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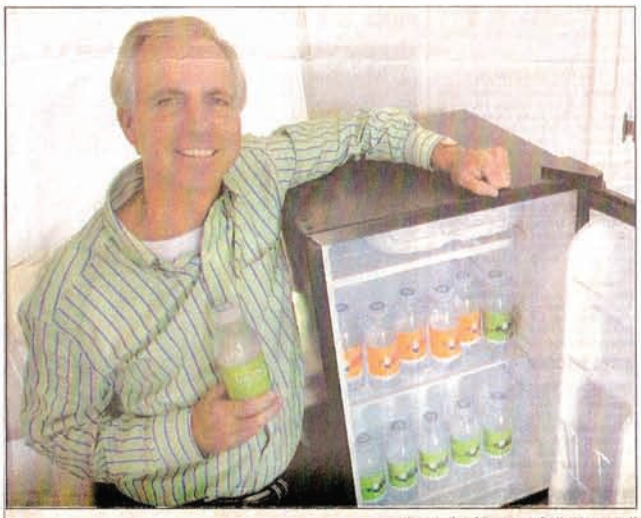

Jacqueline Marque ◆ Daily News staff

Brian Shanley, who coached the Salve Regina men's tennis team to 10 league titles, is featured on labels of owater, a Massachusetts-based drink company.

GETTING LABELED

Former Salve Regina University men's tennis coach Brian Shanley proves to be a tall drink of water for a sports beverage company.

By Scott Barrett
Daily News staff

NEWPORT — Brian Shanley, who coached the men's tennis team at Salve Regina University for 14 seasons and led the Seahawks to 10 conference titles, will tell you he's no Michael Jordan. He's no Tiger Woods, nor is he Tom Brady.

And that's just fine, as far as Tom First is concerned.

First is the founder of owater, a Massachusetts-based sports drink company that celebrates the everyday athlete and not the superstar. He set out to create a healthier alternative to Gatorade or vitaminwater.

"When we started, we were trying to make a balanced product," First said. "A product that had the stuff you wanted, but none of the stuff you didn't."

First, perhaps better known for founding Nantucket Nectars in 1989, started owater in 2005 and said it's just starting to pick up steam. The marketing strategy used by the former "Juice Guy" was putting local sports heroes on its labels.

That's where Shanley comes in.

Shanley, who gives tennis lessons at Point Judith Country Club in Narragansett, coaches a boy whose mother is employed by owater. She nominated him to be on one of the product's labels, and First said he was the ideal spokesperson.

"We discovered what an amazing guy he is," First said of Shanley. "How dedicated he is, and how dedicated he is to working with kids. We approached him with the idea and told him he's the type of person we're looking for."

That idea caught Shanley a little by surprise.

"My first thought is that was a joke, that I was totally getting punked," said Shanley, who retired as Salve's tennis coach after last season. "But then I got very excited. I thought it could be a cool thing to be on a product that is going to be delivered nationwide."

It wasn't long before Shanley was sending photos to the company's headquarters in Concord, Mass., to get an artist's rendition. Needless to say, he was a bit surprised when he saw the final cut. And he wasn't the only one.

LABELED B3

"My wife said, 'You wish you had that body.'"

Brian Shanley, talking about his owater label

Former Salve Regina men's tennis coach Brian Shanley is featured on three flavors of owater.

Labeled

Continued from B1

"My wife said, 'You wish you had that body,'" Shanley said with a laugh. "I've also been told I look a little like George W. Bush."

Shanley, who jokingly said he was disappointed when he found out there'd be no royalties, asked to try the product before he agreed to be on a label. And it took just a few sips before he was sold.

"When you drink it, it goes down smooth," said Shanley, who added that it's a bit healther than Gatorade. "I like what they're doing with the product. It's a good, refreshing drink. They gave me 10 cases and threw me a T-shirt. What more can you ask for?"

Shanley, who is on three flavors of the drink, is one of about 70 athletes on the labels. The biggest name is Boston Red Sox outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury, and First said he's been in contact with St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Matt Holliday, but the rest are everyday people.

In fact, at the company's Web site (www.owater.com), nominations are continually accepted. First said it is a good way to bring his product into communities.

"We can't pay Kevin Garnett $2 million to endorse our product," he said. "The people you see aren't getting paid to be there. We're looking for people who truly represent the brand and athletics.

"Special Olympians could be on the label. A trapeze artist could be on the label. Is a trapeze artist going to be the label for Gatorade?"

One of Shanley's friends called him a "drink model," but he said he's taking his newfound "fame" in stride.

"I'm really thrilled they asked me to be on the label," he said. "Whether or not I'm replaced in six months, it's just a fun thing to have."

Owater can be found locally at the following stores: Sigs Market, Bliss Market, Stop & Shop, The Cookie Jar and Pick Pockets.

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