Made for Redding

South Western grad Bill Redding guided the Reading High School boys.

By CORY MULL

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It was over, so it was time to do something he would remember all his life.

Hoping to make this a family affair, a sharply dressed Tim Redding rushed across the court amid a celebration of red uniforms encircled near the Reading High boys' basketball bench last Saturday at the Giant Center in Hershey.

He skipped off the court where, as coach of the Red Knights, he had just won the District 3 Class AAAA championship against previously undefeated Hempfield, and jumped over a row of metal fences.

He then leaned slightly against a white speckled board that Hershey Bears hockey players normally crash into. And, as a smile curled around his face, he pulled in his son Carter over the railing.

Redding carefully placed Carter, 3½, back over the metal fencing before jumping over it himself and returning to the court to savor the championship moment with his first-born child.

"Carter is a basketball junkie himself, I think," said Redding, a 1997 graduate of South Western High who also has a younger daughter, Bella. "I come home from practice or come home from school and he's dribbling the ball. It's no pressure that we give him as a family. It's just a matter of he sees Daddy dribbling that ball a lot and he loves to do it himself."

Here, only two years into his high school coaching career, Redding has his third piece of hardware - he won a Berks County title in his first year and another one this season.

He's a rookie coach no more.

He's now fully integrated into the rich Reading basketball tradition, one that's among the best in Pennsylvania.

The district championship is Reading's 19th in school history and sends the Red Knights into the PIAA tournament at 5:30 p.m. Saturday at Hersheypark Arena.

He makes quick work, doesn't he?

He seems so young to be in this position, guiding a
historically great program whose most famous graduate is former NBA player Donnell Marshall, but Redding, 32, seems predestined to be here - if the name doesn't clearly spell it out for you.

"Tim is an exceptional man," said South Western boys' track coach Bob Shue, who guided Redding on the track from 1993-97. "I really am so happy to see him doing well."

Fact is, Redding could never say no to the sport - even if it said no back.

At South Western, he was a star, for sure. It just wasn't in basketball. The three-sport athlete was a stand out more on the gridiron and on the track than with that orange piece of leather.

On the football field for the 9-2 Mustangs in 1996, Redding caught 29 passes for 390 yards. At the time, his catches stood fourth all-time with the program.

"He was probably our best wide receiver," said then-and-now head coach Don Seidenstricker.

On the track, Redding was a gifted hurdler that placed third in the 300-meter intermediate hurdles in the YAIAA Championships. He also was an exceptional leadoff man in the 1,600 relay, which placed in districts and ended with a sixth-place medal at states.

"It was in relays where he stood out," Shue said.

But basketball wasn't his strong suit.

Redding only saw action in five games as a junior for head coach Bill Flaherty and only scored 25 points his senior year, averaging a measly 1.25 points per game.

However, Redding didn't give up, which is a testament to his never-say-quit attitude that still persists.

"It was in basketball where it was just kind of a drive from younger (years)," said Redding, whose deep, raspy voice and looks resemble movie actor Dermot Mulroney. "Maybe it was because I wasn't that good in it. I loved the competitiveness of it."

About 6-foot-1, Redding said he was a combination of forward and guard in high school.

"I played more like four, which is unbelievable," Redding said of his position. "I guess you can call me a forward. I don't know."

For any normal person, retiring from a sport that didn't give the love back would be the sensible decision.

Redding didn't want to give it up.

Even though he was recruited to play football and run track at Albright College, Redding made his way onto the basketball team and played three years for the Lions before graduating in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in English.

He then followed his coach, Ken Tyler, to Shepherd University, which was the first stop on his road into the coaching world.

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The story of how Redding ended up with the head coaching job at Reading in the fall of 2008 is a quick, but winding one, to be sure. When he first was
approved as coach of the Red Knights, there had to be more than a few doubters.

After all, he was a high school head coach for the first time at a school where basketball was played and observed almost religiously. He took over for an extremely successful man, Richard Reyes, who went 160-51 during a 7-year tenure.

Not many people knew about the postgraduate work Redding did at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he served as an intern for the men’s program and earned a master's degree in sports leadership. During that time, he also worked at big-time college camps held at Wake Forest, Villanova, Virginia and Maryland.

Nor did most know about the nearly five years of assistant coaching work he put in with NCAA Division II Shepherd, Division III Cabrini College and with a minor league professional team, the Reading Railers.

"As far as Cabrini and Shepherd, it gave me a good look into coaching,” Redding said.

Still, the body of work was good enough.

And Redding responded by bringing the Red Knights their 17th Berks county title in his first campaign, following a year in which Reading was 30-1 and won the District 3 Class AAAA title.

"We had one starter (back) from that team,” Redding said of the district championship. "Everyone else was gone. And there were a lot of jayvee players. But I think the jayvee unit that came up were hard workers and we tried to feed on that chemistry that we had on the court."

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So how did basketball end up in Redding's life, after it had all but cast him aside in high school?

It's simple.

He loved the game. And he didn't give up.

"I've been fortunate and blessed in the support network that I have as a family," Redding said. "My coaches and teachers at South Western and my family have founded the principles of what I've tried to do with this team."

Shue has stayed in touch with Redding. He even went to see the Red Knights play in the first round of the district tournament. Almost 15 years after he last coached Redding, Shue only has high praise.

"He's just a nice, good person," Shue said. "He's good around other people. He's very respectful. He's very patient too."

And more importantly, as an English teacher at Reading, Redding has a dual responsibility to teach lessons outside of basketball.

"I think it all speaks highly of Tim," Seidenstricker said. "He has chosen to make working with young people his life's passion. Sometimes that gets lost in why coaches and teachers do what they do. The reality is Tim is extremely dedicated to his work with teenagers."

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