

Former Gator Basketball guard is back in Gainesville to help the next generation of athletic kids
By Erica Blake
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Dribbling back into Gainesville for their fourth consecutive year, the All Fundamentals Basketball Camp hosted by Camp Directors Dan Cross and Andrew DeClercq is right around the corner and registration is now open.

Beginning August 4, from 9:30 a.m. till 4:30 p.m., Gainesville area kids will be learning the fundamentals of shooting, dribbling, passing, teamwork, respect, discipline and leadership skills from former professional athletes, experienced coaches and local community volunteers.

Located at the Florida Gym, this year's basketball camp will be \$165 for the entire week. The All Fundamentals Basketball camp is a community-based youth sports camp designed to help educate and coach boys and girls ages eight to 15 on the fundamentals of basketball and life, Cross said.

"Dan and I were taught basketball a certain way, with fundamentals being the main building block. We think this is the basis of our success. We are excited to give back to the school we shared our success at and the community that has given us so much support," DeClercq said.

Both of the camp directors are more than qualified in all aspects of the game. Cross is a University of Florida Athletic Hall of Fame member and played for the Gators as a guard from 1992-1995. Fellow Gator, DeClercq, played for the University of Florida as the starting center before going on to a 10-year career in the NBA with the Orlando Magic. Cross and DeClercq lead the Gators to the first final four in school history.

Having 25 years of combined basketball experience and understanding, Cross and DeClercq have put together a team of qualified coaches and current/ former basketball players who appreciate the importance of teaching basketball and life fundamentals.

"We want to show kids that it is important to have something else planned for your life when basketball ends. Encouraging kids to think about becoming doctors, lawyers and entrepreneurs instead of just becoming the next Michael Jordan or LeBron James helps us demonstrate what else the world has to offer them," Cross said.

Every day the camp hosts a different speaker from around the community. They bring in former athletes as well as people unrelated to sports to promote a lifestyle outside of athletics.

Larry Shyatt, the men's Gator basketball assistant coach, has been speaking at camps for the past 34 years and said that most kids attend sports camps to get a quick fix. Shyatt disagrees with this mentality, stating that learning the fundamental skills of basketball is a process. In his opinion, Cross's camp does a good job of demonstrating that kids need a balance between the game of basketball and the game of life.

Past life coaches and guest speakers have included Joakim Noah, Jeremy Foley, Larry Shyatt, university resources and Gainesville police and fire departments.

One of last year's speaker's was Sgt. Jayson Levy of the Juvenile Relations Bureau with the Alachua County Sherriff's Office. He spoke to the campers about decision making and choosing carefully who you get advice from.

"It's enlightening to have kids who pay attention. You could tell that they wanted to be there and really wanted to learn. They might not like what I have to say, but they were very attentive and asked great questions," Levy said.

This year's camp speakers have not yet been decided, however, Shyatt said "Anytime Dan has needed something from me, my staff or my team, as a former Gator, we are always more than willing to help him out with his camps."

Driving the hour and a half to Gainesville from O'Brien, was well worth the trip for Holli Miller, mother of Dylan, 9 and Austin, 14. Her two boys have attended the camp for the past two years and will return this summer for their third. Austin had tried out for the middle school basketball team a few times unsuccessfully before attending Cross's camp.

"My older sons' confidence just really wasn't good. Our experience with Dan has been really personal. The next season, when Austin tried out for the team he made it. As soon as my son found out, the first person he wanted to tell was Dan Cross," Miller said.

The final day of camp, is the annual parent/camper day that will involve interaction between parent/guardian and camper. By having the parents involved in the learning process, they will understand what kinds of drills and skills their child should be working on at home, Cross said.

"Usually on Saturday, the parents get to come to camp and do the same drills as the kids, even though we can't walk the next day. This lets the parents see what a day in the life of basketball camp is really all about," Miller said.

The camp would not be successful without its sponsors and they are always looking for additional support, said Cross. They include Wade Raulerson Pontiac, Buick, GMC, Athletic Academy Gainesville Health & Fitness Center, Country Inn Suites, Gator Dominos, Gatorade, Southern Living at Home, Home: Living in the Heart of Florida, Advocare, Viking Construction, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Gulf Breeze, The Swamp Restaurant, ESPN Radio AM Gainesville Ocala, YBOA and Charles Perry Construction.

To learn more about the camp, or to register, go online to www.allfundamentals.com.