

BASKETBALL

JULIA MALAKIE PHOTOS / LOWELL SUN

Los Angeles Clippers forward Terance Mann, right, pauses signing photos to sign a basketball at his Terance Mann Complete Players Clinic for youth basketball on Wednesday. Julian Lawrence-Taylor, left, was running the clinic.

GIVING BACK

NBA player Terance Mann of Lowell hosts youth camp with former trainer

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WESTFORD » Terance Mann plays on the West Coast, but he'll never forget where his passion for basketball was born — in the Mill City.

Coming full circle, the second-year guard for the Los Angeles Clippers coached alongside his former trainer, Julian Lawrence-Taylor, Synergy Basketball's head

coach, during a three-day camp this week at The Mill Works.

"This means a lot to me just because I grew up going to camps and that's where I met most of my friends and how we got better at basketball," Mann said. He recalled summer camps as a kid, noting that when it was time to leave, they'd keep playing at the park.

"We just love the game and it's

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Damien Jackman, 15, of Lowell, looks to shoot during scrimmage at the clinic.

Mann

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good see kids still doing the same thing," Mann said.

The Terance Mann Complete Player Camp took place Monday through Wednesday. Athletes ages 8 to 18 hustled up and down the courts, as a Lowell DJ spun upbeat music to keep the energy going.

"Eyes up! Encourage your teammate," Taylor exhorted.

Known as "Coach JT," Taylor glided between scrimmages and drills to coach as a Sun reporter walked beside him.

"I was his first personal player development coach," Taylor said of Mann, who emerged in the NBA playoffs. "It's a big week for Terance Mann in the Merrimack Valley and Lowell.

"He's a great humble kid and he's all about giving back and helping out."

Mann's Complete Player Camp is a tribute to William "Billy G" Gilmore, who was the athletics manager at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell for 12 years. Gilmore died in 2018 at age 52.

Additionally, on Thursday, Mann hosted a free clinic at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell. He received a key to the city.

The camp focused on all aspects of basketball — not just shooting, or playing defense or dribbling — but encouraging teammates, motivating others and making other players better. Being the best player you can be



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Libby Dahn, 11, of Newburyport, dribbles the ball during drills at the Terance Mann Complete Players Clinic.

for your team, Taylor explained. "That's what Terance has been able to show in the NBA — that

he's a well-rounded player. He doesn't just do one thing, he does all the other things."

Mann moved to Lowell from Brooklyn, N.Y., when he was 11. He didn't have an NBA vision until he was much older.

"I decided to play travel basketball my fifth grade year and that's where somebody saw me play and put my mother in contact with JT," Mann said.

Mann's mother, Daynia La-Force, is a WNBA coach for the Atlanta Dream.

Taylor said Mann always had a great support system that made him well-rounded — his mother, father and brother, Martin Mann.

By sixth and seventh grade he was playing basketball every weekend.

Taylor would take them to tournaments in Connecticut, Virginia, and sometimes Florida. Training during the week is where Mann said he met lots of friends. "That's where my game grew," he said.

"I wanted to expose him to other different competition," Taylor said. "Also more of a dangling carrot to think 'hey, you know what, there's someone out there that's working as hard' and it led to a motivation. So I was there at an early age and been there ever since."

Taylor has been in player development for about 14 years. "It's more than basketball," he said.

"That's what Terance wants to do, he wants to be able to give his experiences — the work ethic that he learned at camps and clinics — and give it back to these athletes. Especially cause he's an MVC kid."

Saul Phiri, who plays basket-

ball at LaSalle University, helped coach at camp.

"I've known Terance and JT for almost 18 years now. It's honestly what got me started in basketball. I joined JT's original AAU team, BBC, and Terance was a part of the program," said Phiri. "Watching him grow throughout high school, college, now being a pro is an unbelievable experience for someone you know from back home."

Mann and Phiri have been great buddies ever since.

Mann, 24, who was the 48th NBA draft pick in 2020 out of Florida State, just completed a second stellar season in LA. But as much fun as that was, he said being a part of this camp is equally rewarding.

"It feels good because when I was their age I didn't really have anybody like myself to look up to. No one really came around, had camps, talked to the kids," Mann said.

"We kind of had to lead ourselves, so it's cool to have somebody there to do it."

Maya Petterson, a sophomore from Lowell, said she got a lot out of the expert coaching. "I like the coaches," she said. "They do their best and they're really good at it."

Mann tries to visit the MVC at least once a year. "It's cool being back. I just don't like how the exit numbers changed," he joked, about the state's highway exit renumbering project.

"I would like to thank Arbella Insurance cause they helped me out with this a lot," Mann said. Other camp sponsors included Nike, Cliff Bar and BodyArmor.