

Inside Sports

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These refs deserve a cheer

by Alan Dell

Go to almost any basketball game at any level and the referees are usually the people fans enjoy booing.

But the refs who worked the Sarasota County Youth Foundation Girls Holiday Basketball Classic last weekend at Sarasota Christian School deserve a bunch of cheers.

The refs (from the Gulf Coast Basketball Officials Association) did something that deserves a lot of kudos, particularly in these tough economic times.

They offered to reduce their fee by nearly fifty percent to officiate the event and its 10 games.

The move came after tournament director **Howard Karasick** announced he was going to let everyone in free of charge for the two day event.

Karasick (known in the area as “Harpoon”) couldn’t have felt more fortunate. His decision to allow fans in free so families and friends could spend more time together was going to put a financial strain on his Youth Foundation with it trickling down to the kids.

To show his gratitude, Harpoon named the refs association and host school Sarasota Christian co-sponsors of the event, which might have been a first for a referee’s association.

People should know these guys don’t get paid much and sometimes take abuse you would never find in any other job.

“This is the first time I’ve ever heard of refs doing something like that and you can look it up,” Harpoon said with a smile.

Sarasota Christian also made a nice gesture. At the urging of athletic director **Phil Helmuth**, the school didn’t charge a rental fee for the gym. Harpoon didn’t have to pay for custodians because the Sarasota Christian basketball players cleaned up after each day and parents from the school worked the concession stands.

To help the Sarasota County Youth Foundation more, Helmuth scheduled a boy’s basketball game between his team and Riverview that will be held January 6 at Sarasota Christian with all the proceeds going to the Youth Foundation.