



HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Popular venue back in basketball business with help from Malibu Jack’s

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Youth sports in Lexington were dealt an unexpected blow when the Kentucky Basketball Academy closed abruptly in June. A new venture in the same venue plans to step up and serve the community for years to come.

The Kentucky Basketball Commission, a joint venture between brothers Steve and Terry Hatton — who co-own the indoor theme park Malibu Jack’s — Tom Bower and Julius King, will offer camps, tournaments and leagues “designed to provide maximum player development and education on order to help each player reach

their goals,” according to a mission statement on its Twitter account, @kbchoops. Activities will be conducted at the same site where KBA formerly operated, 273 Ruccio Way.

Fayette Circuit Court Judge Pamela Goodwine ordered KBA Sports Inc. to immediately vacate the facility on June 8. The Hattons, who own the building, have been in an ongoing legal dispute with KBA Sports since 2015.

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Bower, who’s from Lexington, was the senior sports director at KBA from May 2011 to March 2016 and has stayed active in the youth sports scene on a national level. King, a Maysville native, is the program director for Camp One, a youth basketball outfit that operates talent showcases and camps.

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“Being able to work with the Hatton brothers and the first thing out of their mouth, man, was about the community,” King said. “What the community needs, what the state needs. Everything about it just feels right. Our vision is to take this and make it about the development of kids, the development of coaches, the development of officials. We want to bring a brand of high-level basketball back to Kentucky.

“Everybody looks at UK and is like, ‘Wow, they don’t have any Kentucky kids on the roster. Where are all the Kentucky kids at?’ We want to help bring a little luster and development back, and give everybody something to be proud of.”

Bower believes KBC will provide top-flight services to individuals trying to reach whatever their “next level” might be — to making the cut for their high school team to getting a professional contract.

“One hundred percent, when you come to KBC, you have a chance to be seen,” Bower said. “We’re taking away from kids and from parents the excuse of ‘My kid’s just overlooked.’ We’re gonna remove all those excuses through these different programs that we have.”

Renovations and a grand reopening are planned to take place in the fall but KBC’s first basketball events begin this week. Schedules and registration links are available at kbchoops.com.

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