

(Lake County News-Sun)

Area competitive cheerleaders flourish at national level

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Somewhere along the line, this cheerleading thing simply took on a life of its own.

And clearly, now that the genie is out of the bottle, so to speak, there ain't no goin' back to the days when cheerleading squads were basically one way to measure who the six most popular girls were at any given school.



The Chicago Bulls' court at the United Center in Chicago recently served as the big stage for the the locally-based Ace cheerleading squad.

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The Senior Coed Division girls cheerleading squad at Ace Athletics performs a difficult stunt during its performance at a recent Bulls game.

Not that we should ever think of going back!

What's amazing is how cheerleading has evolved from an activity to a highly competitive sport in such a short period of time.

At the high-school level, cheerleading is now an IHSA-sanctioned sport with its own state-tournaments series.

And away from the high-school scene, our area is home to one of the top youth cheer programs anywhere -- Ace Athletics.

The program is based out of Mundelein and Deerfield, and the organization is headed by Jeff Siegal, who also is coach of the Ace Senior Coed Division squad.

Ace has qualified squads for national competitions in each of the past seven years.

This year, Ace started off its cheer season by performing at halftime of a Chicago Bulls preseason game.

The Junior Girls Division and the Senior Coed Division teams each performed a five-minute, high-energy routine that involved Level 5 (difficult) stunting and tumbling.

While performing in front of a huge crowd was a big thing for the cheerers, the biggest thrill was seeing themselves on the big screens hanging above the basketball court of the United Center.

Ace will continue its season by attending competitions in various Illinois cities as well as Indianapolis, Orlando and Dallas.

Dallas is the site of the national meet at which, last year, the Ace Senior Coed Division team fell .06 points short of taking first place.

Ace practices out of the Gym Spot in Mundelein and out of Caruso Gym in Deerfield.

Justin Boumstein and Georgie Blum coach the Juniors Girls Division team, and Jeff Siegal, Dave Graubart, and Erin Vance coach the Senior Coed Division team.