

# Spotlight

R. Ron Sertz, President



## What is the D-League?

The NBA Development League, or D-League, is the official minor league of the NBA and has been the only U.S. league to provide players to the NBA during the season. The D-League is comprised of 16 teams including two expansion teams which will begin play during the 2008-09 season (Reno and Erie). The NBA currently consists of about 70 players, 17 coaches and about 25 percent of referees who honed their skills in the D-League. In addition, the D-League serves as the Research and Development department for the NBA, testing new rules, equipment and technologies for potential use in the NBA.

## Each D-League city has a great platform for community involvement, such as the Read to Achieve Program. Will the Erie team follow suit?

The D-League prides itself on being strong assets within the communities the teams are a part of. That community involvement is also one of my strongest personal philosophies for building a loyalty to the team from the community. You can count on the fact that our players, coaches and front office will be making plenty of visits to schools, hospitals and every other place we can pitch in. The D-League's players are not only skilled on the court, but in the community they serve as great role models and important assets. In addition, our owners have generously made a large donation of tickets, so not only will our players make visits, they will also host youngsters at Tullio Arena.

## As the founder and tournament director of the annual McDonald's Basketball Classic tournament in Erie, not to mention your storied history at Cathedral Prep, you have quite a unique insight into Erie sports. Do you think Erie is a "basketball town" and how do you think the team will fare with local sports fans?

This is my hometown, and, without a doubt it's a "basketball town." There are literally thousands of kids in this region playing basketball at all levels who haven't had a pro team to root for. But even more than that, this city is about family entertainment. I can't guarantee you

that our team will win the title first year out, but that is our goal. What I can guarantee is that fans will love the experience of coming to our games.

## The new team will bring to three the number of professional teams who play at the Tullio Arena, including the Erie Otters hockey team and the Erie RiverRats indoor football team. Do you think Erie is a big enough market to support all three?

I think so. We have a great deal of respect for the teams you mention and I think when Erie fans of all of the sports see our product, which features fun, family-entertainment at an affordable price, they will be hooked and will fall in love with our team and D-League basketball as a whole.

## Since you are a minority owner in the Erie Otters and both the Otters and D-League seasons will run through spring, which team will you really be rooting for during those overlapping seasons?

I don't know if this is the answer you're looking for, but I'll root hard for both. The Otters players, coaches and front office have meant so much to my family and to myself and I will always have a special place in my heart for the team and the many loyal fans who've played such a special role in my professional life. In basketball, I'm now 100 percent committed to the success of Erie's new D-League team.

## How will the Erie community be involved?

I'm an Erie guy. I love this city. I want everyone – kids, families, businesses – to be proud of this team and what we will bring to the community. We're offering entertainment at all price levels and seating, and creative partnerships for the business community. I can promise everyone that we will work hard every day to deserve the respect and support of the Erie community. Together, we'll make this a great product that will be just another example for Erie pride. ★

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