

ADIDAS SUPERSTAR CAMP: Campers hearken to lessons from life; DERRICK MAHONE, Staff

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A few miles from the basketball courts, the campers at the Adidas Superstar Camp were given a dose of reality. Every player had to spend four hours in a hotel ballroom in the "life skills" portion of the camp, which concluded Saturday at the Suwanee Sports Academy.

The campers listened to former NBA player Jay Williams, Atlanta Falcons quarterbacks coach Michael Johnson, a financial planner and a marketing director.

"We have a responsibility to these young men to give them more than just basketball," said Francis Williams, who coordinates the life skills program. "This is more important than what is going on in the gym. We have to share other pieces of life with them."

Campers listened attentively as each speaker spoke for 30 minutes on topics including media relations, marketing, teamwork, investing and life after sports.

Jay Williams, a former Duke standout and No. 2 pick of the Chicago Bulls in the 2002 draft, told the campers how he "threw away my career" with a bad decision. The former point guard was injured in a motorcycle incident that he hopes won't permanently end his career.

"Look around to your left and to your right," Williams said. "Everybody in here is not going to make it in the NBA. It is all about the decisions you make. Some of you are just content on being here. You have to want to succeed more than the next person.

"You guys need to start preparing for life after basketball. Lucky for me that I had parents who consistently pushed that point. You shouldn't look at education to fall back on, but use it."

After each presentation, the players give the speaker a standing ovation. Although the players have heard much of the same advice from their parents and high school and summer coaches, they say hearing it from someone new reinforces the point.

"What those guys said really opens your eyes," Buford senior guard Andre Morgan said. "They all made a great impression on me. I'm glad they talked about things other than bas- ketball."

Billie Moore, a motivational speaker and a former Portland, Ore., high school standout now in his 50s, demanded that the players pay close attention to his speech on discipline and staying focused. When a player began checking his cellphone messages, Moore called the camper to the front of the room and took the phone.

The player also had to do 20 pushups.

"The next time I hear a cellphone or see anyone with a CD player, it's mine," Moore warned.

Like Williams, he pushed the point about education.

"Some of us in this room will get in trouble," he said. "Instead of being the big ticket, you are going to be the big trouble. I saw some of you play; y'all better forget that NBA [censored]."

So intimidated, the players were reluctant to raise their hands when Moore asked how many thought they would be college stars.

Mays standout Rashad Chase said he will always remember the advice from the speakers.

"This has taught me to be more wise in the decisions I make," said Chase, who helped Mays to the Class AAAA title. "You have to watch the people you hang around. It is good to hear this from people that have firsthand experience."

Steven Piascik, a Virginia-based financial planner, told of how players have blown money on senseless investments and wasted it on friends.

"My advice is to slow down," Piascik said. "You need to have wise people around you giving you advice."

**ILLUSTRATIONS/PHOTOS:** Camp coach Chris Gilmartin rallies his players during an opening-round game at the Suwanee Sports Academy. Players received instruction on more than just basketball. / CURTIS COMPTON / Staff

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