

# North-South All-Star game: Players get taste of giving back from NFL local Frye

By Terry Massey - For The Sun News

The 88 players participating in the Saturday's North-South All-Star Football Game learned more about giving than handoffs and center-snap exchanges Thursday.



Both squads broke early from morning workouts to take part in "Brandon Frye Gives Back," a program started by the former Myrtle Beach High standout and current NFL player to take local, underprivileged children on a Christmas shopping spree.

"I was one of those kids who didn't have a lot growing up and I remember what it was like," said Frye, who is on injured reserve with the Seattle Seahawks. "It feels good to help kids from that same environment have a good Christmas."

This is the third year Frye has led the program, but this is the first time he was able to get the North-South players involved. One player from each side teamed to adopt a child for the day and help them spend \$100 at the Myrtle Beach Wal-Mart.

"We had a lot of fun shopping with the kids," said Marlboro County and South offensive lineman Lee Pegues, who joined with South Pointe and North wide receiver Quinton Darby to shop with a 10-year-old Myrtle Beach girl. "She spent more money shopping for her family than she did for herself."

And that was the message Frye was trying to deliver to the players and the kids - it really is better to give than receive. He hopes the program will encourage them to do more in the future.

"With these guys being all-stars, they are going to have opportunities to go to college and get good jobs, maybe even play in the NFL one day," he said. "I hope this is something that sticks with them, to give back to the community and help those less fortunate than themselves."

After the shopping spree, Frye treated both the players and children to lunch at Golden Corral. The players went back to afternoon practice with a hot meal in their bellies and a warm spot in their hearts.

"Of all the fun things we've got to do down here, that was the best," Darby said. "It makes you feel good inside to help kids."

Girls gone recruiting?

North defensive end Brandon Willis says he is rock-solid on his verbal commitment to play football up on ol' Rocky Top despite an NCAA investigation into whether Tennessee used hostesses from Orange Pride to influence his and other recruits' decisions.

Willis was one of three Byrnes players to be interviewed by the NCAA about female students he met while attending football camp at UT. They later attended a Byrnes home game this season, flashing a sign that read ``Come to Tennessee." But that was after Willis and teammate Corey Miller had already committed to the Volunteers.

"I took my official visit there and I liked the coaching staff, the campus, the whole atmosphere," said Willis, avoiding any direct comment about the NCAA investigation. "I'm looking forward to going there in the fall."

Willis' father, Gary Willis, did address the issue in an interview with the Greenville News. "You're talking about my son and something that he has worked hard for. It's not going to be based upon no girls, I promise you that," he said. "These girls had nothing to do with the impact when my son decided he would go to school at Tennessee."

Mr. Football

The 2009 South Carolina Mr. Football Award will be presented at the Myrtle Beach High School Performing Arts Center at 7 tonight.

The five finalists are Bruce Ellington (Berkeley), DeAndre Hopkins (Daniel), Malcolm Howard (Goose Creek), Marcus Lattimore (Byrnes) and Dylan Pace Thompson (Boiling Springs).

Lattimore, who is ranked in the top five of most major recruiting services and one of the most sought-after running backs in the nation, is the front-runner for the award. He is competing in the Shrine Bowl, as are the other four finalists.

Lattimore, who has narrowed his college choices to Auburn, Georgia, Oregon, Penn State and USC, rushed for 1,904 yards and 31 touchdowns while also catching 48 passes for 675 yards and five scores for the Rebels this season.

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