

GRACE EXCITED ABOUT BASKETBALL SEASON

I wanted to talk to my main man Mike Grace this week simply because basketball season seems to be swinging into full gear around here. In case you didn't know, Grace is the smooth, senior point guard at Mt. Tabor that recently committed to play ball for Yale.

He's also one of the best ballers around the city. Grace is also one of my favorite area athletes to talk with. I usually have a pretty good time talking to Mike.

I always get the most candid, honest and well-thought-out answers when I talk with Grace. He's a very smart guy that knows how to do interviews. I called him up earlier this week to discuss a number of things. He and I talked about Davidson's Stephon Curry, North Forsyth, Yale, Chris Paul, girls and UNC. We also talked about his teammate Josh Hicks and Wake's Jeff Teague.

I forgot to ask Grace to give me a top five. I think he still managed to give a shout out to a number of ballers. Take a look at some of the things "The Graceful One" and I talked about on Monday night.

Anthony: What's going on, Mike Grace?

Mike: Nothing much. What's going on?

Anthony: You got it. I just thought it would be a good time to talk with you, being that basketball season is swinging into gear.

Mike: Yes sir. We're back at it. This is what I love.

Anthony: (Smiles.) I hear that. What type of year can we expect from Mike Grace?

Mike: You can expect a solid year. I've been working as a team player, trying to get ready for states. I'm trying to help my team win a state championship.

Anthony: Guys say some of the same things every year. Everybody thinks they can win a state championship early on. How confident that you and your teammates can really bring home that hardware?

Mike: I have the upmost confidence in my teammates. We were one game away last year. Everybody thought we were going to win it. We thought we were gonna win it. We came up a little short, though. This year is no different. We're working toward that goal every day.

Anthony: One of your teammates definitely looks like he's stepped his game up this year. We talked about it briefly last week. I'm talking about Josh Hicks. How good can Josh be for this team?

Mike: (Giggles.) Josh Hicks does it all for this team. He's really the key to this team. He's the one that gets us going. He can rebound the ball. He can D-up any position. He guards the one through the four. He can score the basketball. If he doesn't play well then we're not going to win the state championship. It's as simple as that.

Anthony: (Smiles.) Have you told him any of that?

Mike: I tell him that all the time. He's my best friend. We're always together. Josh has to come out to play every night.

Anthony: (Smiles.) I know you like Carolina. But do you feel like Duke sometimes. (Smiles.) I mean, I haven't met a guy that doesn't want to beat you and your teammates. Everybody wants to beat Mt. Tabor.

Mike: (Laughs.) All the time. It seems like someone is always talking to us, or hating on us. They want to play Tabor. They want to play Mike and C.J. It's always been like that. We love it. We thrive on it.

Anthony: Do you really? I would hate it.

Mike: I mean, I love it. I love coming out to a court, knowing this guy has been waiting on this game. They've been waiting to show Mike and C.J. up, or they want to show Mike up. (Both laugh.) I love that.

Anthony: I hear that. I know the season is just starting. But which teams have you been hearing about already? Which schools are going to give you guys the most competition?

Mike: North is definitely going to have a good team. They have a point guard that played AAU with us. He signed with High Point. They've got

Chip, Allen Hauser and Gary. And, Reynolds is going to always be good. They're going to always give us a game. That's our big rival. They've got Will Carpenter and Matt. They're going to always be good. But we're really looking forward to the North game. That's going to be our best game.

Anthony: That North team is supposed to be really good.

Mike: Yeah. (Giggles.) They're going to have to come get us, though. All that talking isn't gonna do it.

Anthony: How much better are you going to be this year?

Mike: A lot better. I've gotten stronger and quicker. I can handle the ball a lot crisper. I'm more of a team player. I'm trying to feed off my teammates.

Anthony: How much of a relief is it for you to have your college choice out of the way?

Mike: That's the biggest weight I could've taken off my shoulders. I think I really came out of my shell and played like I was capable of playing at some times last year — compared to my freshman and sophomore years.

I kind of turned it on. At the same time, that thought still lingered. "Where am I gonna play ball? Am I gonna play ball in college?" Now I can focus on my team with that out of the way.

Anthony: I thought you made a great decision with your college choice. But I've heard some of the craziest things from people opposed to your decision. (Smiles.) I am sure you have too.

Mike: (Laughs.) Yeah. **Anthony:** What are some of the craziest things you've heard from people?

Mike: Crazy? People asking me if I wanted to play in the Atlantic 10 or Big South. People were asking me why I didn't go to Wake or here or there? Some people were asking me if Yale had a basketball team.

Anthony: Do people realize what type of institution Yale is?

Mike: Nope. (Both laugh.) Not most people. Some people thought I should've gone to other places that are better known for basketball. I was being recruited by Davidson, St. Joseph's and Penn State. That really wasn't my main focus. And, I began to realize there was life after basketball. What better place to get an education than the number rated college? How could I go wrong?

Anthony: With that said, have you set your mind on becoming an attorney?

Mike: Definitely. I hope to go to Yale for four years. Then, either go to Wake or Georgetown. I want to go to New York to do some internships for a couple summers. Then, hopefully come back and practice with my dad.

Anthony: Whoa. That would be something else.

Mike: I hope so, man. He's looking forward to having me on board. He's been getting excited about it.

Anthony: Me too. Give me a job when you get on.

Mike: I got you. Just give me a call.

Anthony: Let's move on. College basketball is in full swing. Um, Stephon Curry looked crazy the other night. Did you see him?

Mike: Man. He's no joke. He was at the Chris Paul camp, where the top guards in the East coast were invited. Me and C.J. were there. You know that.

Anthony: Right.

Mike: We were watching him. You think he only shoots 3-pointers. But he handles the rock, takes it to the hole and dishes it off. He's a complete player. I think he's the most dangerous player in the nation right now. It would be a shame



Mt. Tabor senior point guard Mike Grace draws contact during a game earlier this season.

if he didn't get player of the year. I love watching him play. Me and C.J. call each other and talk the whole time when he's playing.

Anthony: Speaking of that

CP camp. How nice was it for you to get to play with top guards from high school and college squads?

Mike: That was great. It was nice being recognized as

one of the top guards. Then, to get in there and actually be a part of the camp with some of the guys you read about all the time. It was an honor and learning experience.

Anthony: How have you been able to deal with all of the pressure that has come your way? (Smiles.) A number of people have unfairly compared you to Chris Paul ever since you were a freshman.

Mike: Right. There was definitely a lot of pressure. But I grew up in a household of pressure. My dad has always put pressure on me. My parents pressure me to do well. I've always had pressure to perform.

If I can take the pressure from my family and people that love me then pressure from other people is nothing. I've worked hard in the gym and weight room. It's tough to say anything bad about me now.

Anthony: What's one talent that you have that most people may not know?

Mike: I've played the alto saxophone since I was in the fourth grade. I'm pretty decent. But I haven't pulled it out in about a year. But I'm pretty good at it.

Anthony: (Laughs.) How's the atmosphere around school, with the football season being over?

Mike: Oh, it's tough. But people have been so ready for basketball season. People love basketball around here almost as much as football. I've been talking to the football players and they always tell us how much they love to come watch us play.

Anthony: OK. Who's going to win it all this in college basketball?

Mike: Carolina. I love those boys at Wake. You'll

never hear me say anything bad about them. I love Jeff Teague. But those boys at Carolina go hard.

Anthony: Ay, Jeff Teague is going to dunk on Ty Lawson.

Mike: That's all right. But we'll get the W. (Both laugh.) Exactly.

Anthony: OK. What are you bumping nowadays?

Mike: That "808 & Heartbreak," by Kanye is hot. "Dedication 3," came out. People say Lil' Wayne is falling off. I don't think he's going anywhere.

Anthony: How's your love life?

Mike: Love life? I'm single. Testing the waters. But I really don't need a girlfriend at this point in my life. Basketball season just started and school is tough. So, I'm just chilling right now.

Anthony: Let's close with free association.

Mike: OK.

Anthony: Winston-Salem Prep.

Mike: Good guards. Solid. Good defense. Plays hard. And, good coach.

Anthony: Nickname.

Mike: (Laughs.) Lil' CP. I don't like it, but people gave it to me.

Anthony: Pops. (Michael Grace Sr.)

Mike: Taught me everything that I know.

Anthony: Grandfather.

Mike: My role model. Who I try to be like everyday.

Anthony: Dream car.

Mike: Lamborghini marciologo.

Anthony: Favorite spot to eat.

Mike: That's tough. Probably Milner's. I get the fish and grits when I go.



One-on-One

with Anthony Hill

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Forsyth County Dept. of Public Health
799 North Highland Avenue
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Monday, December 1, 2008

7-8 p.m. — In Sickness and in Wealth segment

8-8:30 p.m. — Public comment period

Monday, December 8, 2008

7-8 p.m. — When the Bough Breaks and Becoming American segments

8-8:30 p.m. — Public comment period

Reynolda Manor Branch Library
2839 Fairlawn Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27106

Monday, January 5, 2009

7-8 p.m. — Bad Sugar and Place Matters segments

8-8:30 p.m. — Public comment period

Monday, January 12, 2009

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