

# Olympian, SEAL tell Rams to stay mentally sharp

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

Athletes at Winston-Salem State University got a high powered pep talk last week from a Navy SEAL and an Olympic athlete, as part of a series of "Mental Toughness" seminars that are being held at all 13 member schools of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) by the marketing firm LuBear, Inc. and the Navy SEALs. Hundreds of athletes gathered in a ballroom at WSSU's Anderson Center to hear from their special guests, who talked about the type of determination it took to be successful in each of their fields.

WSSU Athletic Director Bill Hayes said the program was highly recommended by other CIAA athletic directors. Mental determination is a big factor in sports, Hayes believes.

"What I've heard personally over the years, over a lot of years, is that athletics is about 80 percent mental," he said.

Both speakers have risen to the top of their profession. Rhadi Ferguson was a member of the 2004 U.S. Judo Olympic team. Senior Chief Joseph Jones is a Navy SEAL, part of an elite fighting force that operates on land, at sea and in the air.

There are only 2,500 SEALs worldwide and Jones is one of only 48 African-Americans in their ranks. Commander Brodes Hartley is a diversity officer tasked with increasing the number of minorities in the SEALs and the Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (SWCC) that support them. He said along with instilling advice in the athletes that will help them in life and in competition, the seminars are also intended to expose them to the SEALs.

Hartley said traditional recruit-



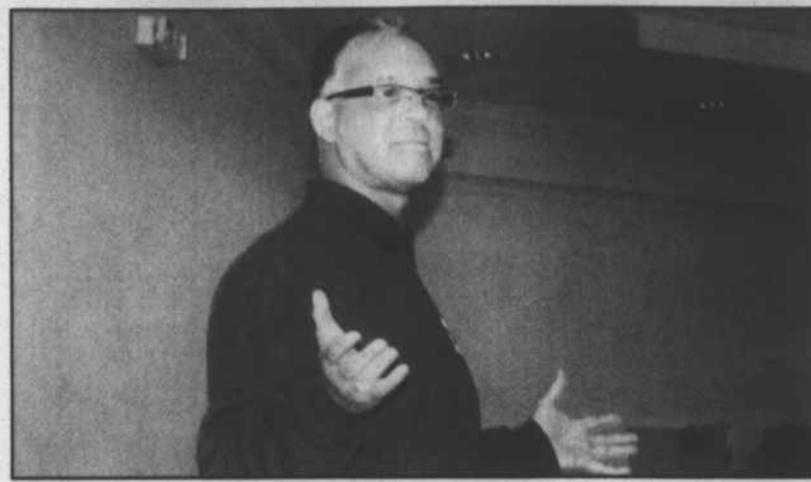
Above: (from right) Steve Harrell, Joseph Jones and Rhadi Ferguson speak to WSSU athletes last week.

Right: Commander Brodes Hartley tells athletes about the Navy SEALs.

ing methods haven't worked for the SEALs, so he's instead trying to create awareness. He said studies showed African-Americans learned about SEALs at a much later age than their white counterparts.

"We found out we can't really recruit for SEALs, they got to want it in their heart and their mind," said Hartley. "So now we're doing an awareness campaign."

Jones, a SEAL for the last 14 years, has endured his share of pain and discomfort to get to where he is. He showed a video of the initial training SEALs undergo, which amazed the crowd. A trainee in the video described it as "six



months of hell" in which he was "treated like the absolute lowest form on Earth." Crawling through mud, severe sleep deprivation, lifting logs, leaping through an obstacle course and performing amazing aquatic feats with their hands and feet tied are just some of the challenges the training presents. Every year, 600-800 men try out for the SEALs, but only a third of them make it.

Jones, who is stationed in Virginia Beach, Va., went over SEAL techniques for becoming mentally tough and getting through daunting challenges. He told the athletes they need to go beyond their comfort zones to achieve greatness.

"While you're going through whatever you're going through to get wherever you're going, it's going to be uncomfortable at

times, get used to it," said Jones. "You want to be great in this world, you're going to suffer through some things."

Ferguson, who lives in Florida, agreed with that. He showed the audience some of his martial arts matches, dazzling the crowd with repeated take downs of opponents. Then he told them what he endured to achieve that. He described competing and practicing even while injured, including after tearing the muscle off his leg bone on several occasions. He said he went through a lot of pain, discomfort and sacrifice to climb to the top of his sport.



Ferguson

"If I didn't learn about how to not care about myself and get so focused on the goal, I would be of no value to Team USA," said Ferguson, who now competes in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and holds a master's and doctorate in education.

The WSSU football team will get a double helping of the SEAL experience. The SEALs will provide players with mental toughness conditioning and team-building events at the Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base in Virginia Beach, Va. later this year during spring football camp.

WSSU football player Keith Ferguson, who is no relation to Rhadi Ferguson, said he was up to the challenge. He thought the seminar was "great."

"I took away that sometimes you have to put away certain things to reach certain types of goals that you set yourself out for," said Keith Ferguson. "Nothing in life is easy."

## Globetrotter

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Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum Saturday evening, as part of their 2011 World Tour. Earlier in the day, Branch participated in the team's Smile Patrol, visiting patients at Brenner Children's Hospital.

"Everywhere we go, we have fun, we bring smiles and we always bring an important message," Branch said. "It's messages in our game: teamwork, hard work, competitiveness, but also, we have fun."

Branch, who also provides professional training for the Kingwood, Texas-based Project Hoops, a non-profit youth sports organization, says setting a positive example for kids is one of the most important components of his job.

"As a Globetrotter, you're a role model, so you've got to be able to come out and do it," he said of interacting with the youngsters. "But for myself, I wanted to do it because I didn't have it when I was young."

Principal Floyd Lowman



Hot Shot shows off his moves for the students.

Photos by Layla Farmer

said he was thrilled to have Branch come and emphasize the values the staff at Bolton works to instill in their students each day through BEARS (Be Proud, Effort in Everything, A+ Positive Attitude, Respect and Responsibility, Self Control).

"I think that reinforcement is what we're after," said Lowman, who has helmed Bolton since the beginning of the school year. "The same message from another voice is often a new idea."

Lowman, an educator for the last three decades, says

he has fond memories of watching the legendary Fred "Curly" Neal, who spent 22 seasons with the team, and other Globetrotters greats as a child.

"I saw the whole thing live when I was a wee little tot. It lives on in my memory," Lowman related.

"...they have a very powerful presence and a very positive message."

The 85 year-old institution, which actually began in the south side of Chicago, has a proud history, Branch told the youngsters.

"The Harlem Globetrotters is the most famous basketball team in the world," he stated. "...The Globetrotters have been to 120 countries. We've entertained over 135 million fans. We have the best record of any professional basketball team in the world—we've won over 25,000 games."

Towards the end of the program, Branch invited members of the audience to come up and expound upon CHEER's chief points.

"Effort means to keep trying and not give up," third grader Diana Antunez told her peers.

"We all have a special talent," Branch added. "Whatever you choose to be in life is your dream...whatever your

dream is, give it 110 percent."

Ten year-old Christian Rose received a high five from Branch for his explanation of enthusiasm.

"I think it means that even if something does go wrong, just don't give up," the fifth grader related. "Stay happy and you can work around it."

Branch asked Lowman to give his definition of responsibility.

Branch, who is in his eighth season with the Globetrotters, said he has to try out annually to stay on the team, so it's his responsibility to stay in shape and practice hard so he can keep his job.

"It starts with you—do your job, do what you're supposed to do," he told the kids, before leading the respondents in a "Magic Circle" demonstration to show the importance of listening and paying attention. "...All these things we talked about are going to make you a great person."



Lowman

## Brown

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March 18 event. Hillian, a veteran educator with a career that spanned more 48 years, said she hoped to raise at least \$5000 for the Chapter's scholarship fund through the event.

A parade of public officials was on hand at the event to wish Chapter members well.

"This university has played, and continues to play, such a key role in the revitalization of our city and I'm sure that your chancellor would agree that this chapter has played a key role in keeping the university strong," commented Mayor Allen Joines, who issued a proclamation declaring March 18, 2011 "Brown Alumni Chapter Day" in the city of Winston-Salem.

"We are so blessed because you love your school and you're making such a difference for all of our city's people," added Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke.

Hartsfield's daughter, District Court Judge Denise Hartsfield presided over the celebration as mistress of



Barbara Puryear (second from right) presents a Doris Hartsfield (center) with a token of the Chapter's appreciation as (from left) Director of Alumni Relations Gregory Hairston, Miss Brown Alumni 2010 Minnie Ervin and Vera Hillian look on.

Photos by Layla Farmer

ceremonies. "It's good to see her being recognized for something that has meant a lot to her," the judge said of her mother, whom she said has been rumored to have enough talent to "teach a rock to read."

Though Judge Hartsfield took a different path, attending Spelman College and later Wake Forest School of

Law, she said she always admired her mother and the other "Winston-Salem State teaching divas" she grew up around. They came from a time "when teachers were teachers and respect was not something that should happen but was demanded," Hartsfield told the audience during her emotional tribute.

The judge has recently suffered media scrutiny for

allegedly "fixing traffic tickets" for acquaintances and friends, but she told alumni Friday that her mother has been steadfast through it all.

"I want you all to know that she is stronger than her little body looks," Judge Hartsfield said, her eyes welling with tears as she recounted her painful conversation with her mother as news reports multiplied



State Rep. Larry Womble addresses the audience.

around her. "...She said, 'Baby, you cannot embarrass me. I am proud of you no matter what you do.'"

At that, the audience rose to its feet, saluting both women with thunderous applause.

WSSU Chancellor Donald Reaves rounded the evening out with his keynote speech about the proud history the school enjoys, the present challenges it faces, and the future that lies ahead.

"We're moving ahead at a very rapid pace," Reaves told the audience. "It won't be easy, it never is ... but the results that we anticipate will be tremendously beneficial to our graduates."

With so many choices available to modern African American students today, historically black colleges and universities like WSSU no longer have the monopoly when it comes to African American students, Reaves said, but the institutions remain key contributors in the education of Black America.

"We can all take pride in the fact that WSSU is a part of a rich history, a rich legacy," the chancellor commented. "It's an important part of the educational history of African Americans in this country, and it's people like you ... that help sustain and maintain the important role that these colleges and universities continue to play."

For more information about the Brown Alumni Chapter, contact President Barbara Puryear, at bpur10207@bellsouth.net.