

Jimmy Kennedy: Viking extraordinaire

Written by

Wednesday, 08 December 2010 16:52



Television and newspapers have been focused on all the woes of the Minnesota Vikings. To hear them talk, the reader would think that there is nothing good about the football organization. Contrary to popular belief, one of the best things about the Vikings is defensive tackle Jimmy Kennedy.

At 31, Jimmy Kennedy is not only a successful football player, but he is also a college graduate with a degree in Rehabilitation Services and minors in African American Studies and Sociology from Penn State University. He is also a business owner with a plethora of businesses which include real estate and several laundry mats.

Kennedy's passion is to work with children who come from humble backgrounds like he does. He was born in Yonkers, NY, in 1979. He was a young man who went through the hardships of special education. In high school he was reading at a fifth grade level. With a mother who worked two jobs and wasn't home a lot, often times he wouldn't eat regular meals. Many days he lived off cereal. Kennedy started hanging out with the wrong crowd and got caught up in drug dealing and living the "fast life." Many in his life thought he wouldn't make it to the age of 18. With the assistance of his 9th grade coach, Tony DeMatteo, Kennedy changed his life around. With DeMatteo's help, Kennedy graduated from high school and graduated from college with a 3.2 grade point average. He has come a long ways from special education.

Kennedy spoke honestly and passionately with WE WIN Institute's Rites of Passage afterschool program; which activities include academic tutoring, cultural literacy, and principles that are based on building community, the nine principles of manhood and womanhood and the seven principles of Kwanzaa. WE WIN children shared with the Vikings player the daily rituals they recite, which include libations and the pledge to give their best. They also showed him their talents with African drum and dancing. Sixty children sat at the edge of their seat as Kennedy shared intimate details of his life with them, and inspired them to stay in school, to give their 100 percent so that they too can be successful in life.

Kyalah Allbritton, Durond Bell and Davant Moore share their impressions of the 6'4", 320-pound

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defensive tackle, Jimmy Kennedy.



Davant Moore

Third Grade

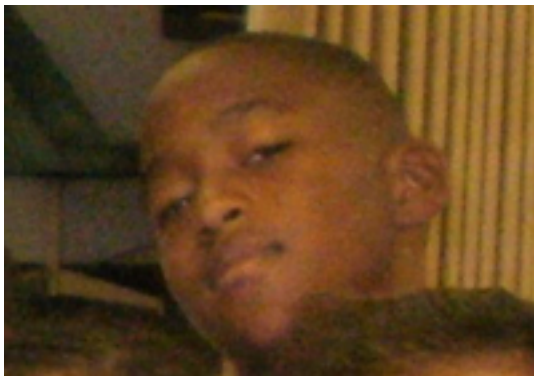
Jimmy Kennedy was born on November 15, 1979, in Yonkers, New York. He attended Roosevelt High School. When he was growing up he was taken from his mom. She was on drugs. He was put in foster care. It must have been hard to be taken from his mom. He was caught with two guns by his coach in high school. His coach told him to play football. I liked how he told us the truth about his life. He didn't try to pretend he was perfect. He helped me want to do better. I like that WE WIN always brings in African Americans that are doing good things. Jimmy Kennedy said he would come back and hang out with us. I really like that he was just like us.

Kyalah Allbritton

Eighth grade

Jimmy Jimmy Jimmy Kennedy. What can I say...? His life has only just begun through all the seeds he has planted. The plant has become the new generation of Black leaders. He is an inspiration for his own kids, for me, and for everyone who is fortunate enough to hear and learn from him.

Those of us who attend WE WIN Institute were so lucky to hear him share his life and wisdom with us. He kept his message real! In the past, I only looked up to a couple of people. Now Jimmy Kennedy is one of my heroes. As Jimmy Kennedy's life goes up and down and over and around; he will continue to inspire me. I will soon be like him, a success! I give Jimmy Kennedy a 10!



Durond Bell

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Third Grade

Jimmy Kennedy was born on November 15th. Jimmy said that he had a dad who had a drinking problem. His mom had a drug addiction and then she got clean. Jimmy ate cereal at night because his mom was working a lot. He told us that he would get beatings from his dad if he ate the last piece of bread.

Jimmy's coach found out that he had a gun. The coach told him that he wouldn't press charges if Jimmy agreed to get his act together, so he did. He went to college and then he went into pro ball. He played with a lot of football teams and then he came to the Vikings.

I'm so glad he came to WE WIN to talk to us. I learned a lot from him. He showed me that if I work hard that I can be a success like he is.