer as well as landing a sponsorship from Converse Canada.

"I was really surprised to have them commit to a community camp like this, but their impact has already reached the campers," said Watsa. "Almost all of the players in our camps are sporting Converse attire."

Watsa's decision to keep the camp's length at half-a-day seemed to promote the Canadian intercollegiate game. It's a concept that has been unanimously accepted by the players.

"Playing for half-a-day gives us a chance to do something else in the afternoon," says 12-year-old Gary Filiatrault of Amherstburg.

It has also given Filiatrault the confidence to try out for his St. John the Baptist school team next year.

It's an opportunity to play basketball created by Watsa's interest in the community.