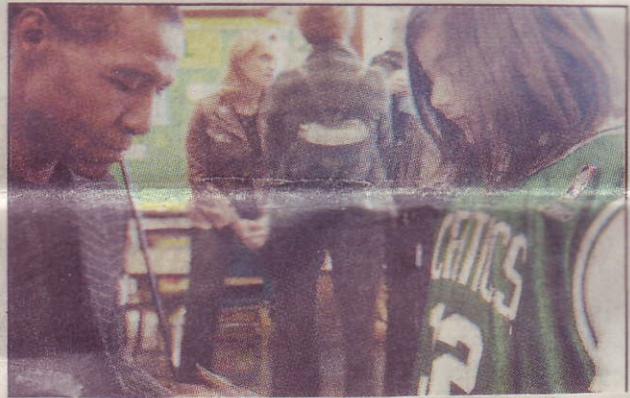


FINDING THE HERO WITHIN



Former Boston Celtic stops at Bright Elementary to talk about setting a good example for others

By Christopher Rocchio
DAILY NEWS STAFF

WALTHAM—Former Boston Celtic JoJo White knows a thing or two about heroes, having shared the court with many accomplished athletes. However, Friday morning at Bright Elementary, White told second- and third-grade students he

never had to look too far to find his role model.

"My father, The Rev. G.L. White, is my hero," he said. "I didn't know when I was little that I would use all of the stuff he taught me in raising my own children. He prepared me to be a father."

White was at Bright Friday to read

from "The Boston Celtics Hero Book," a project recently completed by the Celtics Women's Group that helps children identify characteristics they admire in other people, while at the same time encouraging them to display those same characteristics.

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Celtic talks about being a hero

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"It's a wonderful opportunity for the children to think about their own role models and how they can copy some of those positive characteristics in their own life," said Bright principal Deborah Ahlman.

White was accompanied by the book's author, Ellen Sabin, and both discussed qualities of heroes, which included courage, having big hearts and being a hard working, focused and committed individual.

"It was an honor to participate with the Celtics Women's Group in creating this book," Sabin said. "Not only does it promote literacy, but also helps kids identify their role models and act like them to be the best they can be."

When White asked students who their role models were, answers varied from Abraham Lincoln to David Ortiz. White said while it's okay to have well-known heroes, there are everyday role models that exist within the Waltham community, such as parents and teachers. Because you never know who you may be influencing, White also stressed the importance of always setting a good example for others.

"You can be a hero for anyone, it just depends on how you act and carry yourself," he said. "Make sure you all do good with your lives because someone



PHOTO BY JOHN J. CROOKES

Ellen Sabin, left, author of "The Boston Celtics Hero Book" and Celtics legend Jo Jo White, answer questions from second and third graders at Bright Elementary School in Waltham Friday.

may want to follow in your footsteps."

Ahlman said it was an extremely thrilling experience to have someone like White come and talk to Bright students, especially about such an important topic.

"He's somebody I've admired my whole life, and not just for playing basketball, but for all the good he does for youth in the Greater Boston area," said Ahlman of White, who was named the NBA Finals Most Valuable Player as a member of the Celtics in 1976.

The Celtics Women's Group is an organization of parents, wives and mothers of Celtics

players, coaches, ownership and management, which was created to help advance the philanthropic goals of the organization's Shamrock Foundation. Esta Epstein, Celtics Women's Group book committee co-chair, said 5,000 copies of the book are being given away to local youth, including those at Bright, and all proceeds from its sale will go towards the foundation.

"The book is very interactive," Epstein said. "We're extremely happy with the way it turned out."

White described "The Boston Celtics Hero Book" as an activity book, diary and scrapbook all in

one. The back of the book also features a section with contributions from former and current Celtic players, coaches and personnel describing who their heroes are. Answers varied from Paul Pierce saying his mother is his hero, to Robert Parish saying he's always looked up to Nelson Mandela.

"Different athletes are inspired by different people," said White. "It lets us know that any of us could be heroes for anyone."

"The Boston Celtics Hero Book" is available for purchase at the TD Banknorth Garden and Borders Bookstores, as well as www.bostonceltics.com.