



AIA FEATURE STORY By: Don Ketchum

COACHES OVERCOME HEART ATTACKS

PHOENIX, AZ (November 12, 2008) – Winning a football game is important, but it doesn't compare to the battle for one's life while experiencing a heart attack.

Three of Arizona's top prep coaches are glad they are alive to follow their teams' performances in the big-school playoffs that begin Friday night.

Chandler Basha's Tim McBurney will lead his team against defending Class 5A Division I champ Phoenix Brophy Prep and Gilbert Higley's Jim Beall will be on the sideline as his team faces Phoenix Arcadia in Class 4A Division II play.

Prescott Valley Bradshaw Mountain's Chuck Apap will be following his team via radio as it plays its 4A-II first-round game at Scottsdale Coronado.

McBurney's team is on a roll, having defeated highly regarded Tempe Corona del Sol in last week's regular-season finale.

"Hopefully we can build on that," McBurney said. "Brophy's got one of the best (defensive) fronts in all of Arizona."

In March, McBurney had a heart attack that led to three rounds of surgery, for two stents and an angioplasty (cleanout of arteries). He also had a nuclear scan in August to make sure everything was working properly.

"It was upsetting at first," he said. "You wonder how the stress will affect you, whether you will still be able to coach. I still worry about it, but I keep going. You try to stay calm, but you get hyped up, caught up in the moment. But generally, I feel pretty good."

Beall's team will attempt to shake off the effects of a tough loss to rival Queen Creek in the regular-season finale.

Higley defeated Arcadia, its East Sky Region rival, on Oct. 24, but Beall is wary of Arcadia.

"They have lost four in a row, and those kind of teams are dangerous," he said.

Not as dangerous as what Beall experienced.

He had stents implanted in February, but one of the arteries collapsed and caused a heart attack in June.

"We had some family visiting from Texas and I went out in my pickup truck," he said. "I felt it and I knew what it was. I was able to turn the truck around and go back home. I told my sons what was happening, and I fell onto the bed.

"I was told that a few more minutes and things might have been different, much worse. I got opened up and cleaned out. I feel very lucky.

“I have tried to settle down a little more, but it is hard to do. I try to do my best. But I have a very good staff, guys like Mike Clark (former head coach at Mesa Dobson and Phoenix Thunderbird), and they help me keep things under control.”

Apap’s ordeal came in late summer. He had a quintuple-bypass and a small stroke.

“I had one artery 100 percent clogged, two at 90 percent and two at 80 percent. Not good, low scores, like in golf,” he said with a laugh.

“I’m lucky I’m alive. God didn’t want me yet. There are more things left for me to do.”

He recently returned to the classroom as a math teacher, and hopes to return to coaching next season. Ron Fuson has taken over the football team for now.

“I have good assistants and they have done a very good job,” Apap said. “I hope to return next year, but you never know what will happen. Coaching is a year-round job, with supervising weight training, trying to help kids get scholarships . . . I don’t want to do it if I can’t give the kids 100 percent.”

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