

PLAY IT SMART

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AUSTIN-EAST AND FULTON “REMEMBER THE TITANS”

Members of the Austin-East and Fulton football teams in Knoxville, TN recently had the chance to interact with Herman Boone, the legendary football coach at T.C. Williams High School.

His story was recently portrayed in the 2000 blockbuster hit *Remember the Titans*. Coach Boone was in town to be the keynote speaker at Knoxville’s Promise Youth Summit, an all day seminar and work shop that was held on March 11. Sixteen players from both schools were present from 9-12:30 to assist in the affair as part of a commu-



Austin-East and Fulton players with Coach Herman Boone.

nity service opportunity. They assisted with the set-up and take down of chairs, tables, video/ audio set-up, lunch set-up, etc. In addition, some of the players directed attendees to their respec-

tive workshops.

Afterwards, the players were granted an exclusive opportunity to eat a free Schlotzsky's lunch with Coach Boone and converse with him for about an hour. Since no one else was present, players had the chance to hear and understand his message, which was indicative of what the movie portrays. Coach Boone spoke specifically of the importance of youth as the future of society and how critical it is that adults make youth development a top priority, not only nationally but worldwide. It sounds like a wonderful learning experience for all that were involved.

BEN-AMI MAKES HISTORY

Congratulations are in order for Laurie Ben-Ami, Academic Coach at New Brunswick High School (NJ) . Her position will now be entirely funded by the New Brunswick Board of Education. This is a ground breaking step for the Play It Smart program as Laurie has made history by becoming the first full time high school athletic counselor. Coach Ben-Ami has worked tirelessly over the past two years. Her New Bruns-

wick team has completed a record setting 1,230 hours of community service (and counting), 15 senior football players earned a 3.0 GPA or higher during the second marking period, and five players joined the 1,000 yard club. Laurie “is excited that the school feels [she] and the program are a good fit for the district.” Moreover, “the school is making a huge commitment to the future of our Play It Smart members!”

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ROXBOROUGH & BEN FRANKLIN KICK OFF THE SUMMER

The big BBQ finale hosted by Ben Franklin and Roxborough High Schools went down like a verse from Will Smith's "Summertime". Roxborough's Coach Riley skillfully manned the grill and cooked up some burgers, dogs, hot sausages, and chicken for a hungry crowd of players. No cases of food poisoning were reported.

The day was filled with food, football, hoops, families, coaches, and many others affiliated with the Play it Smart Family here in Philly. People in attendance who ensured the success of the Bar-B-Que included Coach O'Brien from Ben Franklin; Sid Young, the NFF representative for Villanova; and Jim Presbrey and his wife Joanne.

The day was marked by a partial re-enactment of the herculean battle on the gridiron between Roxborough and Ben Franklin last fall, where Roxborough prevailed mightily, but only because of a controversial incomplete pass which was ruled a fumble. Much friendly trash talk filled the air as the two teams finished up what didn't get settled last fall in games of football and basketball.



Roxborough & Ben Franklin end the year with a BBQ!

The picnic also served as a farewell for Coach Riley. Riley will be leaving Roxborough High School at the end of the school year. He'll be moving back to his native state of Indiana and taking over two Play It Smart schools in Indianapolis. "The experiences I've had at Roxborough have been life changing," said Coach Riley. "I've had the privilege to instruct and mentor some fine young men. These guys have taught me just as much--if not more--than I have taught them." "It's really neat to see our guys interact and get along so well," remarked Coach O'Brien. "They really seem to enjoy each other's company." Both schools have done several activities together over the past two years. But the proudest similarity is that this coming Fall, Ben Franklin's Boe Davis and Roxborough's Richard Cheek will both be attending Penn State University with the hopes of playing for the Nittany Lions.

The day provided a chance for everyone to interact and get to know one another. "I was happy to see everyone just hangin' out and enjoying the day and each other's company," said Coach Riley.

PLAY IT SMART PROMOTIONS

The Play It Smart program began during the '98-99 school year. Due to its overwhelming success, academic coaches have been placed in 44 schools and that number will practically double in the fall '02 due to a generous grant from the NFL.

Expansion has created new oppor-

"Expansion has created new opportunities for three coaches who have been promoted to 'Regional Coordinators'..."

tunities for three coaches who have been promoted to "Regional Coordinators": Jeff McCann, Ore Pumariega, and Charles Gomes. Both McCann and Pumariega will keep an office in their respective schools while Gomes will join the full time staff of the NFF Center on July 1. Each will conduct regular site visits, assist in program development, and supervise new academic coaches who will be part of the AmeriCorps volunteers for Play It Smart.

NATIONAL PLAY IT SMART DAY

The First Annual National Play It Smart Day was held on Saturday, June 1 and was extended through out the following week. The event was a success despite some early school closures and SAT exams. Over 30 sites took part in a community service event in their home area. The day gave Play It Smart participants a chance to be a part of a program which stretches beyond the walls of their high school. It also provided many an opportunity to celebrate their success of the past year, both on the field or in the classroom.

Members of the Hillhouse team and Coach McCann took part in the "American Cancer Society's Relay for Life" in which they spent 24 hours walking around the Cheshire track. Platt High School par-

ticipated in a "Special Day for Special People" and members of Ben Franklin assisted in the "People for People" program where they helped elementary school children with their homework.

For many schools, the day culminated in a well-deserved cookout and a friendly game of basketball.



Play It Smart proudly displayed by Knoxville participants.

COMMUNITY SERVICE THE MLK WAY

Community service activities took center stage this spring for the Play It Smart participants at Martin Luther King High School in Philadelphia. Led by two entrepreneurial seniors, who won a grant from Youth As Resources (YAR), the MLK Cougars taught disabled kids to play football; held a football clinic for elementary school kids; and hosted an "Appreciation Dinner" for their cheerleaders. The YAR grant helped pay for the flag football equipment, other supplies and food during the different activities. To learn more about YAR go to <http://www.yar.org>. YAR, a national organization, donates small sums of money to community groups led by students. Your team may qualify. Check it out and get your kids to apply.

The Cougars began their community service outreach by assisting their former head football coach, Mr. Warren, and his special education class during a mini-football camp. Even though many of the 25 boys and girls from the class had various learning and physical disabilities, they were able to participate in a modified version of flag football. Next the

team joined the Methodist Children's Services and the Black Women in Sport Foundation to help with another mini-football camp for about 40 children from grades 1-5.

The team's community service efforts culminated in an "Appreciation Dinner" for the MLK cheerleaders. They were treated to a guest lecturer, Dr. Beverly Pittman, who specializes in the fitness and health of African American females. After the discussion, the cheerleaders enjoyed a meal completely prepared by the members of the football team. The evening included table service, candlelight dinner, soothing sounds of jazz music, aromatherapy, and a gift bag containing lovely scented candles, bath salts, and beads. "The evening was a great way to facilitate better communication between the football team and cheerleaders, teaching them to socialize as respected ladies and gentleman. It was a great success," said Coach Scott.



Members of MLK & Coach Scott at football camp.

MESSAGE FROM MORRISTOWN

Even though it seems like I have only been in Morristown for a few days this spring, I want to provide everyone with an update from the Play It Smart headquarters in New Jersey.

Play It Smart's fourth year has been an incredible one. Across the country, people have recognized all of the hard work of our academic coaches and the Play It Smart participants. The National Football League is one that has recognized the worthiness of Play It Smart as a school-based development program.

The NFL grant that we received last year has been designated to support one new Play It Smart school in every NFL franchise city. My travels have taken me to many new cities such as Houston, TX, Kansas City, MO, Atlanta, GA, Buffalo, NY, etc. Academic coaches have also been instrumental in the selection process. Ore Pumariega visited prospective sites in Miami and Jacksonville, FL. Charles Gomes assisted in the New York City area as well as Pittsburgh, PA while Craig Cypher traveled to Green Bay, WI and Minneapolis, MN. I would like to thank these folks as we add the new schools for next year.

The Play It Smart program is quickly approaching 80 schools for the upcoming 2002-2003 academic year. Each of us is looking forward to seeing all of the new faces at the annual summer training which will be returning to the Springfield College campus in Springfield, MA from July 20-27.

I am also pleased to report that many of our academic coaches will be returning next year and some have committed to full time assignments within the Play It Smart community. Devin Riley, Keri Guminey, and Erica Bratis will join Keith Dent and Harvey Thompson in over-seeing two schools.

Laurie Ben-Ami has become the first full time Play It Smart academic coach to serve in one high school. Her position will now be entirely funded by the New Brunswick Board of Education.

And finally, the infrastructure of Play It Smart will be stronger with Charles Gomes, Ore Pumariega, and Jeff McCann serving as regional coordinators.

I look forward to a relaxing and rejuvenating summer for all of us as the upcoming academic year promises to be another busy and exciting year for the Play It Smart team!

- Jim Presbrey, National Director

"The NFL...has recognized the worthiness of Play It Smart as a school-based development program."

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STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY THROUGH SPORT: A CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE TO 9/11

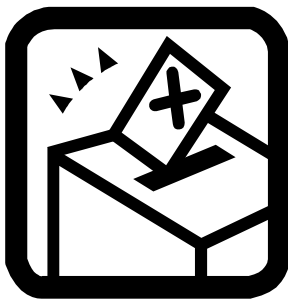
Returning Academic Coaches will have an opportunity at the July training camp to learn about Freedom's Answer, a unique community service activity that will allow Play It Smart participants to take a constructive role in responding to events surrounding the anniversary of 9/11 as part of a Youth Voter Corp.

In events where people feel a sense of powerlessness such as 9/11, it is important to provide forums where people can engage in constructive activities, according to Dr. Al Petitpas, the Director of the NFF Center for Youth Development Through Sport at Springfield College. Freedom's Answer fits the bill. It's a national non-partisan, non-profit effort designed to produce the largest-ever voter turnout and send an unmistakable message to the perpetrators of 9/11: Freedom is alive and well in America.

With community service playing a central role in Play It Smart, the connection between the two programs is

strong. Freedom's Answer will allow Play It Smart kids to take a leadership role in strengthening citizenship in America.

Play It Smart participants, led by their Academic Coach, will have an opportunity to engage in a variety of activities designed to seek voting pledges from parents, grandparents, friends, neighbors, and other students to vote on November 5th.



Play It Smart participants may soon have the opportunity to encourage others to vote through a unique partnership with Freedom's Answer.

Participants will receive a Freedom's Answer t-shirt, jacket, or hat; a letter of thanks signed by the leadership parties; and pride in helping their country. Our connection with Freedom's Answer will also provide academic coaches and their players media opportunities. Freedom's Answer has linked over 700 newspapers nationwide, US News & World Report and MTV. Participants may find themselves highlighted as the "Hero of the Day" in their local paper. To learn more about Freedom's Answer, visit: www.FreedomsAnswer.net.