

Cy Creek's Thomson has a world perspective on basketball

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By **MICHAEL SUDHALTER**

In Class 5A-District 17, a long road trip is the 13.8 one-way distance between Cy Creek and Cy Lakes.

Cy Creek boys basketball coach Ron Thomson did quite a bit more intraleague traveling while he coached basketball at an international school in Taipei, Taiwan.

"The league we were in (had) Hong Kong, Singapore, Manila and Jakarta," Thomson said. "It was a really fun league. When we went on a road trip, we really went on a road trip. Our tournaments were always in one of those places."

Thomson, now in his seventh season as head coach of the Cougars (8-13, 1-4), also coached basketball at international schools in Budapest, Hungary, Frankfurt, Germany and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Thomson is a physical education teacher and his wife, Pam, teaches at Birkes Elementary School. They enjoyed the experience of living abroad, which also gave Thomson an opportunity to be a head coach for the first time.

"That's where I really got into the groove of being a head coach," Thomson said.

Coaching with international rules also opened Thomson up to different ideas about the sport and taught him a great deal about the sport.

When he wasn't coaching basketball, Thomson traveled with his wife to places like the Great Wall of China, the Himalayan Mountains in Nepal, Paris, France, Munich, Germany, and Scotland – the home of his ancestors.

"If I die tomorrow, I'll have seen more things than most people have seen in a lifetime," Thomson said. "We checked out the world and had a great time."

Making the decision to coach and teach abroad wasn't a difficult one for Thomson, who moved to Greater Houston in the early 1980's from Cleveland, Ohio.

"Being an Ohioan and coming down here, I've always been the adventurous sort," Thomson said. "Making the jump (to go overseas) wasn't that big of a jump."

When he first arrived in Houston, Thomson taught Adaptive Physical Education in Houston ISD and was an assistant basketball coach at Jackson Middle School.

He later served as an assistant coach at Dulles High and Quail Valley Middle School in Fort Bend ISD, and Texas City High, in Texas City, before becoming the head coach at Thornton Middle School in Cy-Fair ISD.

In six seasons with the Cougars, Thomson has led Cy Creek to three playoff appearances.

"I really like Cy Creek," Thomson said. "It's a good school, and I like the Cy-Fair school district. We have great kids and a lot of support. I have a great principal in Jim Wells, and (athletic coordinator) Greg McCaig is fabulous to work for."

Last season, Cy Creek lost a double overtime game at Cy Woods in the regular season finale that would have clinched the first district title under Thomson.

"It's painful," Thomson said. "I thought we had that game. It ended up being double overtime. We had to stop them from getting down the court in five seconds."

Like LeBron James, Thomson is a Greater Cleveland native who played post-high school basketball in the area; Thomson was a walk-on at Cleveland State University, and James played seven seasons for the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers.

The similarities end there.

"I'll be the first one to agree with Charles Barkley -- he shouldn't have gone," Thomson said. "He should have done what Michael Jordan did and made the team better around him."

Both Thomson and James left Cleveland for places with warmer weather, but Thomson said the circumstances were much different.

"I left for a job -- he already had a good job," Thomson said.

Thomson originally planned on studying Business, but he realized that teaching and coaching was something that appealed more to him.

"I just couldn't see myself sitting behind a desk," Thomson said. "I started to explore what I really wanted to do. I knew I liked working with kids and I knew I loved basketball... It's been the right decision."

Thomson's Cleveland State Vikings etched their name into NCAA Tournament lore a few years after he graduated when they upset Bobby Knight's Indiana Hoosiers in the first round of the 1986 tournament.

Thomson earned a Master's Degree in Education from The Ohio State University and is a proud Buckete fan -- something that causes some good-natured rivalries at Cy Creek.

"They all tease me about the Big Ten," Thomson said. "Luckily, Ohio State's pretty good."

Thomson, who stands 6-foot-7, probably has the tallest coaching staff in the state of Texas, and perhaps, the nation. Assistants Larry McCage (former Rice and Sam Houston State basketball player) and Ronnie Reyes are both taller than 6-foot-5.

Thomson likes his chances with McCage and Reyes in a 3-on-3 tournament against another coaching staff.

"I'd take those two and take on some people," Thomson said. "We may be old, but we've still got some basketball brains amongst us."

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