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# SPORTS

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## Helping Those Less Fortunate For Christmas

### ▲ Wake athletes takes time to help 270 families

Christmas is coming and another worthwhile effort to help underprivileged children gets under way this weekend when the Santa's Helper program begins delivering toys to nearly 300 families.

But this program is a bit different from most because athletes from the Wake Forest football and men's and women's basketball teams are a big part of the program.

### COMMENTARY

By Ed Meyers

Started in 1986 by former Wake fullback Chip Rives, the program helped three families and had only 10 volunteers. Rives got the idea after reading about a similar effort in San Antonio called Elf House. Rives approached Robert Egleston, an engineer at R.J. Reynolds, for some assistance. It resulted in Rives being named one of eight Sportsmen of the Year by *Sports Illustrated* in an article called "Athletes Who Care."

Rives, who now lives in Florida, comes back

**"Our players spent 1-2 days delivering gifts and get so much out of it."**

— Coach Dave Odom

every year to help out with the delivery. The program is currently run by a twelve-member board of directors, which includes members from the business community, Wake Forest University and its athletic teams.

The program was run out of Egleston's garage the first two years. Last year, using more than 150 families, the program serve 270 families, including 950 children whose names were supplied by the Christmas Cheer Toy Shop, a United Way agency.

Egleston, an ardent Wake supporter, said, "We deliver every gift with someone dressed as Santa, usually one of the athletes." Another strong supporter is the Winston-Salem Elks, who volunteered the use of their Silas Creek office in addition to provide \$5,000, about half of the program's funding.

Egleston pointed out that Santa's Helper is very efficient, with 94 percent of the money going to the toys and rest to administrative costs. "We make it more fun than charity because of Santa with the athletes," Egleston said.

Egleston related an incident last year when former Wake basketball star and current Denver Nugget Rodney Rogers was helping out. A child opened a gift which turned out to be a Michael Jordan toy. The child immediately turned to Rogers and thought the All-American was Jordan.

Wake guard Randolph Childress echoes touching memories as well. Childress said it took him ten minutes to convince a family living in a condemned building who he was before he had to kick in the door.

Basketball coach Dave Odom drove one of the sleighs one year and other Deacon coaches, past and present, have been supportive as well. It has also been a favorite program for Wake female basketball stand-outs Nichole Levesque, Karen Davis and Amy Wallace.

Several years ago, Sara White was the program's first female Santa. Other former and current Wake athletes who have been involved are former female cager B.J. Thames, George Coghill of the New Orleans Saints and Deacon running back John Leach.

The athletes also go to Brenner Children's Hospital to visit ill children in addition to the families they help. "The female athletes have been helpful to the teenage girls at Brenner," Egleston said. Pictures are taken and the parents of the children seem to get more out of it than the ill children do themselves. Nurses say children who wouldn't smile in weeks are as happy they've ever been during the athletes' visits.

Odom, who has been involved with Santa's Helper since his arrival five years ago, said the program has become a tradition with the team. "Our players spend one to two days delivering gifts and we get so much out of it," Odom said.

## Coaches, ADs Embrace Jayvee Tournament

By MICHAEL JOHNSON  
Chronicle Sports Writer

Area high school athletic directors and junior varsity basketball coaches expressed happiness over the announcement of the David Lash/Chronicle Junior Varsity Holiday Basketball Tournament that will take place Dec. 20-22.

"We're appreciative of The Chronicle's involvement in sponsoring this tournament," said basketball coach Dennis Ring from Mt. Tabor, one of eight schools participating and last year's champion. "This is an outstanding tournament for all the teams involved."

During a press conference at the M.C. Benton Convention Center last Thursday, it was announced that the second-year tournament would be christened in honor of Lash, a former coach and athletic director at Carver, Atkins and East Forsyth high schools. But school officials were just as pleased that the tournament had found the sponsorship it needed.

"I'm just tickled to death that the kids will have an opportunity to play in

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The organizers of the Chronicle/David Lash Tournament. Pictured left to right: Ike Howard, Bob Bell, Ernie Pitt, Jim Robertson, Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines, David Lash, Darryl Brown, Bob Wynn, and Don Hancock.

## Hardee Stresses the Importance of Hard Work

### ▲ Former WSSU wrestling star establishes top notch program at Carver

By MICHAEL JOHNSON  
Chronicle Sports Writer

During each practice, Carver wrestling coach Melton Hardee emphasizes the importance of perseverance and determination to his pupils.

"You can do that every time, so how come you



Carver wrestling coach Melton Hardee begins his fifth season at the school.

don't do it until you want to?" Hardee yells to one his wrestlers who successfully makes a takedown move. When the youngster shrugs his shoulders, Hardee goes into a fit, telling him that there's no room for a part-time wrestler.

Minutes later, Hardee can be seen with heavy-weight wrestler Seneca Dixon on the mat, urging his student to pin him. After nearly twenty minutes of futile response, Hardee's message finally sinks in to Seneca, who begins to become more aggressive with his coach.

Hardee spends each practice shadowing his wrestlers, occasionally picking one who is not performing up to his expectations to wrestle personally. Hardee spends each minute of the session pleading and twisting out every ounce of sweat of his team, pushing them beyond their capabilities.

"My attitude is to push them harder in practice daily to prepare them for their next match," Hardee said, who began his fifth season as Yellow Jackets coach. "These kids are already at the door, but they don't want to open it. Not only do I want them to open it, but go in and peek of what's inside. They might like it in there, so they could stay in for a while."

If any of his students want to see who lives on the other side of success, they shouldn't look any further than the energetic Hardee. During his college days at Winston-Salem State, Hardee was one of the most successful wrestlers in school history. In 1985, Hardee won the Central Intercollegiate Athletic

Association tournament in the 129-pound weight class and placed ninth in the Division II nationals as a senior.

In 1988, Hardee split time as an assistant at his alma mater and East Forsyth High School. In his one year at East, Hardee coached Kat Proper to the state championship in his weight class. Ironically, the person Proper defeated — Donnell Ross — won the Division II title at WSSU. His coach was Hardee, who became the Rams' coach in 1991.

"It's funny something like that happened, because I helped one win in the beginning of his career and another at the end of his," Hardee said.

The moment was short-lived as WSSU shut down the program the following year. But it became more of a blessing to Hardee, who could concentrate more on coaching at Carver, where he also split time as head coach since 1989. Since coming on at Carver, Hardee has coached several wrestlers to the state playoffs, including Darryl Eldridge last year.

"I also had my job at Sara Lee to fall back on, plus my own business (H&T Cleaning Service), so I always had something in the hole," Hardee said. "If I was content only one thing in my life, how can I tell these kids what to do? They would just see me doing one thing with my life and they'll say, 'Look at him, he's just tied down.'"

While Hardee presses himself and his teams to achieve when their on the wrestling mat, he said he does not make their decisions for them. Hardee cites

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## MLK Center Holds Basketball Workshop For Youths

By MICHAEL JOHNSON  
Chronicle Sports Writer

Seven-year old Stephon Wilson dribbles the basketball with his right hand up the court through a row of pylons. Suddenly, the youngster stops dead in his tracks as the whistle blows.

The source of that whistle-blowing directs Stephon on the proper way that he should handle the ball. A large man tells him with a booming voice: "Dribble to the right-hand side of the pylon, use your right. Go around the left, use your left."

More than thirty 6 through 9 year-olds from various parts of Winston-Salem will be learning the essentials of basketball this month at the Martin Luther King Recreational Center. Dribbling, passing and other fundamentals will be stressed throughout the five-week workshop. Though a majority of the youngsters have learned about the game somewhere else, many are learning about the rules for the first time.

"Even though a lot of these kids have been in the gyms playing ball, a lot of them have never learned how to play the game," King Program Director Bill English said.

"If these don't play any organized ball now or in the next few years, they can remember the rules and how it's properly played."

If a person is capable of teaching a youth the game of basketball, it's English. English was member of the 1967 Winston-Salem State basketball team that won the Division II national championship under legendary basketball coach Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines. One of English's teammates was former National Basketball Association All-Star and current NBA Hall-of-Famer Earl "The Pearl" Monroe.

From now until Dec. 20, English and James Irby will be in charge of teaching the basics such as the chest pass as well as some more advanced skills such as teaching a left-handed player how to go to his right. On January 3, English will divide the youths into several intramural teams.

As part of the Winston-Salem Recreational Department, the center will accept any youth who wishes to take part in the workshop. English said the youths are not obligated to play in the intramural games nor do they have to be a member of the center.



Michael Key waits his turn in line during basketball drills at the Martin Luther King Center. Key begins his second year in the workshop program.

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