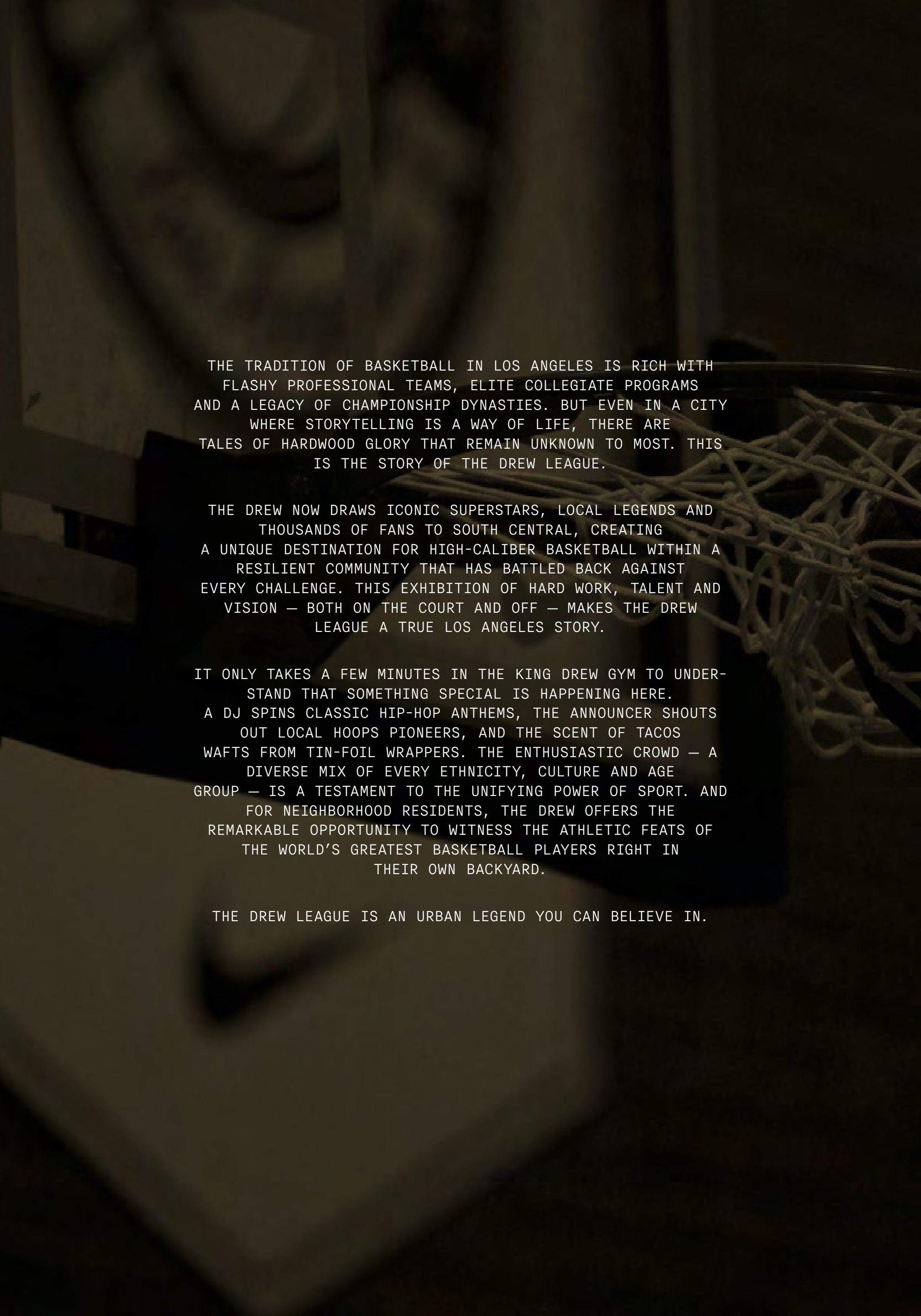


Drew League

4 0 Y E A R S O F S U M M E R L E A G U E





THE TRADITION OF BASKETBALL IN LOS ANGELES IS RICH WITH
FLASHY PROFESSIONAL TEAMS, ELITE COLLEGIATE PROGRAMS
AND A LEGACY OF CHAMPIONSHIP DYNASTIES. BUT EVEN IN A CITY
WHERE STORYTELLING IS A WAY OF LIFE, THERE ARE
TALES OF HARDWOOD GLORY THAT REMAIN UNKNOWN TO MOST. THIS
IS THE STORY OF THE DREW LEAGUE.

THE DREW NOW DRAWS ICONIC SUPERSTARS, LOCAL LEGENDS AND
THOUSANDS OF FANS TO SOUTH CENTRAL, CREATING
A UNIQUE DESTINATION FOR HIGH-CALIBER BASKETBALL WITHIN A
RESILIENT COMMUNITY THAT HAS BATTLED BACK AGAINST
EVERY CHALLENGE. THIS EXHIBITION OF HARD WORK, TALENT AND
VISION — BOTH ON THE COURT AND OFF — MAKES THE DREW
LEAGUE A TRUE LOS ANGELES STORY.

IT ONLY TAKES A FEW MINUTES IN THE KING DREW GYM TO UNDER-
STAND THAT SOMETHING SPECIAL IS HAPPENING HERE.
A DJ SPINS CLASSIC HIP-HOP ANTHEMS, THE ANNOUNCER SHOUTS
OUT LOCAL HOOPS PIONEERS, AND THE SCENT OF TACOS
WAFTS FROM TIN-FOIL WRAPPERS. THE ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD — A
DIVERSE MIX OF EVERY ETHNICITY, CULTURE AND AGE
GROUP — IS A TESTAMENT TO THE UNIFYING POWER OF SPORT. AND
FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS, THE DREW OFFERS THE
REMARKABLE OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS THE ATHLETIC FEATS OF
THE WORLD'S GREATEST BASKETBALL PLAYERS RIGHT IN
THEIR OWN BACKYARD.

THE DREW LEAGUE IS AN URBAN LEGEND YOU CAN BELIEVE IN.

*Drew
League*

C H A P T E R O N E

THE HISTORY

C H A P T E R T W O

THE LOCATIONS

C H A P T E R T H R E E

THE PROS

C H A P T E R F O U R

THE PEOPLE

C H A P T E R F I V E

THE CULTURE

DREW OVER THE DECADES

Here's a chronological rundown of the significant figures, places and events in the history of the Drew. Study up.

70s

1973

THE DREW LEAGUE IS FOUNDED BY ALVIN WILLS WITH SIX TEAMS. HORNEY'S HORNETS WIN THE FIRST CHAMPIONSHIP.

1975

DINO SMILEY COACHES THE DREAMERS AT THE AGE OF 15.

1976

CASPER WARE SR. MAKES HIS DEBUT.

1978

DINO'S DREAMERS WIN THE FIRST OF TWO CHAMPIONSHIPS (1976, 1978).

1979

THE NEIGHBORHOOD DEFEATS THE DEFENDING CHAMPION GASSERS IN DOUBLE OVERTIME.

1983

DINO BECOMES COMMISSIONER AND TAKES OVER THE LEAGUE.

80s

1985

THE DOGS, A YOUNG TEAM WITHOUT UNIFORMS FROM THE JORDAN DOWNS HOUSING PROJECTS, WIN THE FIRST OF BACK-TO-BACK TITLES.

1987

CASPER WARE SR. WINS MVP HONORS AFTER SCORING 41 POINTS IN THE TITLE GAME FOR THE CHEATERS.

1988

THE DREW EXPANDS TO 14 TEAMS.

1989

CLARENCE "CLANK" WORSHIP, THE LEAGUE'S BEST PLAYER, DIES IN A CAR CRASH. THE DREW LEAGUE MVP TROPHY IS NAMED AFTER HIM.

1990

KEVIN DANDRIDGE DIES IN A SHOOTING. THE DREW LEAGUE MOST INSPIRATIONAL PLAYER AWARD IS NAMED AFTER HIM.

1992

THE DREW LEAGUE REMAINS OPEN AS A SAFE HAVEN FOR THE COMMUNITY DURING THE LOS ANGELES RIOTS.

90s

1997

GEORGE "CHICK HERNANDEZ" PRECIADO BECOMES THE SECOND "VOICE OF THE DREW."

2000

INGLEWOOD-RAISED PAUL PIERCE PLAYS AT THE DREW.

2001

TEAM CHAMPIONS WINS ITS THIRD TITLE, THE FIRST TEAM TO ACCOMPLISH THE FEAT.

2000s

2005

CASPER WARE JR. AND DEMAR DEROZAN DEBUT AT THE DREW.

2006

THE DREW MOVES TO WASHINGTON PARK. TEAM PROBLEMS WINS THE FIRST OF BACK-TO-BACK CHAMPIONSHIPS.

2008

NICK YOUNG FIRST PLAYS AT THE DREW.

2009

JAMES HARDEN MAKES HIS DEBUT AT THE DREW.

2010

LAUNFD WINS THE FIRST OF THREE CONSECUTIVE CHAMPIONSHIPS.

2011

BASKETBALL NEVER STOPS: KEVIN DURANT, LEBRON JAMES AND KOBE BRYANT ALL MAKE DREW LEAGUE APPEARANCES DURING THE LOCKOUT.

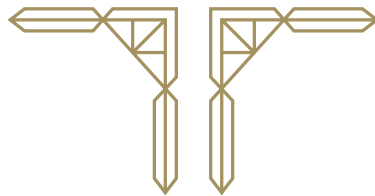
2012

THE DREW MOVES TO KING DREW HIGH SCHOOL AND EXPANDS TO 28 TEAMS.

2013

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DREW.

THE HISTORY



SINCE 1973, THE DREW LEAGUE HAS BROUGHT LOCAL KIDS, STREETBALL LEGENDS AND PROFESSIONAL STARS TOGETHER IN LOS ANGELES — ALL FOR THE LOVE OF BASKETBALL. THE RICH LEGACY INCLUDES THE ORIGINAL FOUNDING FATHER, A VISIONARY COMMISSIONER, VETERAN COACHES, THREE DIFFERENT GYMS AND COUNTLESS MAGICAL MOMENTS. FOR 40 YEARS, THE DREW LEAGUE HAS BEEN A REMARKABLE SUCCESS STORY THAT BEGAN IN SOUTH CENTRAL AND STILL CONTINUES TO FLOURISH WITHIN THE EXACT SAME COMMUNITY.



DINO SMILEY

THE COMMISSIONER



Sometimes Dino Smiley is chatting at the scorer's table. Other times he mans the snack bar. He could even be wiping up spills on the sideline. Such duties are all part of the job for the Commissioner, and the man most responsible for turning the Drew League into a Los Angeles phenomenon. "It's something that's embedded in my family and embedded in the community," he says. "Drew is just a part of me."

Growing up in South Central, Dino first became involved in the Drew League at the age of 13. Even in the formative stage of this basketball renaissance, he was always a renaissance man: At Charles Drew Middle School, Dino would cook hotdogs on a small hotplate in the closet, sell concessions, and climb a seven-foot ladder to change the score on a chalkboard.

These days, seeing the Commissioner of a celebrated summer league mopping up a puddle of Drew-Aid should make even the biggest prima donna reconsider his perspective. Over the decades that have seen him win back-to-back titles as the leader of the Dreamers, Dino's sense of pride and dedication to detail have infused the Drew with the spirit that informs its famous slogan: "No Excuse. Just Produce." "There are no excuses in here," he says. "The pro players know that they gotta play their A-game because the worst thing you want is somebody that didn't make it serving you."

After spending the last quarter-century as Commissioner, Dino's eyes are still aimed towards the future. With the Drew's reputation as a vital testing ground for both established professionals and local legends continuing to grow, he envisions big things ahead. "I think they're eventually gonna bottle this thing," he says of professional basketball's movers and shakers. "They're saying, 'Look, something's going on there that we can't create.' Whatever happens, Dino will be there."



ALVIN WILLS

THE FOUNDER



CHARLES LOVELY

COACH OF THE DREW

The Drew’s superstar cameos, roaring crowds, and vicious dunks that make national sports television highlight reels – none of those would exist without the early efforts of Alvin Wills. Now in his 60s, the league’s founder spent ten years overseeing the league during its infancy, setting the course for what would become a Los Angeles tradition.

Back in the 1970s, while working for an inner-city community organization, Alvin turned the popular “Homeroom Basketball” program at Charles Drew Middle School into evening basketball games. Soon, talented local players and collegiate athletes from big-time programs all over Southern California began lining up to play. “That’s all we did around here,” Alvin says, describing the importance of hoops in the neighborhood. “There’s no bowling alleys, no malls, no movie theatre. So every night we’d be in the gym.”

With players flocking seven days a week, Alvin founded the Drew as a six-team league that adhered to the same code that made his pickup run so popular: “It didn’t matter if you were a name guy or a no-name guy,” he explains. “Whenever you played, you had to play.” He would call the game, referee, keep score and generally do whatever it took to make sure games went smoothly. Even four decades later – with the Drew now solidified as the West Coast’s most celebrated summer league – Alvin’s legacy remains intact.

It’s only fitting that one of the Drew League’s father figures has the nickname “Pops.” For decades, Charles Lovely Sr., a 65-year old native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, has been a fixture not only on the sidelines, but in the lives of young people in South Central Los Angeles. “It’s always important to take care of where you live,” he says. “Give back.”

After attending games at the Drew during the 1980s, Pops was inspired to become involved beyond simply sitting in the bleachers. In the years since, he has founded his own teams, coached, and acted as one of the league’s trusted advisors. On any given summer Sunday, you might find him calling out the officials from the Panthers’ bench, with that starched white towel draped over the shoulder of a crisp dress shirt. “Out of the 28 teams, I have some of my former players on 24 of them,” he says of his enduring league-wide connections.

While running a non-profit agency aimed at helping at-risk youth in Los Angeles, Pops has used his influence at the Drew as another way to help young people within his community. The bonds he forges extend past the lines of the hardwood—and prove his paternal nickname is more than just a catchy handle. “Anything I teach them here they can use in everyday life: the competitiveness, the teamwork, the sharing,” he says. “I just treat them all as my extended family members.”



“STILL”

BILL CRAWFORD

ORIGINAL VOICE OF THE DREW

WILLIAM SMILEY

BIG BROTHER

In streetball, the announcer is part of the performance. And for decades, “Still Bill” Crawford was the original “Voice of the Drew,” delivering straightforward, no non-sense commentary. His professionalism helped give the summer league a reputation as a destination for high-quality basketball where both players and referees were treated with respect. “I grew up in the church and sang in the choir,” he explains. “I was used to being in front of a mic!”

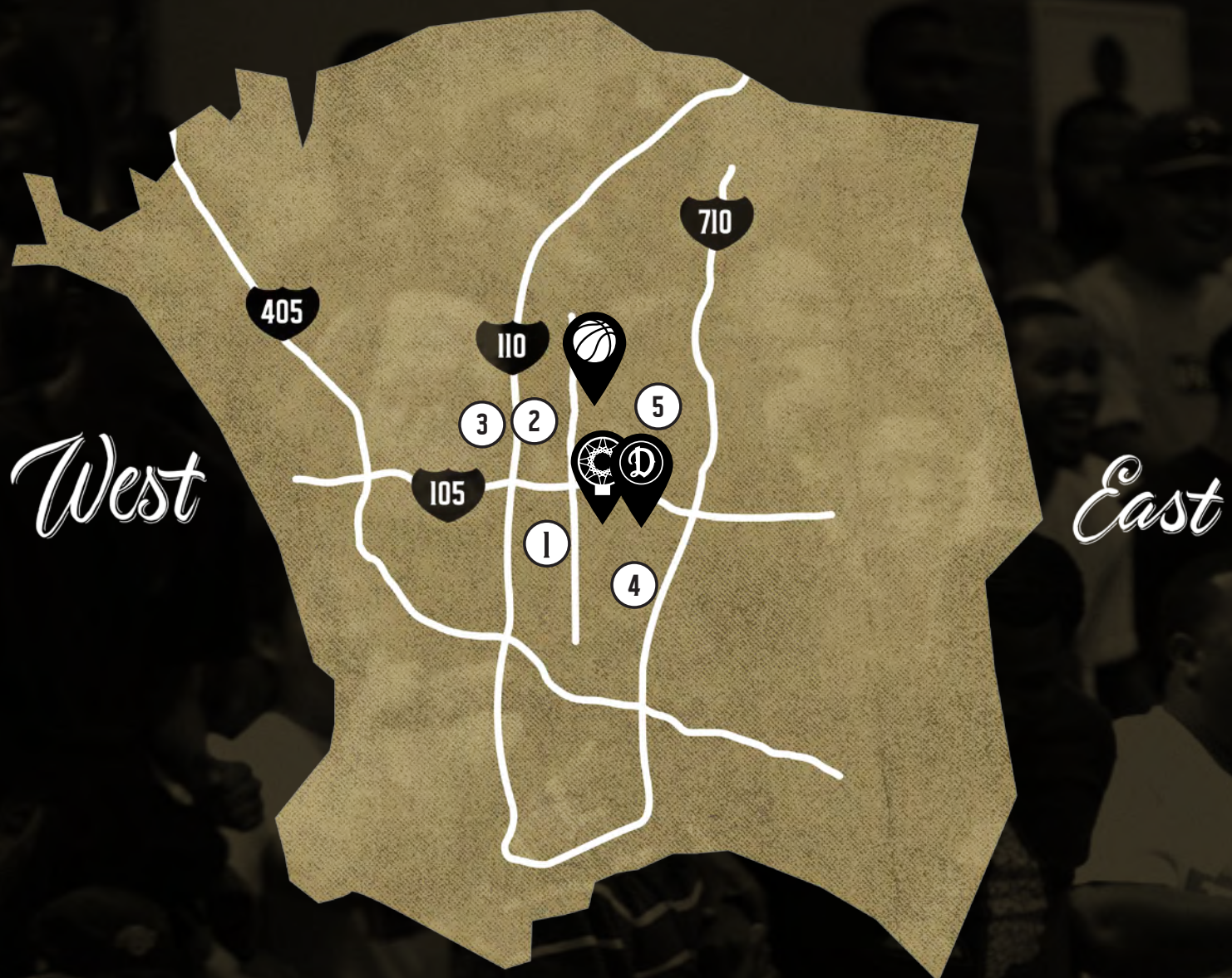
A Los Angeles native, Bill has been involved with the Drew since its embryonic days. After becoming the announcer in 1973, his unmistakable voice led to a gig on a television series about a basketball team in South Central (the program was also the first primetime drama to feature a predominately African-American cast). “I gave the people what they wanted,” Bill says.

Even with Hollywood’s interest, Bill rarely missed a game until health complications forced him to take a break in 1996. Although George Preciado took over announcing duties the following season, the burly Bill can still be found perched in a front row seat at the Drew every weekend.

At the Drew, you’ll always find William Smiley posted up on a metal folding chair near the entrance, perfectly positioned to catch all the excitement on the court. From this vantage point, he happily points out player tendencies and missed defensive assignments to anyone within earshot. “I’ve been there since day one,” he says.

As the older brother of Drew Commissioner Dino Smiley, William has indeed enjoyed a front-row view of the league’s explosion. Back in the initial season of 1973, he played for a team called Chic Unique – and the squad didn’t even have jerseys. But even then, things were handled professionally. “Dino ran it like a corporate business,” William remembers. “All the games started on time. You couldn’t get in the referees’ faces and talk crazy to the referees.”

Things have changed since the Drew League’s era of shirts and skins, but that spirit for respect remained. “It just started getting bigger and bigger,” William says. “Then, on a Friday night, all of a sudden there’d be people outside the door that couldn’t get in. And it’d be 105 degrees in there and the atmosphere would just be electric.” That’s precisely the kind of power that William has helped to harness.



1

ROSCOE'S HOUSE OF CHICKEN & WAFFLES

106 W MANCHESTER AVE.
LOS ANGELES, 90003

This famed diner chain may have more popular locations, but hungry fans from the Drew have been hitting this Roscoe's outpost for comfort grub like the Country Boy (3 southern-style chicken wings, one buttery waffle) for years.

2

WATTS TOWERS

1727 E 107TH ST.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90002

Constructed over six decades ago, the looming collection of 17 connected structures was built by Sabato Rodia from scrap metal, ceramic tiles and soda bottles. Frequently featured in films and videos, the towers are also a testament to the creativity of the inner city.

3

TACO PETE'S

12007 SOUTH CENTRAL AVE.
LOS ANGELES, 90059

More Tex-Mex than authentically south-of-the-border, Taco Pete has been serving unique selections like beef burritos, taco burgers and French fries in the Los Angeles area since 1966.

4

LOUIS BURGERS

308 E COMPTON BLVD.
COMPTON, 90221

The "Best in Town" sign doesn't lie: look no further than this timeless neighborhood staple for mouthwatering cheeseburgers, chili cheese fries and pastrami sandwiches.

5

COMPTON BLUE LINE STATION

275 N. Willowbrook Ave.
Compton, CA 90220

When the Los Angeles Metro Rail launched in 1990, it gave residents a valuable option for public transportation through Downtown, Watts, Compton and Long Beach. With 26 million annual riders, the Blue Line is a true community connection—just like the Drew League.



CHARLES DREW MIDDLE SCHOOL

ADDRESS: 8511 COMPTON AVE
YEARS USED: 1973 – 2005



WASHINGTON PARK

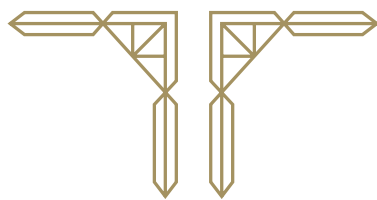
ADDRESS: 8908 MAIE AVE
YEARS USED: 2006 – 2011



KING DREW HIGH SCHOOL

ADDRESS: 1601 E. 120TH STREET
YEARS USED: 2012 – PRESENT

THE LOCATIONS



DURING THE 40 YEARS IN WHICH THE DREW LEAGUE HAS EVOLVED INTO A VITAL SUMMER TRADITION IN SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES, HOOPS DREAMS HAVE SPRUNG INTO REALITY AT THREE DIFFERENT LOCATIONS.

EACH GYM HAS BEEN SITUATED NEAR CENTRAL AVENUE, A PULSING COMMUNITY ARTERY THAT PRESERVES ACCESSIBILITY FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD. AND THE RISING CALIBER OF FACILITIES SPEAKS TO THE LEAGUE'S SURGING POPULARITY AND IMPORTANCE AS A DESTINATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL BASKETBALL.

HERE'S AN OVERVIEW.



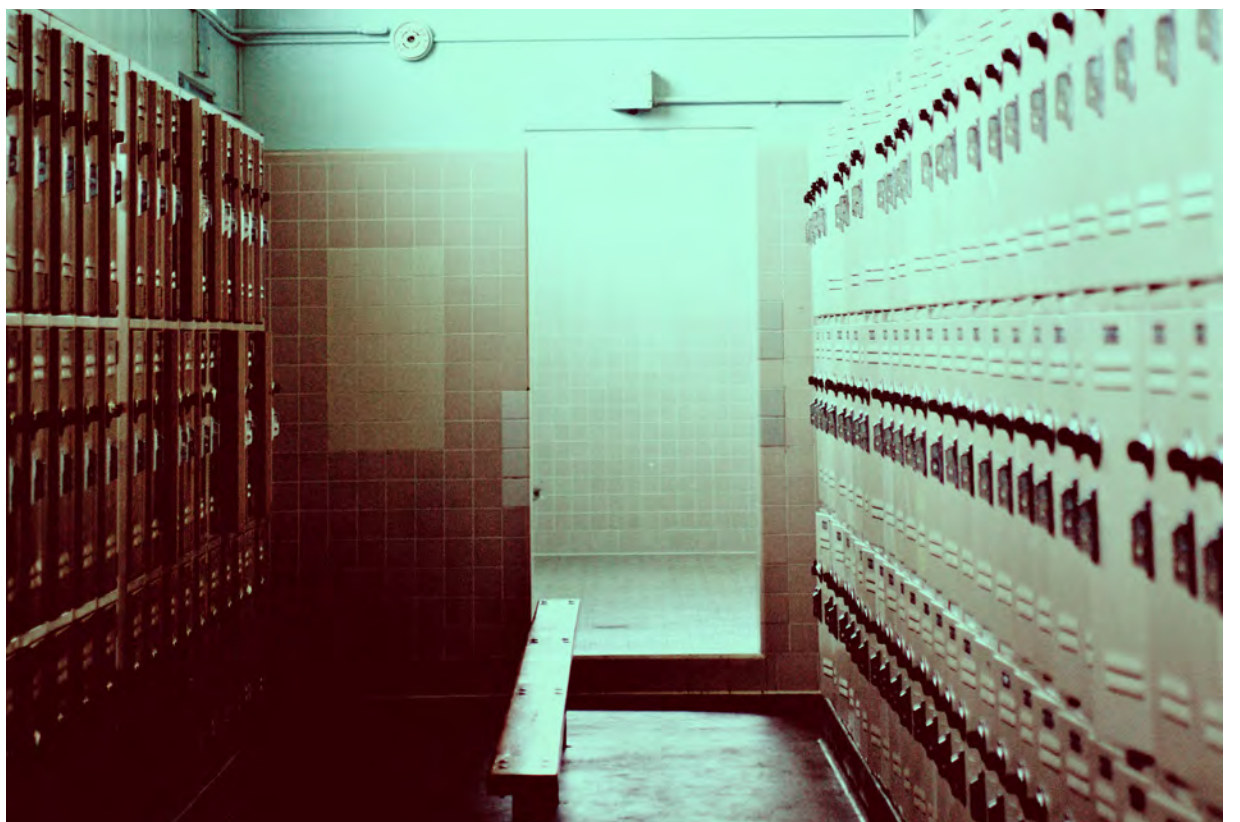
CHARLES DREW MIDDLE SCHOOL

Address: 8511 Compton Ave
Years Used: 1973 – 2005

With roots as a pickup run for local street-ball stars and athletes from nearby universities, the Drew League was originally founded with only six teams. From the start, the small gym emphasized fierce competition over name recognition and featured the rapid-fire action of a high-level playground game.

SIGNATURE MOMENT:

During the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the Drew remained open as a valued community outlet.



Dino Smiley: "The energy was just crazy. The crowd was under the basket and people were in the doorways trying to see. And it was hot - there was no air conditioning."



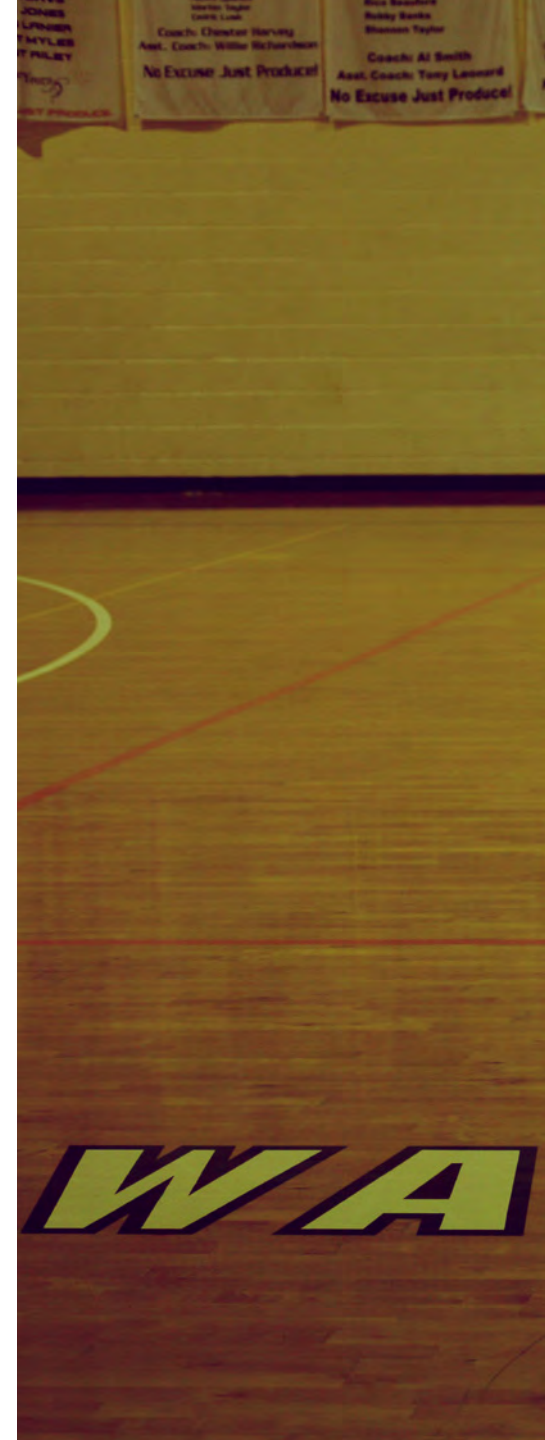
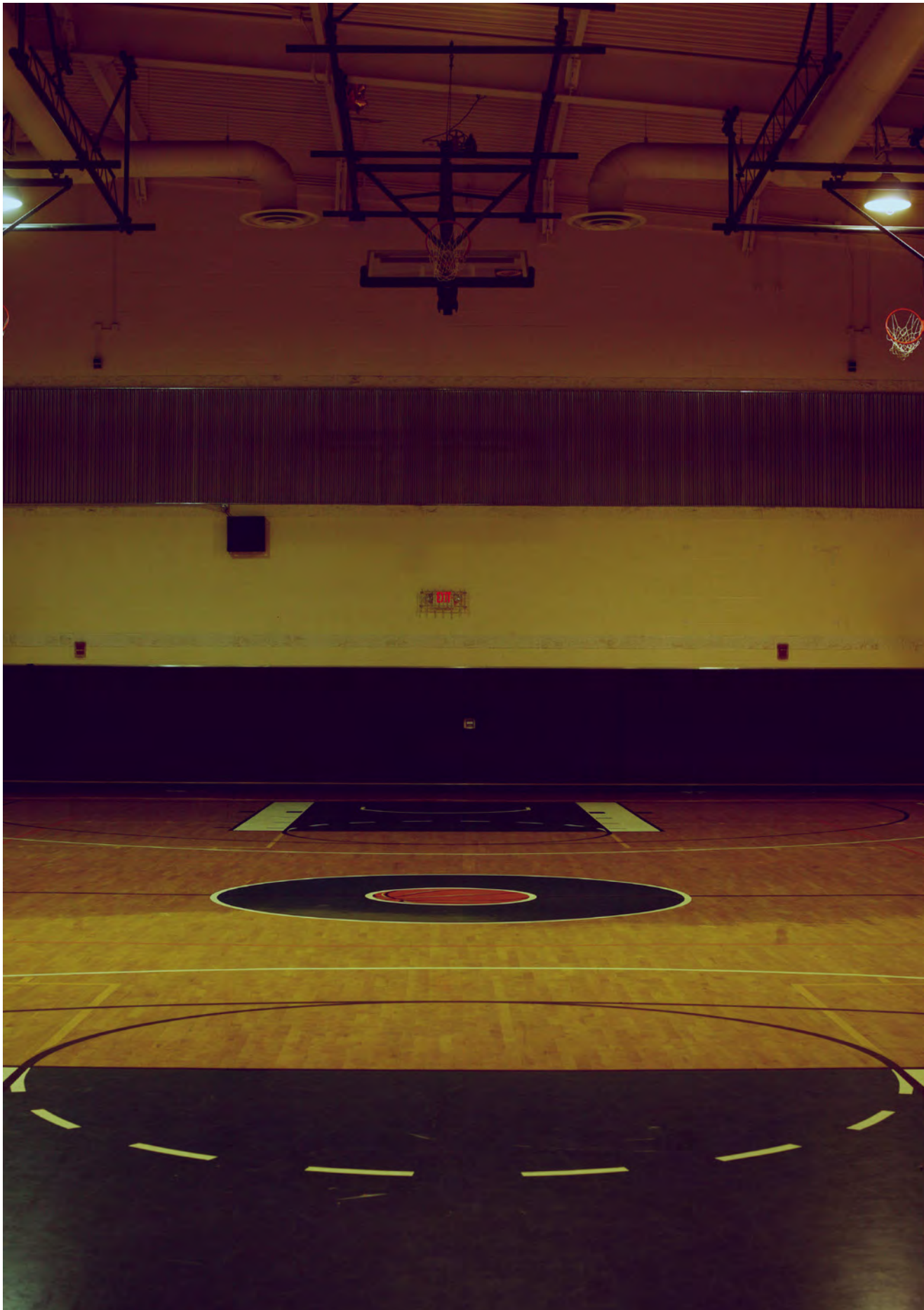
Dino sold hotdogs that were cooked on a hotplate in the closet.



Alvin Wills: "You didn't want to get off the court because you might not get back on. It was death, blood and guts out there. We were mortal enemies, but we were joking on the sidelines. It's always been like that."



Maurice "Big Mo" Spillers: "There was closeness in the small gym. It's not an open floor. You're touching everybody and the noise is just coming down on you."



Dino Smiley: "When we moved here, people said, 'I don't know if it's still gonna have the atmosphere.' But nothing changed. It was the same: everybody's relaxed, everybody's excited."



WASHINGTON PARK

Address: 8908 Maie Ave
Years Used: 2006 – 2011

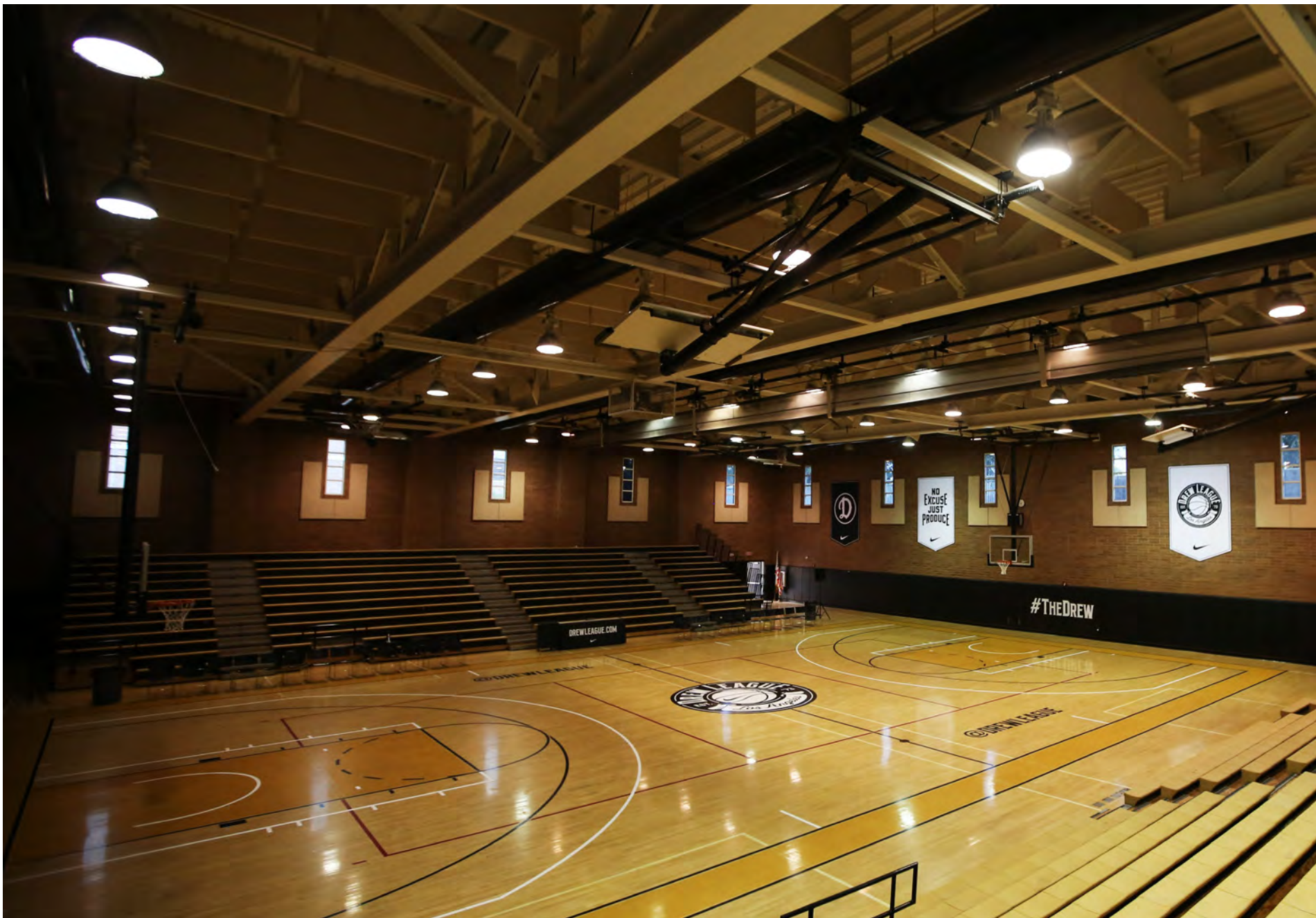
After moving up the street, the Drew League added to the legacy of Washington Park, a community hub that acts as a safe zone for neighborhood residents. The new gym had a built-in scoreboard and air-conditioning, but was usually a standing room only situation.

SIGNATURE MOMENT:

During the 2011 lockout, the league exploded in prominence when superstars like Kevin Durant, LeBron James and Kobe Bryant hit the hardwood. In a heated matchup that has since spiraled into a professional rivalry, Kobe squared off against James Harden.

Washington Park was an improvement from the middle school, but the short supply of bleachers meant it would soon be time to move again.





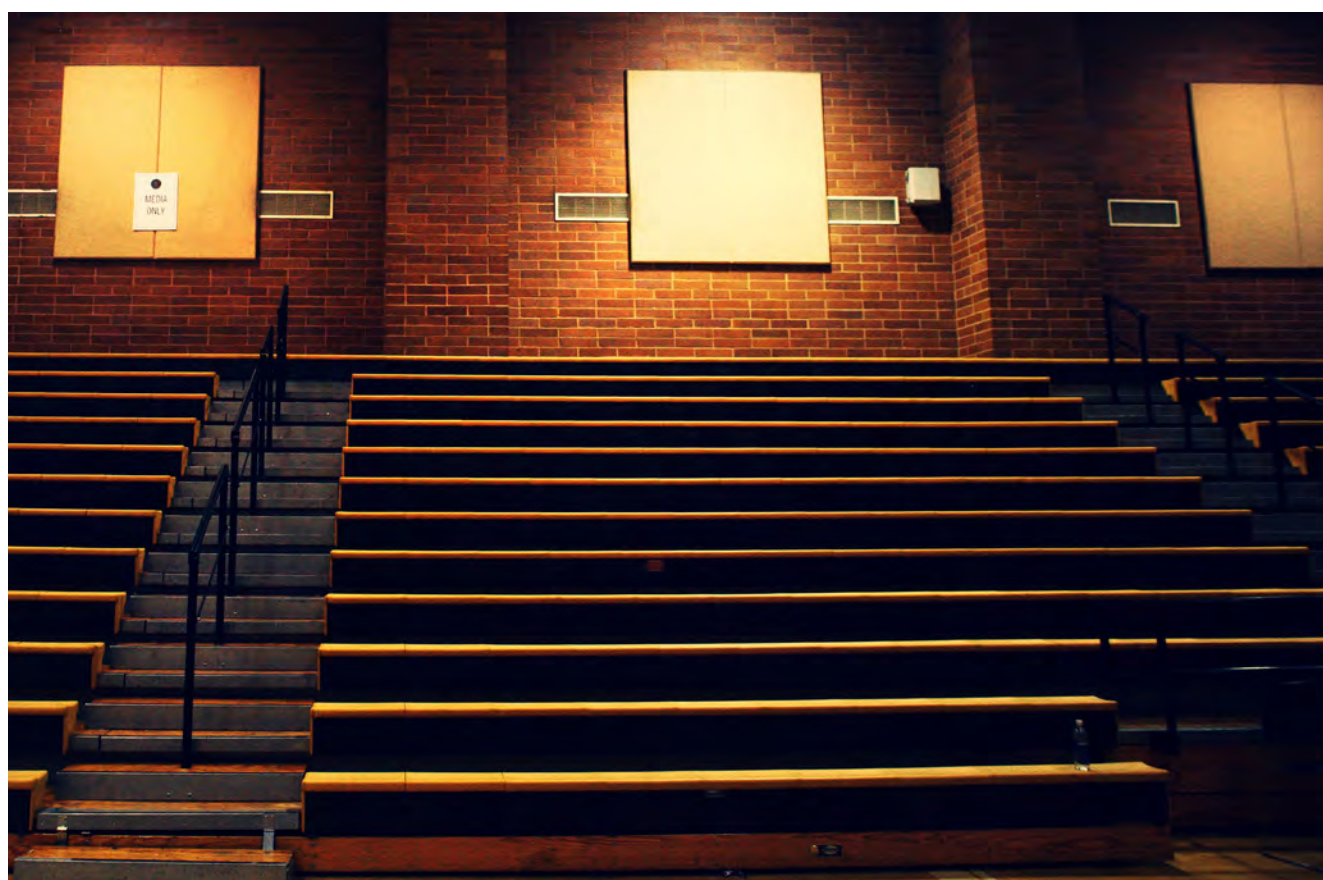
KING DREW HIGH SCHOOL

Address: 1601 E. 120th Street
Years Used: 2012 – Present

Now with 28 teams and players ranging from professional superstars to playground legends, the league enjoys newer facilities and expanded space for teeming crowds. Still, lines of hopeful spectators often snake around the building.

SIGNATURE MOMENT:

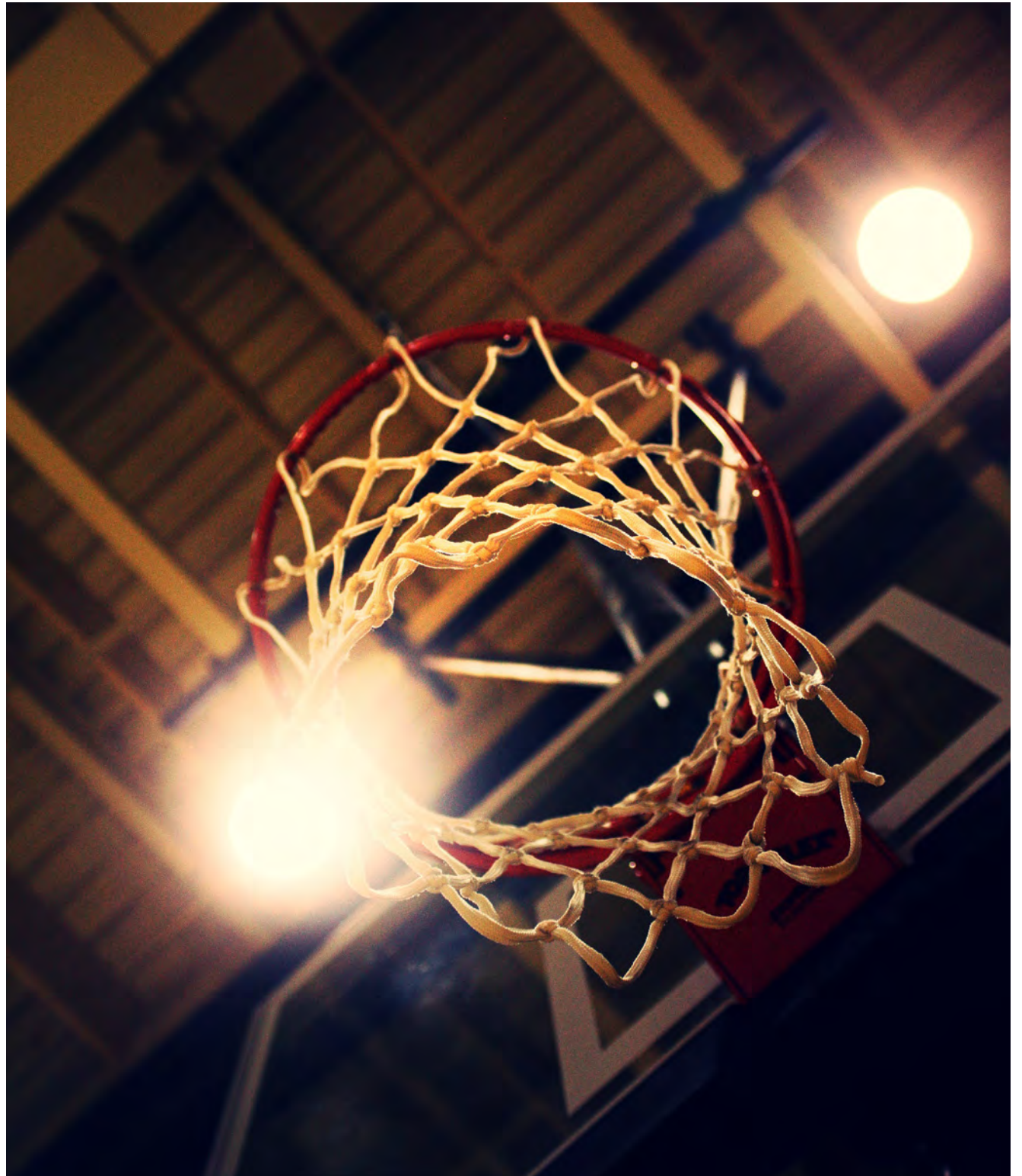
In the wildly entertaining 2012 championship game, LAUNFD defeated The Game's Money Gang to win a third consecutive title.



Chris "Ghetto Bird" Young: "It's magnified, but it's still family. It's a good feeling when you walk in the gym and you see your boys from the last 15 years."



With regulation lanes, three-point lines and a 24-second shot-clock, the current location is ideal for visits from the upper echelon of basketball stars.

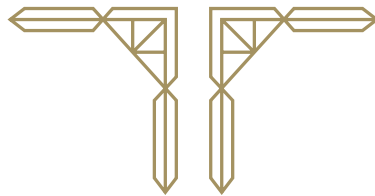


Dino Smiley: "The community has always dealt with the reputation of, 'Don't go on the Eastside.' Now they see the pro guys and the overseas guys coming to play and all the different nationalities coming together on weekends. It makes the community feel proud."

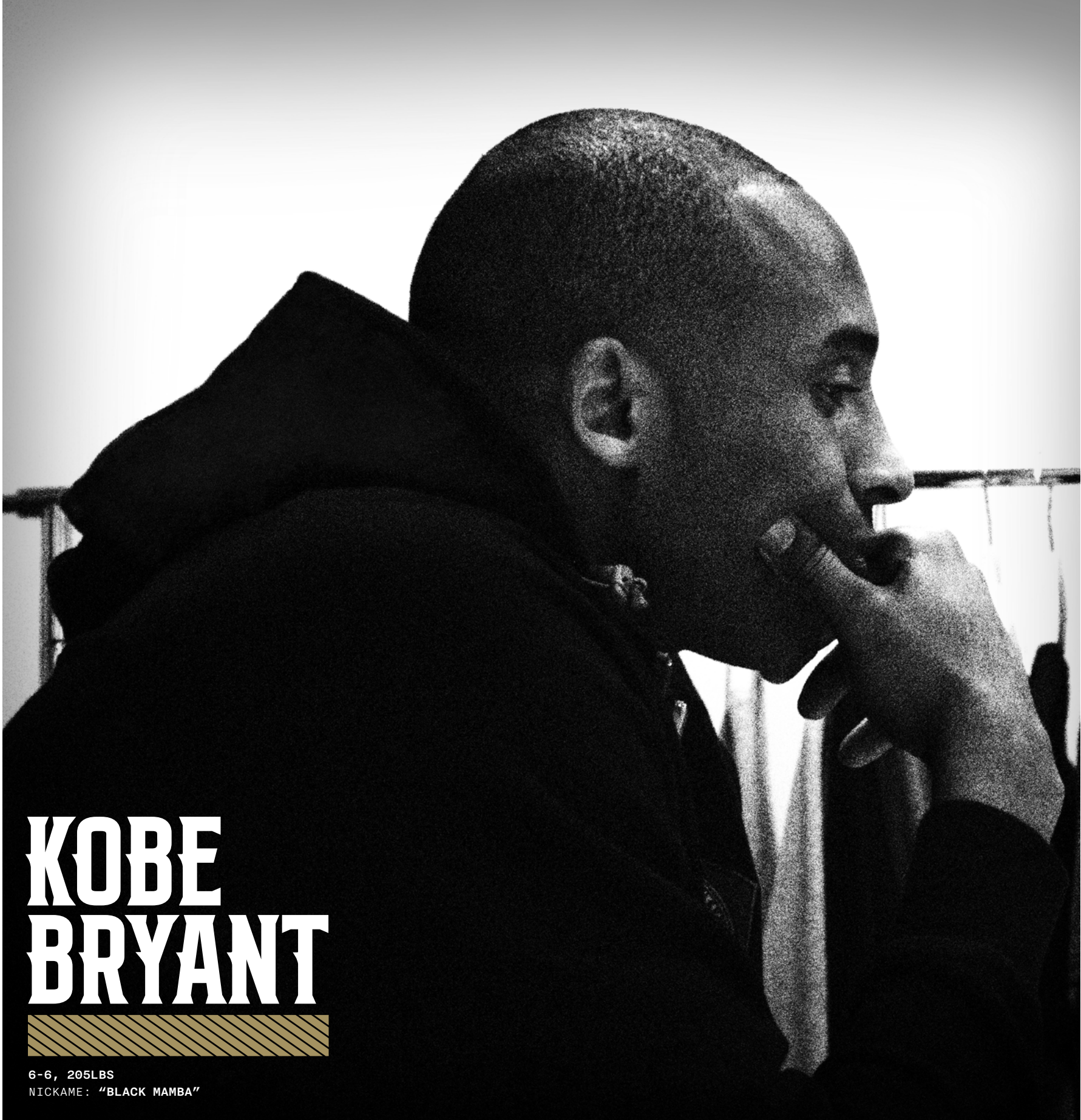




BASKETBALL NEVER STOPS



KOBE. LEBRON. DURANT. THOSE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE GLOBAL ICONS WHO HAVE MADE APPEARANCES AT THE INCREASINGLY STAR-STUDED DREW. MEANWHILE, TALENTED LOCAL PLAYERS LIKE JAMES HARDEN, NICK YOUNG AND DEMAR DEROZAN HAVE ESSENTIALLY GROWN UP IN THE LEAGUE, SOME EVEN PLAYING THEIR FIRST GAMES AS TEENAGERS. FOR HOOPS FANS IN SOUTH CENTRAL WHO MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD FLOOR SEATS AT A PROFESSIONAL GAME, THE DREW PROVIDES THE RARE OPPORTUNITY TO WATCH SOME OF THE GREATEST PLAYERS ON THE PLANET IN PERSON.



KOBE BRYANT

6-6, 205LBS

NICKNAME: "BLACK MAMBA"

Your 43-point outburst in 2011 is regarded as one of the greatest moments in the history of the Drew. What brought you to the gym?

I've always known about the Drew League. It's a cultural phenomenon. In the off-season I'm always nursing injuries, traveling and doing things for various sponsors. I've never had the time to just play.

Where does the Drew rank on your list of favorite places to play?

It was number one. I've been out in LA now for seventeen years and this is home to me. Yet I've never had the chance to really go and play in front of my folks. So this to me was really special. It was also special having James Harden there. At the time he was still kind of below the radar, but I knew how good he was. I felt it was great for us to compete against each other in that environment.

How important do you think it is for players to be a part of summer league basketball?

The athlete gets the joy of playing. It's basketball in its most pure form, without the hype machine and all the other fanfare. And you inspire people who are there. There's a next Kobe sitting in the crowd, the next James Harden sitting in the crowd. Kids are watching and saying "Oh, I can do that!" They can reach out and touch what that dream is. That's the coolest part about it.

As one of the most feared players in the game today, how does that reputation carry over to the street-ball atmosphere of the Drew League?

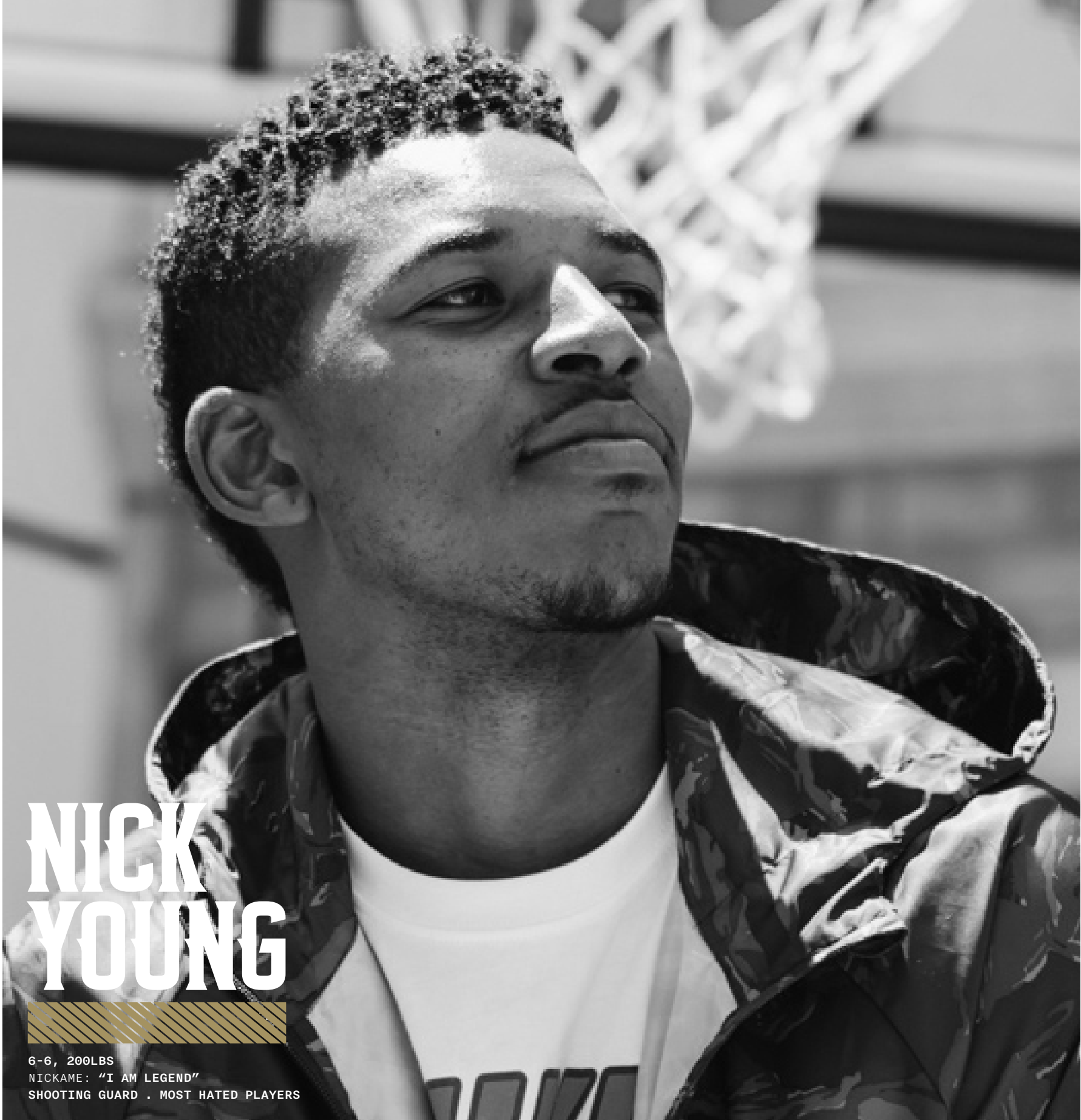
They want to see if all the hype is real. I take that as a test and a challenge. I go into full Black Mamba character.

How important is the Drew League to the community in South Central?

It's a huge part of it. It's an opportunity for the community to rally around something in an extremely positive way. That inspires, educates and teaches kids the values of leadership and selflessness.

How does the motto "No excuse. Just produce." resonate with you as a player?

Man, get it done. Period. I've always lived by that motto. Excuses are a dime a dozen. Come hell or high water, find out a way to get it done and be successful.



NICK YOUNG

6-6, 200LBS
NICKNAME: "I AM LEGEND"
SHOOTING GUARD . MOST HATED PLAYERS

After inking a deal to play professionally in Los Angeles this summer, Nick Young is still scoring buckets and thrilling fans as a member of the Most Hated Players. We took some time to chop it up with Swagy P.

As a veteran of the Drew, what changes have you noticed in the league since you first began playing?

I've been playing in the Drew for the last six years. The Drew is taking off to another level. Now it's getting bigger and more people are coming. It's great competition. You have players that played in the league—and some players that should be in the league.

Have you noticed a different attitude from the crowd since signing with your hometown team?

It's big. I can tell the change over the past couple weeks when I walked in. It feels good coming back home. I grew up here.

What's your Drew League career highlight?

Scoring 43 in my first game back.

Any other favorite memories?

I couldn't believe Kobe Bryant came to South Central, California to hoop in the Drew. The line was around the corner. It was legendary. To me, he's one of the top players to ever play this game. Just being on the court with him, I'm going to try and be a sponge and learn from him.

Why did George nickname you "I Am Legend?"

I was on a team where I was the only person from the league. I was it doing by myself - like in the movie.

Outside of the Drew, you're known by the alias Swagy P. Who is he, exactly?

Swagy P is my alter ego. I go to him when I'm in that mood. When I break somebody or I cross somebody, that's when Swagy P comes out.

You've always been considered something of a showman.

I do that everywhere: the Drew, the league, the park. At the Drew, it's just a little more special. I add some flare to it. You gotta come out there and give them a show. Just have fun and interact with the fans.

How do you plan on getting that Drew championship?

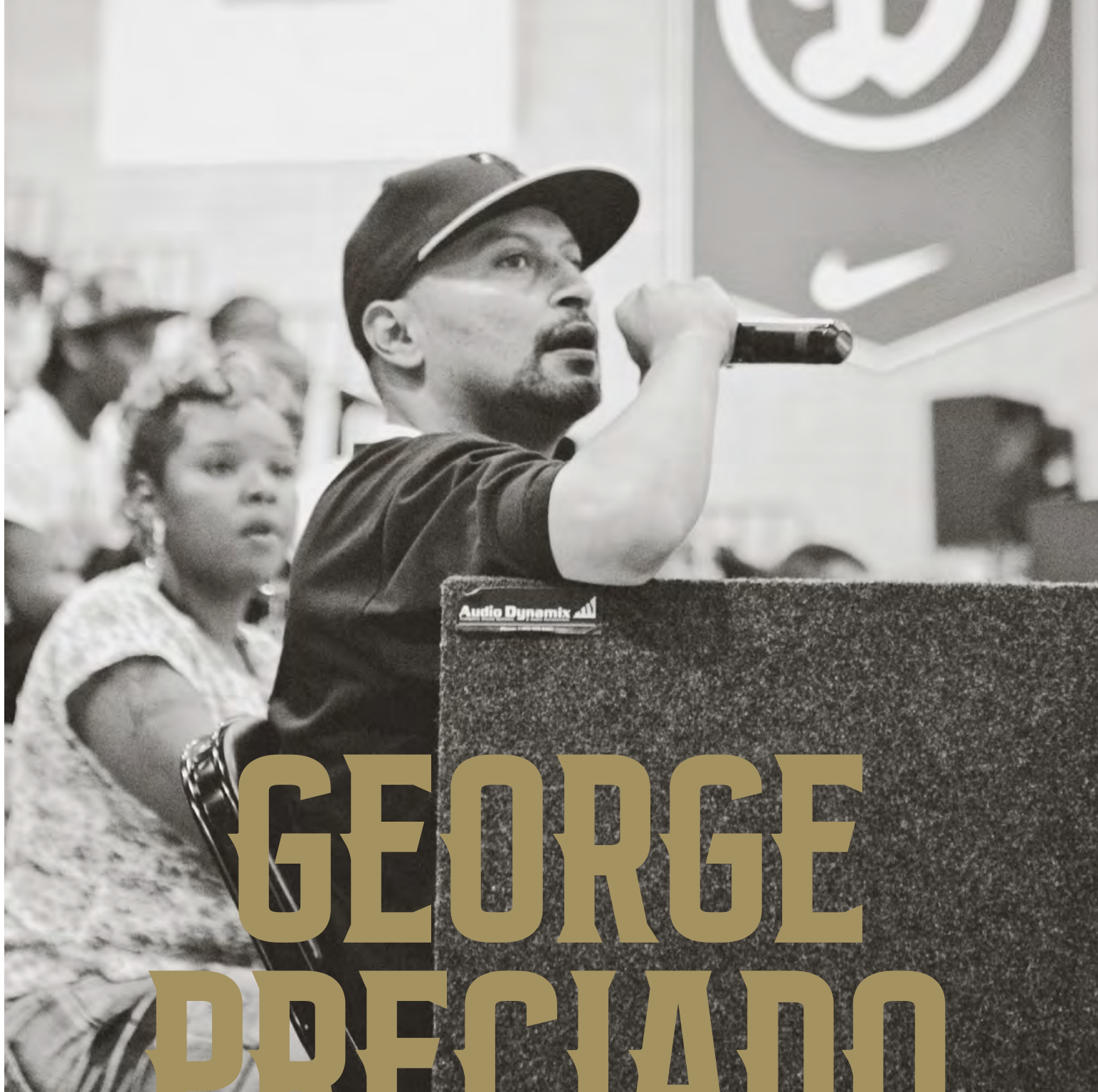
I'm trying to recruit! "You come to my team - you'll get more shots over here!"



THE PEOPLE



GEORGE PRECIADO
THE WARES
LAUNFD



GEORGE PRECIADO



FOR 16 YEARS, ANNOUNCER GEORGE PRECIADO
HAS BEEN MANNING THE MICROPHONE AT THE DREW.
AND HE ALWAYS TELLS IT LIKE IT IS.

Attend a game at King Drew High School, and there's a good chance you'll hear George "Chick Hernandez" Preciado before you see him. That's the right introduction for the league's longtime announcer and the man known as the "Voice of the Drew." For 16 years, George has manned the microphone, narrating the action and providing endless insight and comic relief.

On the typical summer weekend, George can be spotted at the scorer's table with his baseball cap pulled low. From there he doles out countless nicknames that have proven tougher to shake than the most tenacious defender. Nick Young is "I Am Legend." DeMar Derozan is "The Hawk." Marcus Williams is "Mr. Iso." And so on.

Unlike summer league announcers who shriek and taunt, George's style is more like a running monologue from an old friend who obsesses over basketball. He details players' collegiate and professional resumes, shouts out Drew League veterans who are "in the building," and critiques on-court performances with unvarnished honesty. During one clash this summer, he good-naturedly teased a well-known professional—we'll leave him unnamed—for air-balling a free throw. "I need ten pushups out of you before the day is over," George scolded. The player immediately dropped to the floor. "Appreciate it, big dog!" was the announcer's cheery response.

Like many kids from the neighborhood, George started as a fan of the Drew League. In 1997, he took over the announcing duties from the legendary Still Bill. While George initially borrowed stylistic flourishes and a nickname from the iconic Los Angeles announcer, he's now an institution in his own right. "I don't even know what I'm doing half the time," he says, downplaying his formidable talents. "It just comes out of me — it's spontaneous."



BEWARE OF THE WARES



IN THE DREW LEAGUE, ONE FATHER AND SON
COMBINATION IS CONSIDERED ROYALTY. MEET CASPER
WARE SR. AND CASPER WARE JR.

As a local institution for 40 years, the Drew League has become a summer tradition for several generations of South Central residents. Spotting relatives in the gym is no rarity, but the Wares are unique in their involvement: both members of the dynamic father-son tandem of Casper Ware Sr. and Casper Ware Jr. have won MVP awards as standout players at the Drew. Some families pass the peas – they pass the torch.

A schoolboy scoring sensation in Los Angeles, the older Ware bounced around several universities on the collegiate level. The fearless 5'9" guard with a deadly jumper was considered too small for the pros, but nevertheless left his mark on the basketball world. After a long career at the Drew that included a 41-point monsoon in the championship game for the Cheaters in 1987, Ware was named one of California's 24 All-Time Elite Playground Legends by a major sports network. "To see your dad be one of the best players in the league was special," recalls Junior, who would fire up shots during timeouts and halftime. "But it wasn't just all about basketball. It was about spending time with the family."

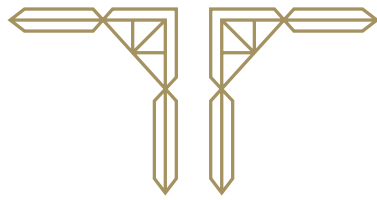
Soon it was Junior's time to shine. A high school star in suburban Cerritos, he earned a scholarship to college and spent the next four years playing. But like his dad, he truly earned his stripes at the Drew. In 2011, the feisty guard won league MVP and added more hardware to the collection that fills the family's living room, garage and a storage space. "I'm watching him and it was just like seeing myself in flashbacks," his dad remembers. "It was like a dream come true."

Despite the tight camaraderie, competitiveness is embedded in the DNA for both the Wares and the spirit of the Drew League. So who's the better shooter these days? "I'd get him," assures Junior. "He hasn't picked up a ball in a minute." But his father isn't having it. "I'll give him a run for his money," Ware guarantees.





THE CULTURE



THE GAME
MRS. SMILEY



Game
OVER
NAME



THE GAME



WHEN RAPPERS AND ATHLETES ATTEMPT TO SWAP PROFESSIONS, THE RESULTS ARE OFTEN UNINSPIRING. BUT AT THE DREW, JAYCEON TAYLOR—BETTER KNOWN AS THE GAME—THRIVES IN BOTH ROLES. NOW IN HIS THIRD SEASON, THE COMPTON NATIVE ACTS AS RECRUITER, COACH AND PLAYER FOR HIS MONEY GANG SQUAD. IT'S NOT JUST FOR SHOW: HE'S PROVEN TO BE AN OPPORTUNISTIC SCORER AND SNARLING COMPETITOR WHO HOLDS HIS OWN AMONG THE PRO TALENT ON THE ROSTER. HERE, THE GAME DISCUSSES HIS BEST (AND WORST) MOMENTS AT THE DREW AND THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN RAPPING AND HOOPING.

How did you become involved as a player in the Drew?

When I was about 25, I first tried to enter the Drew League - but I got denied by Dino. There was a lot of drama attached to my name and my whole persona. I understood. I said, "Let me get a couple years to get the streets out of my system." I'm a little bit older now and the gray hairs are coming in.

You've competed in New York's summer street-ball leagues. How does the Drew stack up?

In New York, it's all about flossing and showboating. It's real wild, real braggadocio. The Drew league is more mechanical basketball with pro referees and pro rules. It's all about producing. Now the Drew is the biggest summer pro league in the world on all levels: for regular street and park legends, pro players, international players, college players.

How has your involvement contributed to the league's stature?

When I came into the Drew, my celebrity attracted other celebrities, which attracted their pro player friends. Now Nike is in, and it's bigger than it's ever been in the 40-year history.

Can you compare performing as a rapper to performing as an athlete?

Once you get on that stage, your heart is beating really fast and there's butterflies in your stomach. I have basketball friends and they say it's the same thing whenever you get in front of those 30,000 people. You show up? They love you. You don't show up? They boo you.

At least you can't get dunked on while rapping.

I don't get dunked on in the Drew! I'm either jumping as high as I can and smacking it - or I'm getting out of the way.

What's been most memorable about playing in the Drew?

Making the Drew League such a big deal and such a comfortable environment that Kobe Bryant came to Washington Park. That was big—not for me and the league—but for the kids and the community. If you're 13 and from Compton or Watts, and you can see Kevin Durant in your neighborhood for free? That's the ticket. This is our city, man.

And your worst moment at the Drew?

Last year, a guy by the name of Bottoms—probably because every time he shoots a jumper, he doesn't miss—he put me on a yoyo string and I fell down. It was all over the internet. Most embarrassing moment of my life.

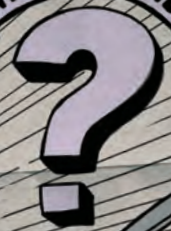


Mrs. Smiley's DREW-AID

THE MYSTICAL BREW OF THE DREW

DRINK CUPS
SINK BUCKETS

WHAT'S INSIDE?



ONLY AT THE DREW

KEEPING BASKETBALL SMILEY



WET YOUR





MRS. SMILEY

FIRST LADY OF THE DREW

Glance around the bleachers during any Drew League game, and you'll spot fans guzzling cups of a chilled pink potion. Known as Drew-Aid, the summer league's signature beverage is often described as possessing notes of watermelon, strawberry and any number of fruity flavors. But whatever the blend, Mrs. Smiley isn't revealing the recipe for her concoction.

Sold at a recession-proof price of \$1 per 16-ounce cup, Drew-Aid offers sweet refreshment on any budget. And like everything to do with the Drew, it has a history. Back in 2006, Mrs. Smiley first began cooling off sweaty spectators by peddling lemonade made from a lemon tree in her backyard. As the league's popularity grew, demand surged. "I could only make maybe 10 gallons," she remembers. "The tree would be gone in one Saturday or Sunday. So I had to do something different."

In 2011, Mrs. Smiley took her recipe back into the kitchen for a literal remix. "I added one more ingredient to it," she says. "I wanted something with a lot of ice that was kind of sweet and sour." She renamed the drink Drew-Aid and sales soared.

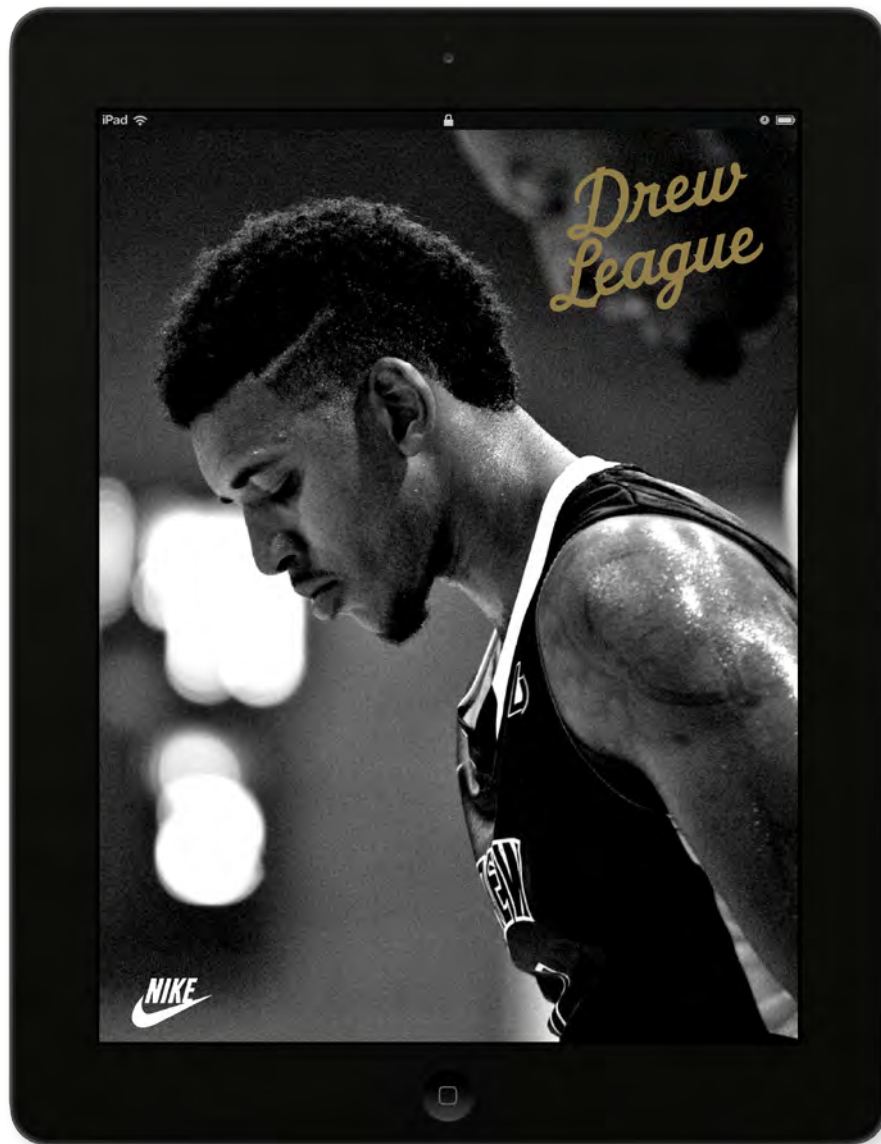
Even with everyone yearning to discover Drew-Aid's mystery element, Mrs. Smiley is keeping that secret to herself. "Most of the time they try to figure what's in it and I just have them guess," she says of her customers. "And that's the fun part." That's the story of the Drew League – a little something extra that makes all the difference.



DREW

13

LEAGUE



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