

Agassi Boys & Girls Club inspires children, adults

By Huel Washington
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If the youngsters who come to the Andre Agassi Boys and Girls Club each morning wonder why Unit Director Stanley Breland has a smile on his face, the answer is obvious: He has found his "niche."

Millions in the working public wish they could match the enthusiasm and warmth Breland feels when he gets to the facility at the corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and Washington Road. Being in charge of the boys and girls club is an eye-opener.

"I just have a passion for working with the young people," said Breland, a Las Vegas native and graduate of Clark High School.

A visit in 1994 to A.D. Guy Community Center by Andre Agassi brought about the consolidation of the A.D. Guy Community Center and Andre Agassi Boys and Girls Club. Agassi had started a program called "Just for Girls."

"Andre pledged \$1 million to put the two clubs together," Breland said. "The kids made a great impression on him. He was aware then that tennis was not a traditional sport for African-Americans."

Agassi was playing in Europe when announcement of the unification was made. He left the tournament, flew to Las Vegas for the news conference, returning to the tournament on a turn-around. The Andre Agassi Charitable Foundation funds projects for



Among the numerous popular offerings at the Andre Agassi Boys & Girls Club in West Las Vegas is the tremendously successful tennis program. From left to right are some of the participants: Sue Owens and Jasmine Muhammad, tennis coach Tim Blenkiron (second row, center), Stanley Breland, Jr. (front, center), Asia Muhammad and Candyce Boney.

children in low-income, troubled areas.

The club sees as many as 400 members a day in the summer and serves more than 2,000 members during the year. The 25,000-square-foot facility, 800 N. Martin Luther King Blvd., offers a full spectrum of activities, reinforcing educational, recreational and social growth to its members. It also features an indoor basketball court, outdoor tennis courts, computer lab, library and teen center.

Breland, 33, is overwhelmed that Agassi, also a

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Las Vegas native, has made such an enormous contribution to the youngsters on the West Side while other wealthy African-Americans, except Mike Tyson, have overlooked them entirely.

Since 1994, Agassi, the son of a casino host, has helped disadvantaged kids find ways to grow in sports, the arts and education. The experience of working with kids did not happen overnight. After high

school, the outstanding city football player began an odyssey that included seasons at the College of Eastern Utah, San Bernardino Junior College and California State University at Fullerton.

As a 6-3, 220-pound line-backer, during his best playing days, Breland rose from number 60 in the nation to 12 in Sports Illustrated's rankings of potential National Football League players. Later he suffered a tear of the medial collateral ligament in his right knee. He had a brief stint with the Ottawa

Roughriders in the Canadian Football League. After a salary dispute, Breland headed for home in 1992.

First he coached Pop Warner teams with Bob Nixon, a Metro Policeman, then with friend, David Barnett. The experience got him ready to assume a position at the A.D. Guy Community Center. Barnett became the director at Doolittle and Breland became unit director at the A.D. Guy.

Breland has four children.

Recently the club hired a new tennis instructor who matches Breland with his affection for working with young people. Tim Blenkiron, a transplanted Australian, came here a little over 10 years ago to play tennis at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. He had his mind set on the pro tour but love and marriage changed his goals as it does for many people.

"Tennis is a unique sport in which a child has to learn self-reliance and how to make appropriate decisions in order to be successful," Blenkiron said. "It is an ideal framework within which to teach children about making the right choices in life."

Last year, six members of Team Agassi, a tournament squad from the Andre Agassi Boys & Girls Club, traveled to London where they went to Wimbledon and played tennis against a team from the United Kingdom in the Two Nations Challenge.

For further information, call (702) 367-2582.

NFL Hall of Famers inductees exhibited class in careers

CANTON, Ohio (AP) - They started on NFL Sundays, so it's fitting that's when they will enter the Hall of Fame.

For the first time in its 40-year history, the Pro Football Hall of Fame will hold its induction ceremony on a Sunday, honoring the 2003 class of Marcus Allen, Hank Stram, Elvin Bethea, Joe DeLamielleure and James Lofton.

The Hall switched the ceremony from its usual Saturday morning slot to help accommodate thousands of out-of-town visitors.

"Having the enshrinement on Saturday made it difficult for people to get to both events," Hall spokesman Joe Horrigan said. "This makes it one less day of commit-



(From left to right) James Lofton, Joe DeLamielleure, Elvin Bethea and Marcus Allen pose with their busts at the Pro Football Hall of Fame Sunday, in Canton, Ohio. The fifth member of this induction class, Hank Stram, was unable to return for the group picture.

ment. It helps our visiting Hall of Famers, many of whom are still working and have commitments elsewhere."

As part of its 40th anniversary, the Hall of Fame invited all 144 living members to attend this year's "NFL Homecoming" weekend and 115 made their way to Canton.

Allen, who rushed for 12,243 yards, is the most prominent member of this year's class. A star for the Raiders and Chiefs, Allen ran through defenses during 16 prolific seasons. He was NFL Rookie of the Year in 1982 and Super Bowl MVP two years later.

An eight-time Pro Bowl selection for the Houston Oilers, Bethea recorded 105

sacks despite playing mostly in coach Bum Phillips' 3-4 alignment.

DeLamielleure was one of the key members of Buffalo's "Electric Company" offensive line, providing the holes for Hall of Famer O.J. Simpson. DeLamielleure's induction will help make up for some rough times, including losing his life savings.

"It makes it all the more worth it," the father of eight said. "I think you have to go through some really tough times to understand what it means."

A college track star, Lofton hardly lost a step at the end of his 16-year career with the Packers, Raiders and Bills. He finished with 14,004 yards receiving and averaged 18.3 yards per catch.