

Atlanta Falcons' Michael Ford Hosts Football Camp For Alton Community

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON - It may have been a day where the heat index reached over 100 degrees, but the great turnout at Alton's summer football camp still had fun.

That's what NFL cornerback Michael Ford said it's all about.

"100 percent. That's my biggest thing about the whole camp. I just wanted them all to have fun," he said.

Ford started off the day running the camp for the little kids around 10 a.m. They just ran through some of the fundamentals of the game and it gave the kids an opportunity to meet a current NFL player. Ford signed a bunch of t-shirts for all the kids after their camp session ended.

"I think it's very important," he said about coaching the kids and getting them into the sport at a younger age."

"Cause when I was a young kid, that's what made me dream the dream that I have now. I feel like me being here and showing those kids that there's someone from the same place that they are, and they've made it to the NFL, I feel like that's the biggest impact."

Ford played football for Alton Middle and then went on to play at Marquette Catholic High School. He played his home games under the lights at Public Stadium which is why it was special to hold the camp there.

"My home games were here before they had this nice turf though," he said jokingly.

Ford began his NFL career for the Detroit Lions before getting traded to the Denver Broncos. During free-agency the Atlanta Falcons picked him up and that's where he'll play the 2022-2023 season.

Even though he made it the big leagues, Ford still feels like it's important to give back to the community.

"I mean, this is where I'm from," he said. "So, to have the opportunity to come out here and give back to these guys and share my knowledge is an honor for me honestly."

Ford stuck around to help run some drills with the middle and high school players. Their camp got under way a little past noon.

The middle and high schoolers started out with some 40-yard dashes then shifted into some throwing drills. The high schoolers lined up and took turns trying to throw the ball into a net from roughly 40 yards out. Whoever scored the most points after three throws was awarded a brand new pair of NFL gloves from Ford.

After that the players broke up into some 1 vs. 1 drills before ending the day with a 7 vs. 7 elimination-style tournament.

As far as how the camp came together, Ford said that he just reached out to his agency and that they just went ahead and started setting things up. He mentioned that summers aren't really busy for most NFL players and that he still had plenty of time to come host this camp.

"As far as the timing, we get a couple months off, so to stop by for a couple of days isn't a big deal," he said.

Ford was all smiles while running those drills with those players and was just overall pleased with how the camp turned out.

"It was a very nice event today, so I'm very thankful."

Between the middle and high school players there were well over 100 kids who came out to take part in the camp. Ford was pleased with the outcome.

This camp was held before new head coach David Parker takes over in the fall for his first season with the Alton Redbirds.

This camp wasn't open to just Alton High players though as kids from Civic Memorial, Marquette, East Alton-Wood River, and some other schools were able to attend.

All in all the event was a success and was a great way for Ford to give back to his community. The players and their families greatly appreciated his time.

