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BY AMANDA CREASEY ON AUGUST 6, 2020

PEOPLE, SPORTS

Dale graduate goes from pro hoops player to life coach and author

In 2004, Braxton R. Byerson, also known as “Brax B,” was the only freshman Knight on the varsity basketball team at Thomas Dale High School. That year on the basketball team left him with life lessons he still draws on today in his roles as life coach, author, and speaker at Brax B Speaks LLC, and as Marketing Specialist at B7 Marketing LLC.

“My first lesson was humility,” Byerson said. Coming to the team green, middle school not far behind him, he “had to learn the game at that level. The coaching staff and the upperclassmen had to teach me the ropes. In order for me to learn and understand how to be successful, I had to humble myself.”

Perhaps counterintuitively, the next lesson Byerson said he learned was confidence. His being a freshman “did not stop the coaching staff from putting me in big games and playing me lots of minutes. For me to produce at a high level, I had to have confidence that I could do whatever it is that I was good at.” Although humility and confidence might seem at odds, the two go hand in hand for Byerson, who sees both traits as necessary to his success. Overall, Byerson said basketball taught him about “consistency, hard work, patience and perseverance.”

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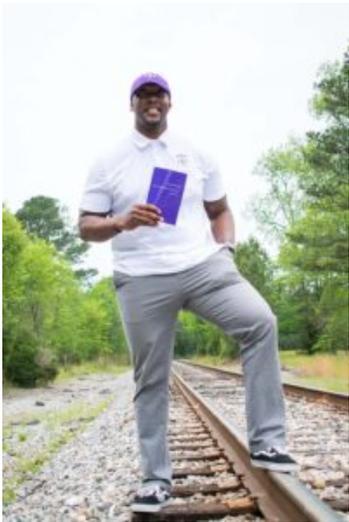
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Byerson isn't alone in his love for the game. "Basketball was bred into our family," Byerson said. "Mom played while in school. Dad played in school as well. He also played in the Army." In addition Byerson's two older brothers played. "When you constantly see something every day and how rewarding it can be, you begin to gravitate towards that," he said. "So I chose basketball because it was fun, exciting, and rewarding for me in so many ways."

After his graduation from TDHS in 2007, Byerson continued his career on a full athletic scholarship to Virginia Union University, where he found himself in a familiar position. "Again, I was the youngest on the team," he said. "My two older brothers were already there, so I joined them and that was a lot of fun." He spent his first 26 games on the bench. During the last nine games, however, he started as the shooting guard.

He continued to play basketball throughout his college career at VUU, receiving captain honors, as well as many academic and athletic awards. Following his 2011 graduation, Byerson went on to play professionally in Montevideo, the capital city of Uruguay, as well as in China.

In 2014, Byerson returned to the States, where he eventually found himself back in the classrooms of TDHS this time as a teacher and coach. "I taught Sports and Entertainment Marketing at Thomas Dale for grades 10-12 for three years," he said. During school hours, he taught, but when the final bell rang at the close of the school day, Byerson wore a different hat: head coach for the boys' varsity basketball team.

His teacher/coach hat fit well, but in 2019, his provisional teaching license expired after those three years, and Byerson chose not to renew it. "I wanted something different than teaching," he said, "because initially my main dream was just to coach basketball." In addition to a desire for change, Byerson and his wife were expecting their third child. "We needed some flexibility in time to make our family dynamic run smooth," he said.

The question for Byerson at that time, then, was: What now? "While I was teaching and coaching basketball, I found myself helping students and players with various types of problems and issues by working with them to establish goals," he said. He noticed that friends and family would also seek his guidance. "And they would always say, 'You should be a life coach.' So, when I was struggling to get a job, I said to myself, 'Why not start your own business as a life coach and public speaker?' And now I'm here."

“Here” is his own business, Brax B Speaks, focused on “helping individuals become the best version of themselves in their personal lives and business.” “Here” is having written and published his first book, “Stay on the Tracks: The Journey of Patience and Perseverance.” “Here” is a career that allows him “to inspire others and help them achieve their goals in every aspect of their life.”

But Byerson didn’t get “here” without setting and achieving his own goals. He doesn’t just talk the talk. “Building my business from the ground was rough; however, the things I learned from basketball have helped me with building my business,” he said. “Staying true to myself, and putting in the work to get things done that will bring success to my family and myself—that’s what building a business is all about.”

Despite having played professional basketball, Byerson said his proudest accomplishments are writing and publishing his book, and also starting his business.

“Stay on the Tracks” took Byerson roughly five years to write, from initial conception to completion. “The message is the struggles of life will sometimes make you want to give up and throw in the towel,” he said. “but taking a look at the positive side of things, being patient with your process—not anyone else’s—and persevering through those hard times can lead to a successful path by applying the lessons you learned.”

Byerson’s book consists of seven chapters “that metaphorically compare trains and life.” His intended audience includes “people from all walks of life because everyone has gone through or is going through something.”

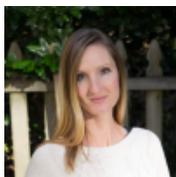
In short, Byerson’s advice for young people is to set goals and dream big. However, he cautions, while “plans are great, remember plans change all the time. It’s okay to adjust the plan, just never change the goal. Be intentional with setting goals.” Byerson wants young people to remember that while life might seem difficult at times, “that’s okay. Take it one stride at a time, be patient and persevere, and whatever you set out to do, make it happen, or somebody else will.”

Despite having achieved so much already, Byerson lives by his own advice. Having achieved so many of his goals, he has set a few more, including launching his book on Amazon in the coming weeks, publishing a second book in mid-2021, launching a coaching course for collegiate level student athletes, and continuing to speak to high school and college students across the nation. His train doesn’t seem to be stopping any time soon.

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