

# Mighty Ants prepare for hoops debut

■ **New Hope Academy plans boys' and girls' basketball teams this season.**

By **JIM SEIP**  
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Sam Sutton felt like he "cheated" some of the people closest to him.

He lived in Baltimore. He had a good job in sales. He coached youth basketball. He should have felt content. Yet, in a way, he felt cut off from his roots — his home.

It wasn't good enough. He needed to work in his hometown. He knew York needed people like him.

"I was cheating a community that had helped me," Sutton said.

A graduate of Towson University, Sutton returned to his hometown last year as the athletic director for New Hope Academy, a charter school started by former William Penn basketball coach Isaiah Anderson.

The Academy is located at 459 W. King St., the former site of York Catholic High School. About 300 students attend grades seven through 10, and the school expects to add grades 11 and 12 next school year. Yet the school hopes to field its first PIAA teams this winter, in its second school year.

And therein lies the biggest challenge.

The school plans to play a full varsity basketball sched-

ule this season, playing in the PIAA as a Class A team — the state's smallest classification. Sutton will coach the boys' basketball team. Long-time youth basketball coach Mark Rhodes will coach the girls' team.



Sutton

Both squads will play their first games on Dec. 5.

"We will have very raw talent, but every coach likes a challenge," Rhodes said with a laugh. "I want them to know they can achieve, they can learn, they can get better. And this will be a real challenge."

"I'll have them psyched up and ready to go."

A driving force in the city's youth basketball and baseball programs, Rhodes has served as the chairman of the York City Youth League and has helped run York Little League.

USA Weekend magazine awarded Rhodes the 2003 Most Caring Coach Award, one of three winners from more than 2,000 nominees gathered nationwide.

"I'm sick of looking in the paper and seeing these shoot-

ings," Rhodes said. "York's not that big of a city. We're not Baltimore. We're not even as big as Harrisburg. And I mean (the victims and the shooters) keep getting younger and younger. We really have to do a better job."



Rhodes

"My biggest issue right now is I see we have no problem raising \$30,000 to \$60,000 to lock someone up for a year, but when it comes down to being proactive about it, raising money becomes a problem. We've become a community that has closed community centers. The reason guns and drugs and violence have become an issue is because of a lack of any alternatives. And if we provide positive alternatives (stu-

dents) won't bother with (crime)."

New Hope targets children at "risk for becoming faceless, engulfed in an academic world where they feel little to no connection," according to the Academy's Web site.

Sutton knows the history of the city. When he graduated from William Penn High School in 1997, he became the first boys' basketball player to receive a Division I basketball scholarship in almost 30 years.

No one has followed him into the Division I basketball ranks, a sad fact considering the Bearcats have traditionally been the best team in the league.

"When I would think about it, it was something I really wanted to change," Sutton said.

But he doesn't enter the 2008-09 campaign blindly. He knows most of his players this

## SCHEDULES

Boys' basketball			Girls' basketball		
Date	School	Time	Date	School	Time
12/5	LCHS Tournament	TBA	12/5	LCHS Tournament	5 p.m.
12/6	LCHS Tournament	TBA	12/6	LCHS Tournament	5 p.m.
12/9	at Living Word	7:30 p.m.	12/12	at CSY	6 p.m.
12/12	at CSY	7:30 p.m.	12/16	Dayspring Christian	6 p.m.
12/16	Dayspring Christian	7:30 p.m.	12/18	at High Point Baptist	6:15 p.m.
12/17	at Annville-Cleona	8 p.m.	12/22	at Bible Baptist	TBA
12/22	at Bible Baptist	7 p.m.	12/26	at Hanover Tournament	TBA
1/08	at Conestoga Christian	7:30 p.m.	12/27	at Hanover Tournament	TBA
1/12	Scotland	7 p.m.	1/08	at Conestoga Christian	5 p.m.
1/14	Artislam	7 p.m.	1/12	Scotland	5 p.m.
1/20	York Country Day	6:30 p.m.	1/14	Artislam Middle-Sr.	6 p.m.
1/24	at Lancaster Christian	2:30 p.m.	1/20	York Country Day	5 p.m.
1/26	at Lititz Christian	7:15 p.m.	1/24	at Lancaster Christian	1 p.m.
1/28	Collegium Charter	6 p.m.	1/26	at Lititz Christian	6 p.m.
2/02	Big Spring	7 p.m.	1/29	Bible Baptist	TBA
2/03	Hershey Christian	6:30 p.m.	2/03	Hershey Christian	5 p.m.
2/05	at York Country Day	6:30 p.m.	2/05	at York Country Day	5 p.m.
2/11	at Church Farm	7 p.m.			
2/13	at Scotland	7 p.m.			

season would typically be playing freshman basketball or sitting on the bench for a junior varsity team.

And he still has a number of details to finalize, including the site for home games.

It's a big challenge, but a fitting start for teams that will be called the Mighty Ants. The unusual nickname works

for the small charter school.

"A lot of symbolism," Sutton said. "Ants need to live in an organized community, and they lift 10 times their body weight. When I watch ants, I find myself being amazed."

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