

ON & OFF THE COURT WITH

Tay Fisher



When a person achieves a certain degree of success through hard work, besides the admiration that often comes with it, an extra measure of respect is gained if he takes the time to help others improve their own lives.

This is certainly the case with Tay Fisher, a member of the world-renowned Harlem Globetrotters basketball team, and also a native of Kingston who takes great pleasure in giving back to his home community. With projects as diverse as a young people's basketball camp and a cure for cancer charity event, Fisher is an athlete setting a sterling example of how to use celebrity to accomplish worthwhile goals.



While still a student, Fisher accumulated an astonishing number of basketball-related accolades. Named player of the year, 2004, at Kingston High School, he also held single-season records in scoring average, three-pointers made, free throws made, single game points, total season points, and more. Career records include most three-pointers, most field goals, and most free throws. He also held the NYS record for 3-point field goals. His career points at KHS surpassed the high school records of even such major players as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Christian Laettner, and others. (The *Daily Freeman* named him Sportsman of the Year in 2003 and 2009.)

Later, while studying Psychology and Education at Siena College,

Fisher racked up more awards, such as most improved player, defensive player of the year, and student athlete of the year. His moves on the basketball court brought him to the attention of the Harlem Globetrotters, the famed exhibition team that combines superb athleticism with comedy and theatrical verve, and who are considered unofficial ambassadors of the United States on their international travels. They drafted Fisher into their elite team and a new world opened up to him.

But keeping in touch with his roots is just as important to this young man as any worldwide acclaim.

Born and raised in Kingston, Tay Fisher attended J. Watson Bailey Middle School, whose teachers he credits for guiding him to a positive

way of life. He says he was not an A-plus student by any means, but with his teachers' encouragement, he did his best. And that is what he tries to impart to the kids he works with today. He knows the value of leading by example.

"You have to be able to show it for the kids to believe it," Fisher said. "I try to show kids they have to work hard both in basketball and the classroom – they go hand in hand. My profession has nothing to do with academics, but I've been trained to work hard at both."

As a youngster, Fisher was exposed to the risks that many young people face. He witnessed the drugs and violence that happened on a daily basis throughout his child-

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hood. He could have gotten lost, just hanging out with friends and getting into mischief. To this day, he understands the temptations that lead youngsters astray, and he strives to influence kids to live their best possible life. “Kids often say, ‘You don’t know what I’ve been through,’ but I can honestly say I do, and I’m proud to say it.”

Fisher was in track and field until 7th grade. “Then I started sparking in basketball,” he told us, so he decided to concentrate on that. He played seriously from the age of 11; by 13, he was invited to play with the Kingston HS Junior Varsity team.

“A lot of people saw potential in me at the Boys and Girls Club. They recommended I go to a higher level.”

Athletics may have come fairly easily, but academic success was more difficult. Still, despite some struggles during his early teens, Fisher was motivated. With the help of caring teachers and coaches, he learned to make wise choices.

“I grew up at the Boys and Girls Club,” he says. “That’s where a lot of my challenge and hard work come from. I still visit there to see the kids. If it weren’t for the Boys and Girls Club, I wouldn’t be where I am physically.”

Physical health is an important component in Fisher’s work with children today. He tells them, “Through my whole life I’ve always been active. Even today as I travel and play numerous games, sometimes twice a day, nine to ten times a week, my whole life is about being active, eating healthy, and staying in shape.”

The Tay Fisher Fundamental Basketball Camp is a perfect venue for instilling that message in his young admirers. “When I come home I make sure my campers do the same thing. Physical fitness is important



to young people whether or not they want to be in professional sports. I tell them as long as you’re trying your best, that’s what matters. I can’t do it for you. But I give them all the tools I can. I’m not the biggest guy; I’m 5’ 9”. But I feel fit and in shape, and whenever you feel good you look at things differently.”

Fisher also thinks highly of the local YMCA. “For a small community, the Y has a lot of good programs. I go every day when I’m home. Besides the Y, I do yoga, ab and core workouts, and zumba. Playing so many games on the road it’s easy to lose weight and lose strength. I can’t take weights with me when I travel, so to keep my strength up I use exercise bands.”

Regarding academics and athletics generally, Fisher notes that at first he did not see how school and basketball related to each other. In high school, Tay would tell people that he was going to school for basketball, not knowing he needed to go for something that would benefit his life after basketball. But thanks to buckling down in his schoolwork, Siena College recruited him as a “scholar athlete.” And now, in between his seasons on the road, he is attending Saint Rose College, studying K-6 education.

“Saint Rose is a great school, and they see my devotion to finishing the courses. They let me work in the classes around my work schedule.”

A newer aspect of Fisher’s involvement with his community is the Fisher’s Fight 4 the Cure charity basketball game. This is the first year he has sponsored it; he plans it as an annual event. “I’m not just a ‘one and done’ guy,” he stated. “That’s not how I do things. A lot of women are affected by breast cancer all around the world. A lot of people in Kingston who I know currently, and others who have passed away. I wanted to do something in the community that everyone can be a part of, not just kids. We raised close to \$4000 the first time, and donated to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation. I can’t wait to do it again next year.” He is hoping for a better attendance the second time around. “I learn a lot each time I do something. Next year I will have activities to keep the crowds involved. I want to do things that keep everyone in attendance active and entertained.”

Fisher emphasized that whatever he does in life, it is not all about him. “But it’s always good to show it instead of just saying it. I met 7 sur-

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vivors at the cancer event. They were hugging me and saying how they really appreciated it. Those are the moments that mean something to me. That, and teaching kids.”

About playing with the Globetrotters, he said, “I’m able to represent my country and travel the world, and when I come home to my camp I teach my kids what I’ve seen in life. I want others to experience what I’ve gone through, if not better.”

The Globetrotters are a notable part of American history. Established in 1926, the early players braved the worst of the segregation years, bringing



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black and white people together as they entertained them. Fisher adds, “Kids need to know the history. There is nothing better than connecting with people and making them smile, and I’m in the perfect job for that.”

The Tay Fisher Fundamental Basketball Camp is co-educational, and 2014 will be their 10th year. Remarkably, Fisher was only 18 when he began it, and yet he earned respect from kids just a couple of years younger than himself. “There’s a lot of great talent in Kingston; not everyone knows it, but I do because I’m around it and I see it firsthand – both boys and girls.” His camp helped more than 20 boys and girls make it to the next level towards college. He hopes to increase that number in the future.

“The best thing I love about it is the people who come to my camp throughout the years. Some of them are staff members at camp now, too. I encourage them to give back, and they are. It’s a nice trend.”

As for the future, Tay Fisher is continuing his college education along with his professional career and charity work. “I go with how it is. Basketball is my love and my passion. It has gotten me where I am today, with hard work. I want to keep it going as long as possible. But my camp, the charity work, everything involving kids and teaching – I will stay with that mindset. Hopefully, if I do become a teacher eventually, fitness and health is something I will definitely include in my curriculum. I have already written lesson plans on physical fitness and health. All of that is important.”

Considering how much he has accomplished so far, both personally and helping his community, it is certain that this multi-faceted young man will go on using his gifts to the best of his ability, and for the benefit of others.

To learn more about Tay Fisher’s career, his basketball camp, and/or Fisher Fight 4 the Cure Breast Cancer event, go to <http://www.tayfishersfbc.com>.

An advertisement for January Cervical Health Awareness Month. The top half features the text "JANUARY is Cervical Health Awareness Month" in large, bold letters. Below the text are three smiling women of diverse ethnicities. The bottom half of the ad contains the text "Vaccinate EARLY • PAP Test REGULARLY & HPV Test when RECOMMENDED" and "LEARN MORE ABOUT HPV AND CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION AT WWW.NCCC-ONLINE.ORG". The NCCC logo is also present, along with the text "National Cervical Cancer Coalition A program of the American Sexual Health Association".

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