

Donaldson

continued from page 1

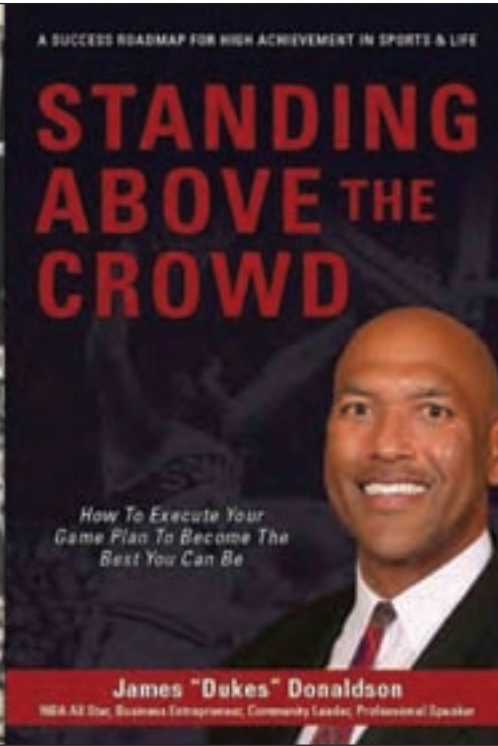
Calif. Where Coach Calhoun came up beside me and encouraged me to take baby steps, to start fulfilling that potential a long time before I could see that potential. So that's where I came from. It also helps to come from a solid family background that really emphasized academics for the first part. I knew I was going to be a good student and stay in school and at least graduate from high school, that was my pathway, but athletics came into the picture pretty late.

TSN: What separates this book from a lot of the other self-help books out there?

JD: Well I think that due to the fact that I have gone through two to three distinct, different career transitions, a lot of people are struggling ... how to remake themselves, how to keep a clear focus and how to keep a clear game plan and strategy when all of a sudden the rug gets pulled out from beneath them. So my book is really one of encouragement, not just the commonsense approach, but one that encourages you to take a deep introspective look at yourself, continue to have faith and trust in yourself, a higher power and those that you keep around you.

TSN: Was it difficult for when you went from basketball to having your own physical therapy clinic?

JD: Not really, I started the physical therapy clinic 21 years ago right in the middle of my 20-year basketball career. I had a devastating knee injury 10 years into my career, I was in my early 30s and the prognosis and outlook was very bleak on whether I'd ever return to playing again. So at that point I had what I call a lightbulb moment to go to therapy for five months. I asked myself, if I cannot play again, what am I going to do? I was a college grad so I was ok with that, and I had other skills, but there was nothing that I was as passionate about as basketball and that's when physical therapy came to the forefront. I said, I know what I want to do now, create an environment where people can come and get well again, be surrounded by great physical therapists, my massage therapist, my nutritionalist, my athletic trainers ... that's when my epiphany hit hard and I went ahead and opened my first clinic. I did eventually make it back to play another 10 years to play professional basketball, but my clinic



was off and running and maturing by the time I retired. During those early years, I was basically a hands off manager and owner, and after basketball I had something to transfer into.

TSN: Do most younger professional sports players do a good job of looking beyond their athletic careers and planning for the future?

JD: No, most players do not do a good job of planning past their athletic careers. You see a story in the NY Times today about Tiki Barber, a great running back for the NY Giants, where at 36 years of age, after being retired for four years, all of a sudden he's coming back to try out for professional football again, because he never found that passion again, something that gets him out of bed, that has him putting the same amount of effort and emphasis to it as the sport that he loved. A lot of athletes are challenged with that. Most of us retire early. A couple of reasons I was motivated to join the Legends of Basketball, otherwise known as the NBA Retired Players Association as a board member because less than 20 percent of us have a college degree. And also, 85

percent of us will be going through a divorce upon retirement, for a career that lasts 3 years on average. Those are a lot of dynamics that are not in your favor. What we try to do on a board level, we try to create programs that will be helpful to the guys on their transition, even before they retire.

TSN: Did that experience help you craft the book?

JD: It did. It really did. Part of my fraternity, is hundreds of hundreds of retired players who are trying to find themselves. I was lucky that out of an adverse situation such as the devastating knee injury, to find what I wanted to do next that wasn't about playing.

TSN: Now a couple of basketball questions. I've read that you never even attempted a three-pointer in your entire NBA career. Why?

JD: Well, you gotta remember, I played back in the 80s and 90s. The three-point game wasn't as totally utilized by every player on the court back then. You had guys on the team whose specific job was to shoot three-pointers. So, I played my whole career – and I'm the answer to a trivia question if

you ever here this – who played the most amount of games, the most amount of seasons without ever, ever attempting a three-point shot and that's me. As the years wore on and I became aware of this trivia, I just said, it's not my role, not my strength to hoist up three-pointers. I'd see guys like Manut Bol throw them up there from all over the place and Ralph Samson from time to time and other 7-footers. But it was not my game and I had no inclination to give it a try.

TSN: During your entire career, were there ever any players or teams that you absolutely dreaded getting on the court with either because they were so good or so dirty?

JD: Yeah, I do write about that in the book. Of course the bad boys up in the Detroit who were filthy and nasty ... Rick Mahorn and Bill Lambier, I'm not sure which was which, it didn't matter. They'd put you in those double team sandwiches and knock the living daylights out of you from time to time. So tough teams like the Pistons, but also hall of fame caliber teams like the LA Showtime Lakers, with Magic, and Kareem and Cooper and Worthy and Scott, Pat Riley running the show. Hall of famers all the way around. I thought I played my best when I went up against the best. I learned early in my career that I couldn't shy away from competition and from feeling a little bit intimidated by those little things. That's another thing I try to convey to the young people out there. Step up to the challenge. Make it happen.

TSN: And finally, who are you rooting for in the NBA Finals?

JD: Well it looks like the Miami Heat is the one who has their act together, playing better and better as the playoffs go on. Originally I had Miami and the Lakers picked to match up in the finals, but I think I'm going to go for Miami and my beloved Dallas Mavericks in the finals.

Visit: www.StandingAboveTheCrowd.com for more information. If you order the book from his website, Donaldson will personally autograph the book.

New Feature Online

Now you can post your announcements directly, using *The Skanner.com* 'YOUR BEAT, Eyes on the Street'.

get them online NOW with *The Skanner.com*