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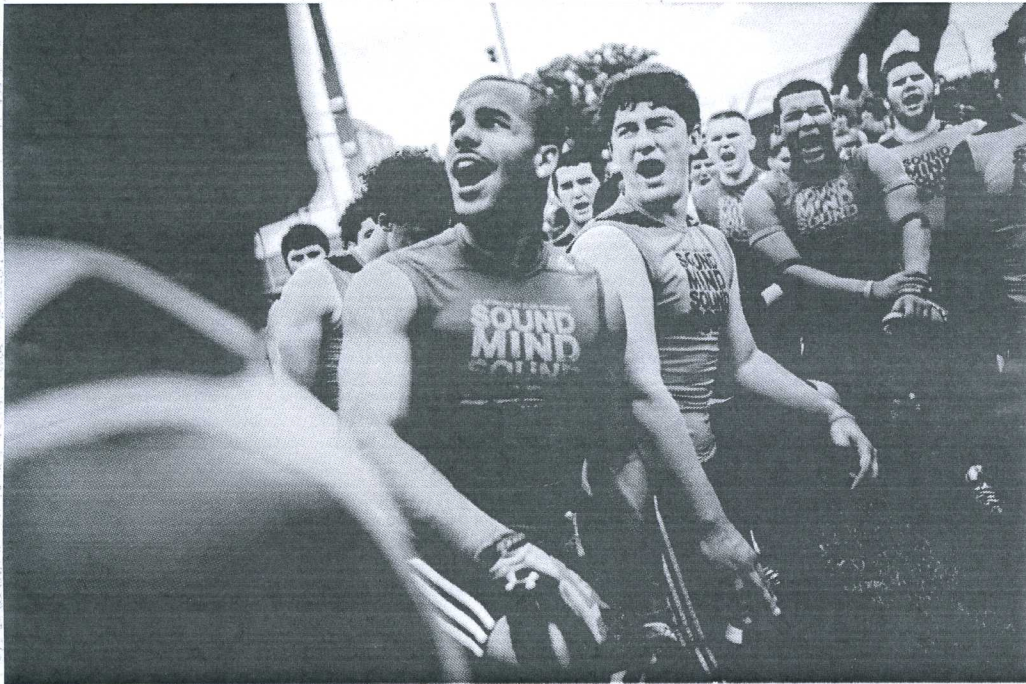
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Football

Sound Mind Sound Body football camp provides athletes more than just a field



After a coach yelled out "Sound Mind," the players responded in unison loudly with "Sound Body" on Thursday, June 12, 2014 at the Sound Mind, Sound Body Football Academy at Chandler Park Academy in Harper Woods near Detroit. Jake May | MLive.com

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By Jon Rzepecki | jrzepcki@mlive.com
on June 13, 2014 8:50 PM, updated June 18, 2014 4:35 PM

HARPER WOODS -- This summer, thousands of teenage football players will descend on college campuses to showcase their talents on the field. But not all camps are the same.

The Sound Mind Sound Body football academy

SOUND MIND SOUND BODY 2014

SMSB Camp Overview

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held Thursday and Friday at Chandler Park Academy offered players from Michigan and surrounding states more than just an hour of field time and a weight room session.

"You can't really change a kid in an hour or two," said camp founder Curtis Blackwell, the director of college advancement at Michigan State University. "It takes two or three days to really give them a life skills program."

Click here to see video of Blackwell on what the camp means to him, and what it will mean to the student-athletes in attendance.

Nearly 1,000 athletes in attendance filled an auditorium and listened to, among others, **Michigan State coach Mark Dantonio on Thursday afternoon**, and later gathered around an end zone at dusk to hear current Ohio State coach and national championship winner, Urban Meyer, speak about team strength.

"It's more than just football," said camp director Deon Johnson. "We do more than 'sell' camps. We dream together with our student-athletes and communities. We paint possibilities, tap into the power of youth-purpose and create movements encompassing healthy living initiatives."

"I like it," **Southfield** safety Dior Johnson said. "I like how all the coaches come out. It gives me a chance to show my talent. I'm going to keep grinding, show them how I do. It's been a great experience (to see the high-profile ex-players/coaches)."

Dantonio arrived in East Lansing in 2007 and said he has seen the camp grow from just an evaluation tool used by Michigan State and Michigan into a camp that "now has 100-plus coaches here and various head coaches."

The camp mixes lectures about academics, conflict resolution, money management and the responsible treatment of women with on-field sessions that not only focus on players' one-on-one abilities, but also their roles in team activities.

Newly hired Eastern Michigan coach Chris Creighton was "blown away" by the size and impact of the camp. Creighton will take over at EMU after spending six seasons in charge of Drake University's Division I FCS program.

"To have 800 guys in an auditorium trying to make them better with the important intangibles of the game; it's phenomenal," Creighton said.

Central Michigan coach Dan Enos said this camp means a lot to him personally.

"What a great thing for all these young people to have these coaches, not just the head coaches but the assistant coaches taking their time to come here and coach these young men and be an example and a role model for them," said the Dearborn native.

Mike Weber

Ray Buford Jr.

Chad Christian II

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Grant Perry, a wide receiver from **Bloomfield Hills Brother Rice** who has an eye on Central Michigan, said he still has plenty of time to see how he measures up and to make his decision.

"(SMSB) gives you a place of where you're at in your development," he said. "Going against the best makes you better, so it's really good."

According to Gerald McBurrows, a former defensive back for the St. Louis Rams and Atlanta Falcons, the camp started with 60 kids 10 years ago, when Blackwell and Johnson asked him and others to foster the academy's growth from day one.

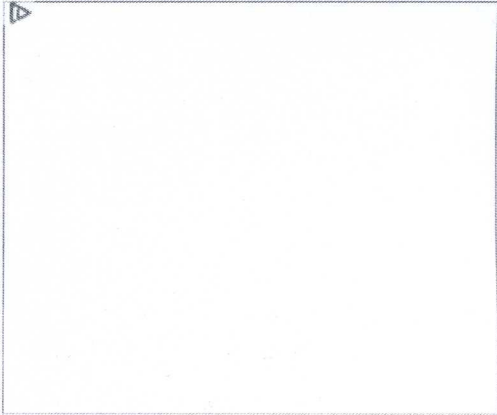
"I'm definitely 100 percent behind them and will be for the rest of my life," McBurrows said.

Kevin Vickerson, a defensive tackle for the Denver Broncos, said he's coming from the same places these athletes are coming from.

Vickerson, a native of Detroit and a four-year letterman at Michigan State, was one of the camp's early advisers.

Some players received scholarship offers on site, and some players will have to visit a few more camps to figure out their own direction.

*Jon Rzepecki is a writer for MLive/The Grand Rapids Press. Email him at jrzepecki@mlive.com, and follow him on **Twitter**.*



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