

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Those given much, should give much

As is custom, the NBA held its annual June draft. And, as has increasingly become custom, the faces of the dozens of college, high school and foreign players becoming millionaires through this basketball rite-of-passage are black.

Yesterday's draft was no different.

For most of the draftees, landing a spot on an NBA team is a dream come true. Suddenly, the imaginary one-on-one scenarios where they dunk on Shaquille O'Neal, juke Scottie Pippen or "D up" Michael Jordan no longer seem far fetched — though many an NBA newcomer entered the league fancying similar thoughts only to realize only to have their flights of fancy ground by a Shaq jump hook, Pippen finger roll or Jordan fadeaway.

The new wealth means access to the good life. Players can move their parents away from drug and violence-plagued ghettos, away from rural squalor, away from civil unrest overseas. Whether they command top rookie salaries — \$9 million for their first three years or they sign for the league minimum, a paltry \$200,000-plus — they are likely making more money than anyone in their family has ever made. Things once foreign become things boringly normal: fancy cars, jewelry, expensive homes, trips to places no one can pronounce.

Too often, though, young players overestimate their wealth, failing to factor in Uncle Sam who's smiling on their move into a stratospheric tax bracket. It means more money for him.

And some young players don't account for their agents' cut. Agents are their employees and much like a boss with no workforce is useless, a player with no agent is either broke, unemployed or underpaid. Agents broker the possible deals for their players for one reason. Concern for that player's well-being? No. It means more money for them.

The NBA needs no special commendation for NBA Team Up and other community projects it performs in cities with franchises. As a corporate citizen whose lifeblood is the fans, its the least it could do. More of the newly-rich black millionaires should take heed, using their economic clout to improve the community.

Moving away from the problem doesn't solve it. Money helps. Black athletes should invest in their communities. Building enterprise facilitates change. The gainfully employed are less likely to engage in self-destructive acts. Sponsor camps, hold charity drives, fun recreational activities, host seminars, make a difference.

To keep the money circulating in our community, black athletes should hire black agents and stock brokers. Use your wealth to create wealth. Since the NBA "showed you the money," show your community some love.



Spelling champion received invaluable adult support

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Washington Post reporter covering the National Spelling Bee held recently in Washington, D.C. dubbed her "the Jamaican phenom who came out of nowhere" because she had never been to the prestigious contest and the island nation had sent its first representative just last year.

But when the pressure-packed event was over 12-year-old Jody-Anne Maxwell of Kingston, Jamaica, had politely marched her way past 248 other contestants and through such brain-twisting words as "cerography," "allargando," "hyssop," "quixote," "parhesia," and the championship word "chiaroscurist" to capture the contest's trophy and the \$10,000 first prize.

I readily admit I'd never even heard of any these words, including "chiaroscurist" — it means someone who paints in a style that emphasizes light and shading to produce the illusion of depth.


But I now have several words to describe Jody-Anne Maxwell that are easy to spell: wonderful, inspiring, illuminating.

Others agree with me. Her victory provoked a burst of pride and celebration among her parents and siblings and fellow countrymen — and probably quite a few others around the world who, like me, became "Jamaicans" in spirit.

"Jamaica is not just a land of nice white beaches," said her sponsor and manager, Maurice Thompson, the director of a stationery supplies company in Jamaica. "It also has young children with spunk, excitement, pizzazz. You've seen it here today."

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
President
National Urban League



Indeed, when Jody-Anne won, one Jamaican mother in New York City, who was watching on television, broke into an exuberant rendition of the Jamaican national anthem. Hugging her son, she then said, "I hope you grow up to be just like that."

That's the point that takes our happiness beyond mere ethnic-group cheerleading to the deeper insight of Jody-Anne Maxwell's accomplishment.

It's the idea of young people envisioning all the good things they can aspire to and their efforts being bolstered by the adults around them.

Jody-Anne Maxwell's parents — dad is an accountant and mom is a data processing operator — sent her to Jamaican schools with tough academic standards.

Her coach, the Rev. Glen O.J. Archer, who teaches religion at her school, helped her learn the thousands of words that were used to challenge the more than nine million youngsters who, aiming for May's championship round, participated this year in feeder competitions around the world.

The words Jody-Anne conquered were tongue twisting. As the Post reporter wrote, "At this bee, so-called

'normal' words — words you might actually use one day — are virtually verboten."

Finally, there was Mr. Thompson, who took up Jody-Anne's sponsorship and that of two other Jamaican contestants when the nation's newspapers — contestants are usually sponsored by newspapers — would not.

He and others saw the value of supporting the young girl's aspirations.

These adults saw that setting high standards pulls young people into full membership in the larger society in two ways: First, it helps them create proper aspirations. Secondly, it helps them shape and channel those ambitions by working to develop the skills and the

discipline to achieve them.

When we adults set high standards — and help children pursue them — we ratify what is the natural inclination of youth: To strive to do their best. In almost any black neighborhood on any given day, you'll see scores of black boys and girls on the outdoor courts and in the gyms, practicing their jump shots, dunks, and dribbling.

These youngsters aren't just playing games.

Like all youth, they've responded quickly and with diligence to the obvious and subtle messages they perceive the larger society is sending them about the opportunities available to them.

It's up to us adults to be sure our youngsters get the right messages and the right role models — that they get the inspiration and the chance to exercise their minds.

That's the larger meaning of Jody-Anne Maxwell's victory: Whether or not our youngsters ever become chiaroscurists — or even learn how to spell that darn word — she's exactly the kind of model they need to follow.

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