Three EMU Basketball Players to Open for State Property Recording Artists

By Kai Orenic
Sports Editor

The letter in EJ Arrington’s hands told of a reunion. Former teammate Jeremy Miller wrote that he would return shortly from basic training on Perris Island, Staten Island, and down south. Arrington said Miller would be able to record a collaboration with Marcus Harris, the third member of the rap group All Minds Bonded (AMB). Arrington, Harris, and Miller were members of EMU’s men’s basketball team last season. Miller has since joined the marines, but Arrington and Harris will return to the court this winter. Arrington was the Old Dominion Athletic Conference Freshman of the Year in 2002 and was among the team leaders in scoring and rebounds last year. Harris was injured for most of last year, but served as a co-captain for the team. Miller was a reserve guard who saw significant playing time last season.

AMB has been an extension of the trio’s on court friendship. The group formed in the fall of 2001, when Arrington was a freshman at EMU and Harris and Miller were sophomores. All three have ties to valley schools. Arrington and Miller attended Stuart’s Draft High School, and Miller is a Fishburne Military Academy graduate. The trio lived on the same hall in 2001-2002 and grew close, often rapping late into the night. The friendships continued over the summer, even through fall conditioning and into the next year.

Basketball was the common bond that brought them to EMU, but music has kept them together. The three are among only a handful of African-American students on campus. AMB is the voice of their combined experience. Arrington recognizes that many students at EMU may not understand the message they send. But he is not one to cater to other’s taste. “If you feel me, you feel me, if you don’t you don’t,” he said.

The voices of African-American males has been largely muted on a predominantly white Christian campus. AMB hopes to change a few perceptions in the community. They embrace a genre of music that defies oppression, in part because they feel oppression on campus. Yet, they strive to perform positive shows. Campus shows contain clean lyrics in hopes that listeners will not pre-judge the performers. Despite cultural difference, AMB appreciates the student body’s support. “They may not understand our message, but they’re willing to learn and listen. I respect them for that,” said Arrington.

The trio has seized the opportunity to network the campus community. “If we weren’t in college, we wouldn’t have all of these different ways to actually get our music out,” said Arrington. They’ve done shows in the campus center, as well as impromptu sessions in dormitories. They’ve also played at La Hacienda, a local night club. Word of mouth has also helped them build following. Preliminary demos have gone home with friends from Roanoke, New York, northern Virginia, and other localities. Miller did not enroll at EMU this fall, but he has continued to write lyrics for the group. He’ll return home for family leave in October. During the break AMB hopes to record at least one full-length album. They’ll press as many as 1000 copies and begin distribution shortly after. They’ll start small but have aspirations for larger sales.

Arrington resonates the feelings of the group. “I’m going to do everything I can in life to be remembered,” he said. AMB wants respect on campus, but if they do not get it here, there are other outlets. AMB hopes to gain more attention in the coming weeks. They’ve enjoyed some radio play on WXJM and Harris and Arrington are slated to perform at an urban fashion show this Friday on the James Madison University campus. They open for State Property recording artists Peedi Crakk and Omilio Sparks. The JMU Grand Ball Room doors open at 7 p.m. and admission is $15.

Athletes Can Only Imagine Life Before Mike

By Wayne Paxton
Staff Writer

When an EMU athlete suffered an injury fifteen years ago, they could either deal with it or make the journey to Rockingham Memorial Hospital, an arduous one for someone in pain.

Now they only need to visit the bottom floor of the University Commons, athletic trainer Mike Downey, and his staff of dedicated assistants.

Downey, now in his third full year, earned a Masters degree in Health Science from James Madison University and passed all exams and certifications to become a professional athletic trainer. After hospital work and tenure at Spotswood High School in Elkton, he came to EMU, then Eastern Mennonite College, in 1989 as part-time help.

“I worked through the better part of the 90’s at different places,” Downey said of his experiences. “I then came on full-time at EMU and have been here ever since.” Before Downey, Royals athletes had no professional athletic trainer to treat their injuries.

Assisting Downey are three intern students from JMU, now working a semester placement program as a part of the curriculum required for a degree in athletic training. “These three, if all goes well, will become full-fledged athletic trainers at a high school or college,” Downey said. “They are a huge help.”

The training room also has a budding professional in Bryan Lurie. Hailing from Westchester University in Philadelphia, Pa. he is Downey’s assistant and is working toward a Masters in Nutrition and Physical Activity.

“EMU has been a good experience because I get to work with multiple teams, not just one,” Lurie said. “This is a graduate assistantship and will help me in getting a position in the future.”

The training room also has 12 work-study students who provide even more support for injured athletes. Kelly Smoker and Jared Morgan are in their second year of service.

“The main things we are responsible for are getting ice bags, medical kits, and water bottles to practices and games,” Smoker said. “We get Mike what he needs when he needs it.”

“We set up and tear down practice sessions as well,” added Morgan. “Every day we are responsible for setup and cleanup.”

Junior Cameron Conrad is in his first year on staff, and so far enjoys the job. “I like helping the athletes in any way I can,” said Conrad. “It’s a social job; you get to know a lot of people you might not normally come in contact with.”

According to the work-study students, the work atmosphere is relaxed. “Mike is a great boss, and all the workers get along,” Conrad said.

The treatment room is clean and well-stocked with whatever is needed. Rehabilitation equipment such as treadmills and large exercise balls line the floor, along with tables, handy first aid stations, team practice schedules, and three adjoining rooms: a storage closet, office, and a room with tubs of water for soaking any swollen or sore limbs, or the entire body if need be.

A major task for Downey now is getting athletes medically eligible for competition. Physicals and other reports must be gathered for players to begin practice.

“We stay busy most of the time, and I’m glad to have such an enthusiastic and responsive staff,” Downey said.

For athletes, and anyone else that needs it, EMU’s athletic training room and its competent staff are ready to serve.