

Basketball Team

By Rev. Jamie
Buckingham

Basketball season is over at Eau Gallie High. And even though the team finished with a losing record — in some respects it was their best season.

The day of the next-to-last game five varsity players skipped their first period classes. They wound up in a local drugstore drinking coffee.

WHEN COACH Abe

Collingsworth heard of the infraction he called the boys into his office. It was a tough decision. The team was in a losing streak and morale was already low. They were to travel to Daytona to play Seabreeze High that night. They desperately needed a win. Two of the boys were scheduled to start.

Coach Collingsworth knows that coaches are often hired on their ability to produce winning

teams.

Yet, to be consistent with principles under which he lived and coached, discipline was mandatory. The boys would not play. The Commodores made the trip with only seven men. They were ahead until the final quarter when two of the boys fouled out and Seabreeze surged ahead to win. But Abe Collingsworth feels some things are more important than winning — and

Lost, Yet

Perspective

obedience is one of them.

THE FORMER Kentucky Wildcat feels a boy makes a commitment when he comes out for the team. He commits himself to put the team first. To live up to training rules. To give his best in practice as well as on the floor. The players know they represent their

school and community and are to act accordingly.

Nine boys were suspended this season. Five of them permanently. The four boys suspended before the Seabreeze game were back on the practice court the next day — and helped lead their team to a final

Maybe They Won

smashing victory against Merritt Island.

Abe Collingsworth is just old-fashioned enough (and courageous enough) to believe that character building is more important than winning games. And that regardless of who breaks the rules, be it the leading scorer or son of the most influential man in town, that all should be treated equally.

BASEBALL'S "lip",

Leo Durocher, said, "Nice guys finish last." Abe's a nice guy, and his team finished close to last in the won-lost column. But in a day when teachers are making noises in other areas, it's refreshing to find a man in the business of building men.

This is an age when commitment is laughed at. Young men go AWOL from the military without tinge of conscience. Politicians take an oath of

office and then accept bribes. Boys promise to love girls until "death do us part" and then act as though there is no responsibility involved at all.

Loyalty to the church is something people think they can take or leave. But it's good to know that here is a coach instilling in these future citizens the essentials of loyalty, commitment, responsibility and respect for authority — as well as the spirit to win.