

LISTEN UP

Organizing the independent



CARSON GIBBONS

Highland Park resident Austin Pruitt gets out of his Suburban on a bright spring morning. He slings his baseball bag over his shoulder and makes his way toward the practice field in Richardson.

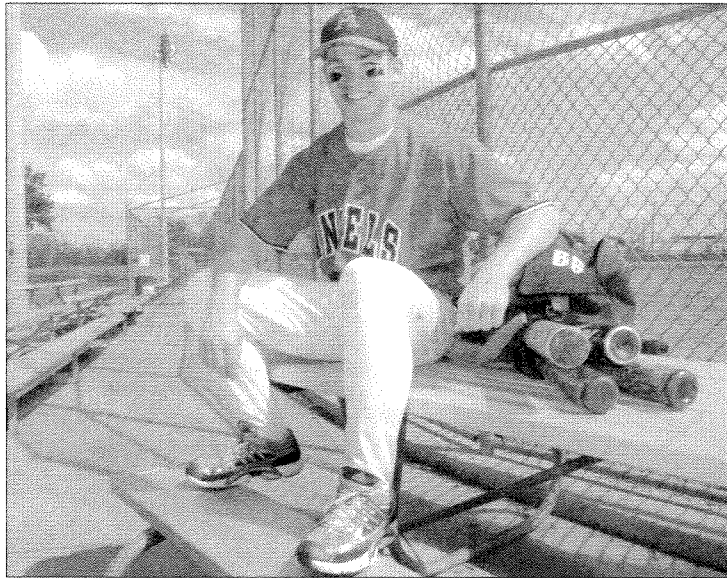
Pruitt is about to go through a three-hour workout with the Angels, a junior varsity team in the Home School Athletic Association.

"It's an awesome experience," said Pruitt, 16. "I have had such a strong relationship with my teammates."

The HSAA is a not-for-profit Christian organization that started in 1995. It gives home-schooled athletes in the Dallas-Fort Worth area the chance to play organized sports at the high school level. It offers programs in football, volleyball, basketball and baseball.

"Our goal is to provide home-schooled athletes with the highest possible secondary athletic competition in an atmosphere that honors Christ," said Chuck Hendricks, HSAA's president.

Teams compete against area private schools.



MILTON HINNANT/Staff Photographer

Austin Pruitt, a home-schooled 10th-grade student, plays baseball for a Home School Athletic Association team. Players are sometimes limited to one workout per week because facilities are hard to come by.

"Probably the biggest difference between HSAA and private school sports is practice time," said Richardson resident Jessica Jones, 18, who plays volleyball in the HSAA and used to play for Garland Christian Academy.

"Because we are home-schooled and we don't have our own practice facilities, most of the teams are limited to practicing one day a week, sometimes two."

HSAA either rents or is given permission to use practice and game facilities. For instance,

Pruitt's baseball team rents batting cages every week and is given the use of its home field, Mark Twain field, by the city of Richardson.

"Limited as we are in our practices," Jones said, "our teams are very competitive with private schools, almost always giving them a game and often coming out victorious."

All HSAA coaches are volunteers.

The league has academic regulations, but the proof of academic

HSAA STANDARDS

- A player must be home-schooled, receiving his or her primary educational direction through the home.
 - A player must be living at home with a parent or guardian.
 - A player is ineligible if enrolled in more than eight hours of dual-credit and/or college courses.
 - A player is ineligible if he or she has gone through a home school, public school, or private school high school graduation ceremony before that season's first game.
 - A player must be passing all courses. The parent is solely responsible for enforcing this rule.
- Source: www.hsaa.org

eligibility lies mostly with the parents, because they are the primary facilitator of the student-athlete's education.

HSAA is a unique league with a lot of great things about it, including flexibility, competitiveness, a number of sports from which to choose.

The baseball season extends through May 24, if the Angels qualify for the national tournament in Pensacola, Fla.

Carson Gibbons is a home-schooled student who lives in Plano.

Interested in contributing to Listen Up? E-mail jorourke@dallasnews.com

FROM THE BLOG

From highschoolsportsblog.dallasnews.com, reaction to the slim area representation on the *Parade* and McDonald's All-America basketball teams

■ I'm astonished. We have the absolute best basketball in the state, the best team in the nation not named Oak Hill. Even the women were dissed on the squad. I think it's a complete slap in the face. *Posted by Najja*

■ I'm not surprised at all. I remember at the end of last year I read in *The News* that this would be a down year for the area as far as super recruits goes. I can almost guarantee that next year Willie Warren of North Crowley

will be a McDonald's All-American if no one else will be. He's a big name nationally already and has been since a freshman. And he's already started in AAU on fire this spring. *Posted by Pru*

SPORTSDAY HIGH SCHOOL

DallasNews.com/highschools

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