

**Mr. Tavares Young, Coach for Madison Eagles Youth Sports**  
**Transcript of interview for the Madison Historical Society Oral History Project.**  
**Interviewed by Kaleigh Spencer, Madison High School Social Studies Student**  
**Date: March 1, 2023**

Kaleigh Spencer [KS]: [Recording starts] Hello, my name is Kaleigh Spencer, I will be interviewing:

Tavares Young [TY] Mr. Coach Tavares Young.

[KS]: About the city of Madison today. How was it growing up in Madison?

[TY]: Actually, my growing up experience was pretty good. It was more family oriented. I grew up in an era where a lot of kids my age, whether it's their houses by me, we had more public housing. And we grew up different from this generation because we didn't have cell phones and nothing like that. So, a lot of our experience, we was outside, you know, whether it was basketball, riding bikes, hanging out, you know, going to the parks, or going into the ice cream shop and just hanging out late night or the afternoon. It was always something for us to do.

[KS]: Would you say you are still friends with anyone from back then?

[TY]: One of my best friends. We've been friends since I was four years old, so you talking what, 43, 42, 43 years?

[KS]: Did you face any obstacles going to school in Madison?

[TY]: I didn't. I pretty much, as far as from the kindergarten to the third grade. I went to Blair Elementary, which later became Bernard Long Elementary. In the 2000s, my principal was actually Bernard Long, Sr. That was my first principal. And at that time when I went to Blair, it was predominantly our black students at Blair Elementary, and then fourth and fifth grade we had a school at the same lot that Family Dollar is now. It was a school called (Lewis Bear???) . And (Lewis Bear???) was a fourth or fifth grade school. And that was the first time I had went to an integrated school with black and white students.

[KS]: Did you have a good experience with sports here?

[TY]: I had a great experience with sports. One of my passions where people that really know me like to say, "you have a lot of love for Madison." My first year going to Madison High School basketball games, they won a state championship in 1981. I was five years old and in kindergarten. So, I and my family traveled to a lot of sports. I had a lot of family members, brothers, and cousins play sports. So sports was always gonna be in my DNA at Madison. And that fueled me to want to follow the footsteps, not just for family members, the people that I see walking the streets. I stayed next to a basketball court,

Newport Carl Banks (???), and all the top basketball players for Madison, Venice, Brooklyn played at Banks. So, I had no choice but to follow sports because it was gonna be in my DNA.

[KS]: What is the best thing you remember about the city?

[TY]: Best thing I remember about the city that most of us didn't have a lot. But we thought we had everything. Even though a majority of my friends---I---I'm one of the few friends that had a mother and father household, A majority of my friends didn't have that. But even growing up, we didn't really think about that. We didn't have a stressful childhood. You know, there was always---we had older people that kept us alive. We had, we had violence and stuff like that. But we felt safe coming and growing up.

[KS]: Did living here teach you any valuable lessons?

[TY]: I think living here taught me a lot of lessons that I probably wouldn't have learned elsewhere. Even the school system, I have mixed emotions about how the school system was when I was growing up compared to now. I think there were advantages that things I did better when I went to school. I think there's a lot of things that as I grew up to be older, that I don't agree with and I wish they didn't do, you know, as a plus or minus for everything. I would say growing up here you get the best of both worlds. You see struggle, and you see people overcome struggles. And like I say growing up, we didn't really say that we felt under privileged. But there were things that you kind of wish as I'm older, wish that we wouldn't have taken for granted. Specifically, the education part, because it was easy, and it still is easy to feel like you're not valuable enough. You're not smart enough. You know? I was a high honor student growing up and then I had some hiccups. In junior high school are some of the things that I went through, I didn't feel as smart as I probably should have, I felt like I wasn't capable enough. And those are some things that happened to me. And that's kind of why I want to give back, came back to the school whether it was coaching and being at school, because I know how it feels to feel like you are an underachiever and you don't feel worthy enough. So those are some of the lessons that I've learned here.

[KS]: What about the community that has changed since you were younger, good or bad?

[TY]: I don't know if you say good or bad ---what it doesn't feel as the community level-- doesn't seem as more sense of community as when I was growing up. Prime example, for a majority of people that grew up here, their family, my parents, my father, specifically, and a majority of our friends' parents grew up in Madison. And I don't know about your family experience, but I believe your family didn't grow up in Madison, did it? So, this generation probably has more of a generation where you may have grown up here, but your mother, your aunt didn't grow up here. Because there has been a transition in community in Madison, compared to when I was coming up. Prime example, this school, there was more, it was more or less, it was more integrated with more----what's the word I'm looking for-- diversity-- far as blacks and whites. But the majority of the white population has left Madison, you know. I say Madison now, our enrollment is probably about 90 plus percent African American. When I was in school, it probably was 75, 70 to 30, 65 to 35 African American to Caucasian. But my father was here it

was majority, I say about 65% Caucasian 30 -35% African American so it's been a transition and the diversity of the school. We had more stores when I was coming up in Madison. You have more right across from you. We didn't have the gas station, it's on Seventh Street. But across from that was a Dairy Queen. So, I told you when I was in fourth or fifth grade (Louis Bayer)? (Elementary School) if you had money or your grades were good, you were able to go and if you sent the school permission letter you can go to lunch at Dairy Queen for lunch time. They had some kind of full meal deal. You get a cheeseburger, fries, drink, and a shake for two dollars, and as a fourth or fifth grader, hey that's a, that's a great deal. And I don't think this generation of parents feel as safe letting their kids out in the streets going different places compared to where we were coming up. You know, I think now you'd be more careful, afraid of something happening to your child hanging out in the neighborhood compared to when I was coming up. We did have violence. But as far as children-wise, your children felt safe. And I don't think these parents are gonna have that same feeling that my child would be safe if they're not at the house. And I think that's a big difference in our community. But I say we knew... most parents knew my mother, knew your mother. Or we know of your mother. And that's what I'm saying about the majority of the families that had children who grew up here. This generation like your mother probably don't know a lot of people her age because she didn't grow up here. So that's the biggest difference. Everyone knew everybody. When you say the Madison, Venice, Brooklyn, that's about a 90% chance you know that family.

[KS]: Well, I want to thank you for coming to the interview today.

[TY]: I enjoyed it. Have a good interview. Thank you!