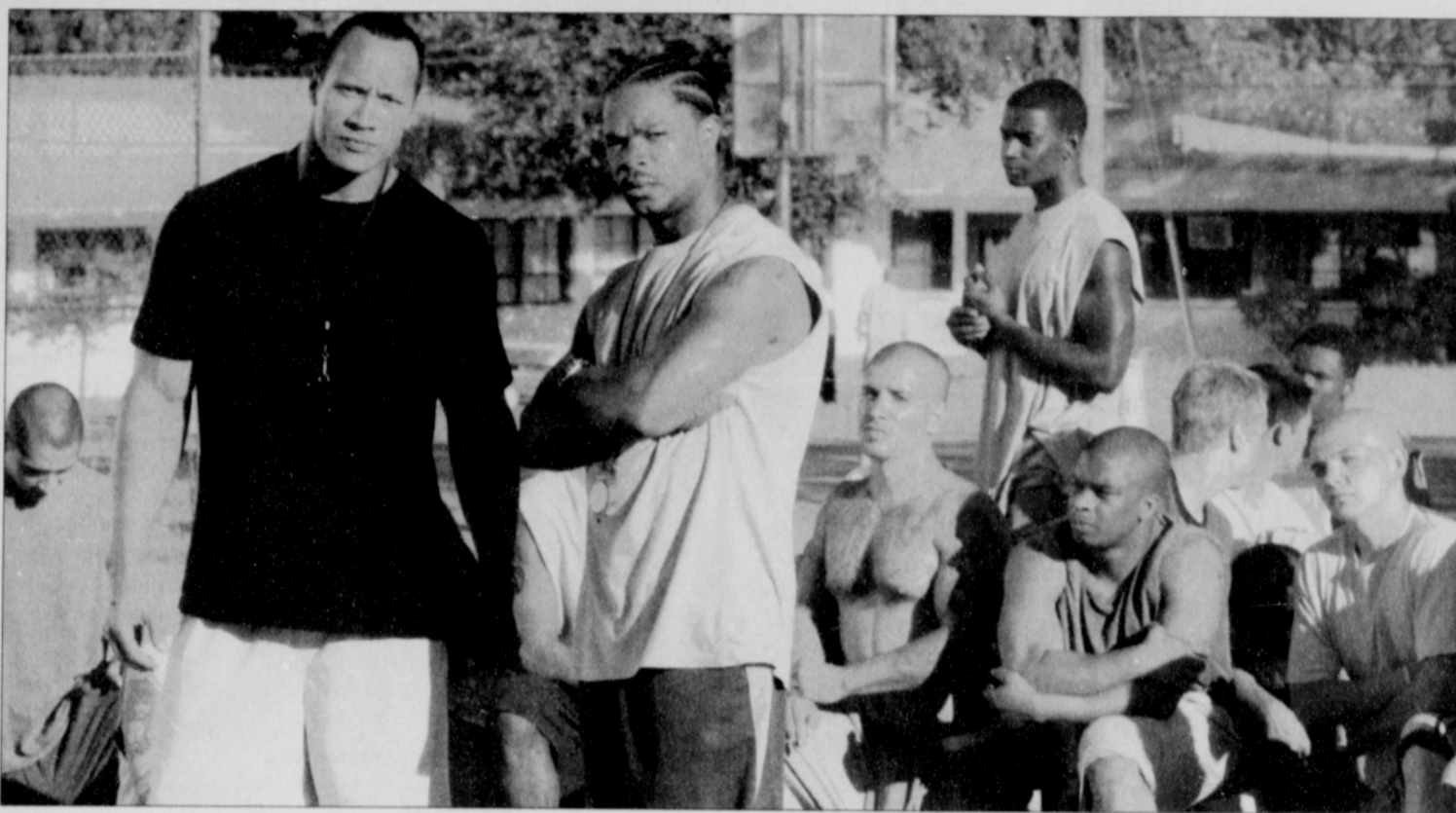


FOCUS



Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson (left) and rapper Xzbit coach a group of teen felons into a winning football team in 'Gridiron Gang,' a new film opening Friday at theaters nationwide.

Lessons Learned in 'Gridiron Gang'

Picture based on true story opens Friday

Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson stars in "Gridiron Gang" as a coach who turns a group of hardcore teenage felons into a winning high school football team in four weeks. The movie, based on a true story is scheduled for release from Columbia Pictures on Friday, Sept. 15. Gritty and powerfully emotional, "Gridiron Gang" touched a chord with Johnson because it mirrored

his experience as a troubled teen whose life was changed by football. The movie is a powerful example that if you can invest some time and care into a kid, that kid's life will change, says the film's producer Lee Stanley, who initially directed and produced the 1993 Emmy Award-winning documentary of the same name. No one knows this better than Johnson, who admits, "I had been arrested eight times before I was 14 years old. However, I was lucky because my arresting officer told me that he was either going to continue to kick my behind and arrest

me every week, or take me off the streets and put me into the freshman high school football program." Football became a major influence for the future actor. He excelled at the sport in high school and won a scholarship to the powerhouse football program at the University of Miami in Florida, where he continued to shine as a defensive end, becoming a member of the school's national championship team in 1989. The following year, however, injuries forced him to abandon his dream of playing professional football. In "Gridiron Gang," Johnson stars as Sean Porter, a juvenile de-

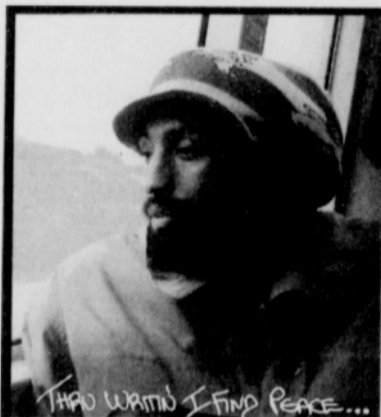
ntention camp probation officer turned coach. Confronted with gang rivalries and bitter hatred between his teammates, Porter teaches some hard lessons, and learns a few himself, as the kids gain a sense of self-respect and responsibility. In a world where 75 percent of juvenile inmates return to prison or meet with violent ends on the streets, Porter faces seemingly insurmountable barriers. No one wants to compete against convicted criminals, but through relentless pursuit and a jolt of inspiration, Porter and his team fight their way to redemption and a second chance.

Steppin' Out by Madgesdiq

Athlete turned poet shares journey

Your family's athleticism is legendary. You are compared to your father, your uncle, as well as your nationally recognized cousin and brother. Not just by your family, friends and community, but every sports fans from all over. Every young school boy's supposed dream is loaded on your shoulders. Your name and face are broadcast across the country. And you have talent too. Talent to play ball, be charming, talent to get out and get rich. Who would choose to be poet instead of a famous basketball player? Madgesdiq. Madgesdiq grew up Antoine Stoudamire in a family of star athletes. His first book, a collection of thoughts and poems, entitled "Steppin' Out" chronicles his journey toward freedom and peace. He displays tremendous courage and faith as he rises above the expectations of others and charts his own

path; one of writer, author, performer and public speaker. On Wednesday, Sept. 13, Madgesdiq will share readings from his collection of poems followed by a book signing during a free event at 7 p.m. at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate. He has also scheduled an event at the Community Energy Project, 420 N.E. Alberta St., on Thursday, Sept. 28 at 7 p.m.



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August 31, 2006

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