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Friday, March 20, 2009

Teen YMCA Referees to Shadow NBA Pros March 28

Two certified teenage basketball referees with the Sarasota Family YMCA will have the opportunity to shadow their professional counterparts with the National Basketball Association at the end of this month.

On March 28, Andrew Murray, 16, and Johnny Atanasov, 14, will travel to Miami to shadow NBA referee Bob Delaney when the Miami Heat hosts the Milwaukee Bucks. Joining the duo will be Jim Murray, YMCA Gators basketball coach and secretary of the Gulf Coast Basketball Officials Association (GCBOA), and Zach Hilferding, Athletic Director at the Evalyn Sadlier Jones Branch YMCA in south Sarasota.

"These guys are getting an amazing opportunity," Hilferding said. "I can't wait for them to meet Bob and see up close how he does his job at the top level of his profession."

Murray and Atanasov are both junior high-level officials certified through the GCBOA. Atanasov has refereed 42 games so far and Murray 34 games. Murray is also a member of the 10th grade Sarasota Gators basketball team and Atanasov is the team's manager. Both are Riverview High School Students and longtime YMCA members.

Hilferding recognized the excitement the teens had for officiating and put in a request for the shadow program with the NBA just four weeks ago. When he makes the trip to Miami, Hilferding, 29, will relive a similar opportunity he had with referee Delaney, a Bradenton resident, when he was in high school at Bradenton Christian.

"Shadowing made a huge impact on me," Hilferding said. "I know that this will continue to inspire Andrew and Johnny in all aspects of their lives, athletic and professional."

The GCBOA provides certification and ongoing official training for referees in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and Hardee counties. More information about the association can be found at www.gcboa.org.

The Sarasota Family YMCA is nationally known for innovative programs and outstanding facilities. From youth shelters to fitness centers, we continue to follow our guiding mission in everything we do: We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities. We continue to develop collaborations and core programs to meet the changing needs of the community.

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