



Clinton soccer success has close ties to Brilla programs

By Danny C. Davis

If you talk to people who are directly involved with Clinton soccer teams, most likely they will agree that Clinton-based Mississippi Brilla Soccer Ministries has had a positive effect on the success of youth and high school soccer in Clinton.

The organization was founded in 1996 and uses soccer as a ministry to reach people from inner city to professional soccer.

But what a lot of people are not aware of is the direct connection to Clinton youth soccer and how that has played a large role in the success of Clinton High School's soccer teams, whose boys' and girls' teams both claimed state championships this year.

Brilla Executive Director Rusty Bryant played for the Clinton High School Arrow championship teams of the early 1990s and has two sons who have also been connected to the CHS boys' soccer program.

Older son Luke played for the Arrow team and now plays for the Di-

vision 1 Davidson College team in North Carolina. Younger son Logan is a junior on this year's Arrow state championship team.

Brilla has several levels of soccer.

At the top level is Brilla's USL2 team, which is a semi-pro team that plays in the summer at Clinton High School's Arrow Field. College team members from around the world minister to other pro play-

ers and in other countries by playing soccer and spreading the word of Jesus Christ.

Brilla also sponsors the Brilla Juniors program that gives competitive older players, U10 through U18, a chance to play at a higher level on a select or club team. Some of those players may eventually become professional players with the Brilla USL2 team if they excel. The coaches are paid by Brilla.

Also available is the Brilla Academy, for recreational team players who want to play at a higher level, for U8 through U12. Brilla also has simple youth recreational teams for U3 through U19, as well as the Mighty



Mighty Mites, a program begun by Brilla Soccer Ministries around 2005, is credited for getting local children interested in the sport of soccer.

Mites program, which Bryant feels has been directly responsible for much soccer success in Clinton.

Mighty Mites soccer was formed in 2004. It offers an entry level soccer experience for children ages four and five to learn about the basics of soccer and get interested in soccer at a young age.

For children who like soccer, then the next level up would be recreation teams.

"We started the Mighty Mites pro-

gram in Clinton around 2004, and about fifteen players on the CHS boys' championship team this year have ties back to the Brilla Mighty Mites," said Bryant.

So, in recent years, Brilla has partnered with the Clinton Soccer Association to run the recreational youth soccer program. The ministry does not have a voting presence on the board, but just runs the program.

In 2009, select soccer teams had taken a nose dive that was directly




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