

D.J. Frandsen, REACH scholarship winner, 1979-2004

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jody Meacham, 408 / 288-2934, jody@sjsa.org

SAN JOSE (Sept. 21, 2004) – The San Jose Sports Authority has been saddened by the loss of David “D.J.” Frandsen Jr., an original recipient of one of the authority’s REACH Youth Scholarships.

D.J., diagnosed at age 6 with a form of kidney cancer known as Wilms’ tumor, died Thursday, Sept. 16. He was 25, a graduate of Bellarmine College Prep, where he was ran cross-country, played basketball and tennis, and of Santa Clara University, where he was manager of the men’s basketball team.

"We remember D.J. as the archetype of a REACH scholarship recipient, a young person who overcame tremendous obstacles in his life through participation in school athletics," said Dean Munro, executive director of the San Jose Sports Authority. "We are tremendously proud of his contributions to our community, and we share the grief of his family and friends in this loss."

There will be a funeral mass for D.J. at 7 p.m. today at the Mission Church on the Santa Clara campus. Donations may be made in his name to the Santa Clara Athletic Department, Bellarmine Athletic Department, or the Recreation Therapy / Child Life Center at Lucille Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford.

The REACH Youth Scholarships (the acronym stands for Recognizing Excellence, Adversity, Courage and Hard work) were first awarded in 1997, and D.J. wrote this essay in his application that year:

In talking about the 1973 pennant race, the great manager Yogi Berra said, “It ain’t over ’til it’s over.” This motto is one that I have lived by all my life. In all the obstacles and problems I have faced medically, it was my choice to adhere to living by this motto. This episode was caused by a cancerous body that had taken over all my left kidney as well as some of my lungs and entrapped a little bit of my right kidney. After a successful nine-hour surgery, a full six weeks of intensive radiation, fourteen months of chemotherapy, a serious blood clot behind my left lung that required hospitalization for six weeks in the Intensive Care unit at Stanford, I was done with my full set of treatment for this case. Many people said I could not do certain activities, but I ignored them and I did. I owe a lot of this intense determination to my family as well as my doctors and nurses at Lucille Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford. There were many things that they said I could not do, but instead I found a way to do them. On July 1, 1989, I once

again returned for my monthly exam at Children's Hospital Stanford. After a day-long exam and a session of IVP X rays, I was re-diagnosed with cancer in my right kidney. My world stopped right in front of me. I hit an emotional wall. I was in extreme denial, especially after I received word that no doctor would take a chance on my condition. It was too serious, and there had not been a surgery like the one I needed ever performed. No one would take a chance until Dr. Michael Harrison, a doctor at the University of California at San Francisco. My surgery was performed on September 26, 1989. It was the first of its kind in that it involved the extraction of my kidney, taken into another room where lasers would shave the cancer off, and radiation would then be placed upon the remaining part of the kidney. All of this took thirteen hours. Another obstacle that came from this was my need for change in my attitude as a team sport athlete. As a team sport athlete I had to think more individually, thus my new found love for tennis evolved. At Bellarmine I have played three sports. I have also lettered in three, basketball, cross-country and tennis. In tennis I have lettered and started on the varsity since my sophomore year and have been captain since my junior year. The way I have been able to evolve into this athlete is by the help of others. This is why I have done over one hundred hours of community service in coaching, with some going into the Special Olympics. I have also talked to other kids and led by an example as they look up to me in an extremely hopeful way. I have learned that no matter how great the odds have been, I have always seemed in some way to overcome them. In facing many obstacles growing up, they have shaped me into a person with the character of never quitting. Fighting against the odds to try to exceed expectations. A person that does not understand the phrase "You can't do that." No matter what I will do in my life I know I will be successful, because I will never give up. I will always adhere to Jim Valvano's aphorism: "Don't give up, don't ever give up."