



LEAD

Journal



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Editor's Note

Happy February Champs!

As Black History Month (BHM) is once again upon us, we're proud of the relentless resolve you bring to the Garden every night!

Your grit and hard work are paying off, and the momentum is building!

A special shout-out to our All-Stars, Captain Jalen & KAT. Welcome aboard Jose and Dillion.

LEAD is also proud our very own ALLAN HOUSTON who is receiving the Jerry Colangelo Award this All-Star Weekend for his exceptional leadership

In this issue we celebrate Black History Month with throwback articles from Allan and Jamal Lesane. We share a feature article on sleep. And we also celebrate Valentine's Day with a special treat from our superstar nutrition team, Erika and Lauren.

Until next time, Keep Rising and Stay Amazing!



Derek H. Suite, M.D. (aka "Suites")
Editor-In-Chief



LEAD



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L

Leadership & Legacy

E

Effort & Excellence

A

Attitude & Accountability

D

Discipline & Dedication



LEAD JOURNAL

Black History Month Feature Article

Playing for More Than the Score

Staff Writer



“ He cut away one word, folded the fabric, dressed, and walked out.”

After the 1939 championship, a New York Renaissance player went back to the locker room and took a razor to his jacket. The patch read “Colored World Champions.” He cut away one word, folded the fabric, dressed, and walked out. The title stayed.

The Renaissance, known as the Rens, and the Washington Bears were among the most dominant Black professional teams of their era, playing outside the leagues that would not have them.

Years earlier in Washington, D.C., Edwin Bancroft Henderson had introduced basketball into segregated Black schools. He believed the game could strengthen bodies worn thin by work and steady young people learning to carry themselves in a country that narrowed their options. In small gyms and borrowed spaces, habits formed. Discipline showed up. Pride had somewhere to stand.

The Rens and the Bears played in ballrooms and church halls where music filled the air between games. Travel meant long bus rides through towns where they could not stop to eat and hotels that would not take them. Every performance shaped how they would be received in the next city.

Most of their games live now in box scores and photographs that require a search to find. The blade in that locker room is easier to picture. They played in buildings that did not want them, ate on buses because restaurants would not serve them, and still returned the next night prepared and composed.

The road changed over time.

The arenas grew, access widened and names on the jerseys became visible in ways theirs were not.

The score always mattered.

So did how they carried themselves when the room was against them.

The stage looks different now. The demand to stay steady hasn’t gone anywhere, and it probably never will.

Been Live: The Starting Five

Featured Article by Suites

Black History Month often highlights moments of courage. Communication. Mindfulness. Accountability. A competitive spirit. Joy.

What built those moments were these.

Communication meant staying connected when families were stretched and communities carried strain. News moved by word of mouth, and opportunity often traveled the same way, so staying linked became a way of staying steady.

Mindfulness looked like composure. When the world felt unpredictable, breathing before reacting and choosing words carefully allowed the next move to happen without panic taking over.

Accountability lived inside close communities where a name carried weight and consistency shaped reputation over time.

A competitive spirit showed up as quiet determination, the kind that kept preparation moving forward even when progress felt slow.

Joy was strength. Music in the house, laughter on the block, celebration woven into ordinary days. Joy kept energy alive.

These values shaped more than survival. They built families, built culture, and carried influence across generations.

Basketball later became one of the places those same traits could breathe.

So when Coach puts those five words on the locker room wall, he isn't creating something new. He's tapping into something that's been practiced for generations, long before this building existed.

That's what you're carrying when you carry these.

They've been live.



The Medical Advantage

Don't Wait. Check In Early.

By Daphne M. Scott, M.D. • Lead Team Physician



As I shared in the last issue, during the winter months, symptoms can start as small as a scratchy throat, a little congestion, or feeling more tired than usual.

Most of the time, it's nothing major, but those early signs are also the easiest to deal with when they're caught early. If something feels off, I want you to know it's always okay to come talk to me sooner rather than later.

Early check-ins aren't about overreacting.

They're about keeping things simple and supporting you before something starts to interfere with your sleep, your energy, or your routine. You're not expected to figure out what symptoms mean on your own or push through something you're unsure about.

That's what I'm here for. And I am always happy to help!

Bringing things up early usually makes it easier to stay consistent, especially during heavy travel stretches and long weeks. I also know real life doesn't pause during the season. Kids get sick. Family members bring things home. That's normal. Staying aware and speaking up early just helps us limit how much that spills into your day-to-day.

If you're ever on the fence, come see me. A quick conversation early almost always makes things easier. Taking care of the small stuff is one of the best ways to take care of yourself over the long season.

Knicks DNA the Return of All-Star Greatness Continues

By Suites



From Rucker Park to the Garden, Knicks' identity has always been shaped by turning struggle into strength.

The Heart of the City: Jalen, KAT & The NYK Squad Building Legacy

For the second time since "Clyde" and Earl "The Pearl" ran the backcourt, the Knicks have two All-Stars. Say their names: Captain Jalen Brunson & Karl-Anthony Towns.

Brunson? A leader in every sense of the word. His footwork, poise, and basketball IQ are straight-up elite. The way he controls the game, makes big plays, and carries himself with that New York toughness—that's why he's got the C on his chest.

And then there's KAT. A dominant force with the kind of skill set big men dream of. He's got touch, power, and a deep bag, and now, he's stepping into the biggest stage of his career—Madison Square Garden. He's home now, and he's hungry.

But let's be clear. This team is more than just two All-Stars.

Every player on this roster is critical to success---grinding, locking in, and doing whatever it takes to win. That's the identity, that's the champion's mindset.

Built on the Shoulders of Giants

This moment didn't happen in a vacuum. It was built on the backs of those who paved the way. Nathaniel "Sweetwater" Clifton was the first Black player to sign with the Knicks in 1950, breaking barriers so future stars could shine.

When Willis Reed limped onto the court in '70, he was embodying the resilience that defines mental toughness and the resilience that defines the black history experience.

That same fire fueled Bernard King's legendary 60-point Christmas Day performance, Melo's 62-point masterpiece, and Ewing's relentless dominance.

The Knicks' 1979 squad made history as the NBA's first all-Black roster. They made a statement. And now, decades later, today's squad is adding its own chapter to the Knicks legacy.

GO KNICKS!



Black and White - Love and Hate

Feature Article by Allan Houston

As with the snapshot of me and my wife, Tammi, below some things are black and white and there is little interpretation needed. They are fairly straight forward.

The term 'black and white' refers to a position, situation or stance that involves 2 defined opposing principles or extremes.

We know however, that when it comes to life and relationships, there is a lot of gray. There are a lot of dynamics between people that aren't so black and white.

When it comes to human history, especially Black History, we cannot avoid the implications of the relationship between black skin and white skin. While the color of our skin is a God-given trait, the matters of the heart are linked to an individual's attitude, experience and perspective.

In other words, the color of our skin is given, love and hate are learned choices!

My view is that the concepts of love and hate **are** black and white.

Love and hate are more than emotions. Emotions are complicated and gray. Love a choices and hate is learned.

They are 2 opposing extremes that we must recognize within ourselves. We must activate love and deny hate. We must intentionally choose love for the sake of our own health, the well-being of our families and our communities at large!

Black history is every day. Love is eternal.





Honoring the Life and Legacy of Dr. Solly Walker

Feature Article by Jaamal Lesane, Esq.

Most people don't know that my Granddad was the first African American player to play at St. John's University. If you Google his name, the story that comes up the most is when Kentucky coach Adolph Rupp said that he wouldn't let Kentucky play against a team with a black player.

When the game finally started, an old lady spit on him as he walked on the court, then he hit 6 out of his first 7 shots in front of fans calling him a "n----r", then Coach Rupp sent in a goon who injured my Granddad and knocked him out of the game for good...Kentucky beat them by 40.

He shared several of those stories with me: the way he couldn't ride in the same train cars or eat in the same restaurants as his teammates, or when they stayed in a "Whites-Only" hotel, how he had to find a local pastor and crash at their house.

I think about him often, but especially during Black History Month. There are so many trailblazers like him that paved the way so that we could have an easier life.

I also think about him when life seems unfair. Here's a dude who slept on a couch, ate bad food, got spit on in front of tens of thousands of screaming racists...and still started the game on fire! I then realize, that maybe things aren't as bad as they seem, and that the best way to honor him, and all of the others who struggled so that I didn't have to, is to put my head down and grind....6 out of 7 style.

By the way, St. Johns saw Kentucky again later in that season, and beat them to go to the Final Four!



Defensive Intelligence

by Roderick Williams, Director of Team Security & Logistics



Situational Awareness — The Mental Touch

Mental toughness must be a part of our daily lives, but in athletics, it is absolutely essential—especially when paired with situational awareness. Together, they give athletes a critical edge.

Situational awareness is the ability to recognize, understand, and anticipate what is happening around you. This includes the environment, the people involved, and the events unfolding in real time. Whether on the court, in the locker room, or in everyday life, situational awareness allows you to make smarter, faster decisions.

When the “mental touch” is applied to situational awareness, its true power is revealed. A key component of mental toughness is recognition—knowing when it is time to dig deep and rise to the moment. This skill becomes most important during hard-fought contests, when fatigue sets in and everyone is tested. At that point, talent is equal, energy is low, and the difference between winning and losing often comes down to mindset and desire.

Athletes must constantly read and understand their environment. You may be competing in a hostile arena or navigating a challenging situation off the field. Awareness of your surroundings—and the people in them—helps determine how you respond. Just as a coach adjusts strategy and personnel based on the moment, you must adjust your approach depending on who you are with and what the situation demands.

Situational awareness, combined with mental toughness, prepares you to perform under pressure.

Always stay aware. Always stay ready.

And especially in moments that demand strength of mind, remember that mental toughness is not optional—it is required.

Here’s a revised version that keeps the tone aligned with LEAD Journal, elevates the follow-up workshop, and reinforces that the G League matters deeply within the organization.

NEXT UP - THE “G”

Same Language. Same Standard.

The Power of Words – Follow-Up Workshop



Staff Writer

Earlier this season, the Westchester Knicks spent time with Allan and Suites exploring identity, language, and what it means to stay grounded while chasing opportunity. Out of that work, each player selected a word, not a slogan, but a personal anchor.

A word that reflected who they are, how they want to show up, and what they need to remember when the work gets heavy.

Last month, those words were introduced as galvanizing commitments for the year.

Last month, Allan and Suites returned for a follow-up workshop. The purpose was simple: revisit the words, examine whether they still felt true, and deepen the commitment behind them. It was an awesome meeting of the minds.

Each player spoke openly about his word. What it has meant in real time, where it has been tested and how it has held up.

Words like Trust. Belief. Consistency. Joy. Surrender. Faith. Patience. Discipline. Humility. Purpose were just some of the words we discussed. They are simple on the surface. But in a performance environment, they carry weight.

Trust has meant committing fully to preparation even when minutes fluctuate.

Belief has meant staying steady after missed shots and quiet stretches.

Consistency has meant showing up with the same professionalism whether starting or coming off the bench.

Joy has meant reconnecting to the game when pressure tries to shrink it.

Surrender has meant releasing outcome anxiety while staying locked into execution.

Patience has meant understanding that development unfolds on its own timeline.

Discipline has meant honoring habits when no one is watching.

Humility has meant staying teachable while still knowing your value.

The follow-up session also introduced a second layer: the shadow word.

For every galvanizing word, there is often an opposite force that quietly works against it.

When a player chooses Trust, the shadow might be Hesitation.
When the word is Belief, the shadow can be Fear.
When the word is Patience, the shadow often shows up as Self-Criticism.
When the word is Joy, the shadow can be Pressure or Comparison.

The room became honest.

Players spoke about the shadow words that creep in after tough stretches, fluctuating roles, or uncertain timelines. They shared insights about how those shadow forces can distort perspective and tighten the body before the mind even recognizes it.

The depth of reflection was remarkable. The awareness was mature ,and the ownership was real.

The session sealed in the power of the original words.

What emerged was recommitment and clarity. We all left with a renewed understanding that identity is not something you perform when things are going well. It is something you return to even when they are not.

The words remain inside each locker as anchors. Quiet reminders of who they really are beyond the numbers.

Different paths and shared commitment under one roof.

The “G” is the place where identity is forged, language is sharpened, and standards are lived daily.

Westchester’s Words still stand.

And now, they stand stronger.

Between Games

NYK DAD ZONE



Every moment we get, we're all the way in

The schedule is relentless. Road trips, back-to-backs, appearances, and upcoming playoff stretches that blur the weeks together.

And somewhere in the middle of all of it...telling a bedtime story over FaceTime. Catching a first step you on video. Hearing a voice that says daddy and doesn't know what conference standings are.

The men in this building who carry both the weight of the job and the weight of being present. And you don't always get seen for it. The work happens in between. In the early mornings before shootaround, the calls from the hotel room. In the promise to show up and the effort it takes to keep your promise.

Black fatherhood has always looked like this. Not the version that gets talked about, but the one that's been lived. Steady hands, quiet consistency and showing up repeatedly when it matters most.

To the fathers in this house--players, coaches, staff--the game asks a lot. So does the role you carry when you leave the building.

You're holding it down. We see you!

Choose Your Heart this Valentine’s Day....

The Benefits of Dark Chocolate

By Erika Whitman, Director of Sports Nutrition
Lauren Duffy, Team Nutritionist



Erika



Lauren

Valentine’s Day is known for roses, hearts, sweet notes, and, of course, chocolate. The good news? Choosing dark chocolate can be more than a delicious indulgence; it has several significant health benefits, so you can stay on top of your game and not miss a dribble.

Dark chocolate made with at least 70% cacao is rich in flavonoids, antioxidants that help support heart health by increasing blood flow and promoting blood pressure. These compounds also help protect cells from everyday wear and tear, giving your body a little extra love.

Another Valentine’s Day benefit? Dark chocolate encourages the release of serotonin and endorphins, the feel-good chemicals good for stress reduction and a little extra mood boost .

Other health benefits of dark chocolate include decreasing inflammation to aid recovery and support brain function. It also contains important minerals such as iron (increases blood flow and oxygen delivery to muscles), magnesium (promotes melatonin production, making it a great nighttime snack – just be aware it also contains small amounts of caffeine), and zinc (improves immune function and wound healing).

Try putting dark chocolate squares in the freezer for an extra crunch or make a mousse (recipe below!) and pair

Dark Chocolate Mousse

Ingredients

- 3 large eggs, separated
- ¾ cup plain non-fat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup light brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp flour
- Pinch fine sea salt
- 1 ½ cups dark chocolate chips (at least 70%)

Instructions

In a small saucepan, whisk together egg yolks, Greek yogurt, brown sugar, flour, and sea salt. Place over low heat and cook, stirring constantly, for 5 minutes or until the mixture has thickened slightly.

Remove saucepan from heat and allow to cool slightly, about 2 minutes. Add the chocolate chips and stir until they melt into the egg yolk mixture. Set aside to cool.

In a standing mixer, whip egg whites to stiff peaks. Slowly drizzle in melted chocolate mixture, folding carefully as to not deflate the egg whites. Fold until combined.

Pour mousse into 8 small ramekins, then refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.

Can store in refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Enjoy!





SLEEP ISN'T JUST YOUR SCORE

Hidden factors that Affect Your Recovery

You know sleep matters.

What you might not know is why the best habits sometimes don't work, or why you can do everything right and still feel like crap the next morning.

Here's what's really going on.

The 7 Drivers of Sleep

1. Nervous System Game ends at 10. Body still wired at 2. That's physiology, not weakness. It can be retrained through breathing work, HRV training, or wind-down protocols.
2. Environment Light, sound, temperature, timing. Your body's circadian system responds automatically - you don't get a vote.
3. Dose & Timing Sleep is medicine. Too little, mistimed, or fragmented sleep limits restoration. Sleeping 9 hours from 4 AM to 1 PM doesn't restore you the same way 11 PM to 8 AM does - your body has an internal clock, not just a sleep quota. The goal isn't a ring score. It's waking up RESTORED - mental clarity, physical readiness, stable mood.
4. Load Under the Surface Stress, injury, contract pressure, family strain. Sleep can't fully compensate when the load underneath is too heavy. You can't out-sleep stress that never lets up.
5. Sleep Pressure Tracking obsessively. Chasing perfect numbers. Guilt when routines slip. That tension makes sleep harder, not better.
6. Switching Off Is a Skill Elite performers switch on easily. Switching off requires practice. Example: 4-7-8 breathing (inhale 4, hold 7, exhale 8) before bed. Repetition builds the skill.
7. Travel & Rhythm Travel disrupts deep and REM sleep. Short trips compound. Random naps and caffeine don't solve it. The body needs anchors - light exposure, consistent meal timing, strategic movement

What This Means

You don't fix all seven. You fix the one blocking everything else.

Wired at night → Nervous System
Travel fatigue → Travel & Rhythm
Chasing scores but tired → Dose & Timing
Life load too heavy → Surface Load
Anxious about sleep → Sleep Pressure
No shutdown routine → Recovery Skill.

When to Reach Out

If you're addressing these and still struggling, talk to me or Dr. Scott. Sometimes there's a medical layer underneath - sleep apnea, clinical insomnia, injury pain, or something else habits alone won't fix.

Many of you know me from mental performance. I also specialize in sleep as performance medicine.

No judgment. Just solutions.

Suites

7 DRIVERS OF RECOVERY

Which one shows up most for you?



Wired

Still alert long after the day ends?



Environment

Light, sound, and timing shape how deeply you sleep.



Dose & Timing

When you sleep matters as much as how long.



System Load

Ongoing stress keeps the body slightly braced.



Tracking Tension

Chasing perfect sleep numbers can create pressure.



Switching Off

Turning off takes as much skill as turning on.



Travel Rhythm

Travel quietly shifts deep and REM sleep.

Most people don't need to change everything.
They need to notice the bottleneck.

If one of these resonates, let's talk.

Suites

Black History Month Poem

Been Live

For the fathers. For the mentors. For the ones who built it before it was televised.

Before the bright lights,
it was live.

Concrete heat
Chain nets singing
Ball off brick, quick slick backspin whisper.

Pressure in the air
Rent due
Shoes thin
Still hooping.

Fence line fathers posted up
Uncles with the quiet nod
Coach say one word, work
and that's law.

Handles tight
mind right
park lights buzzing past midnight.

Every crew touched the rock
left sauce in the crossover
steel in the shoulder
calm when it's colder

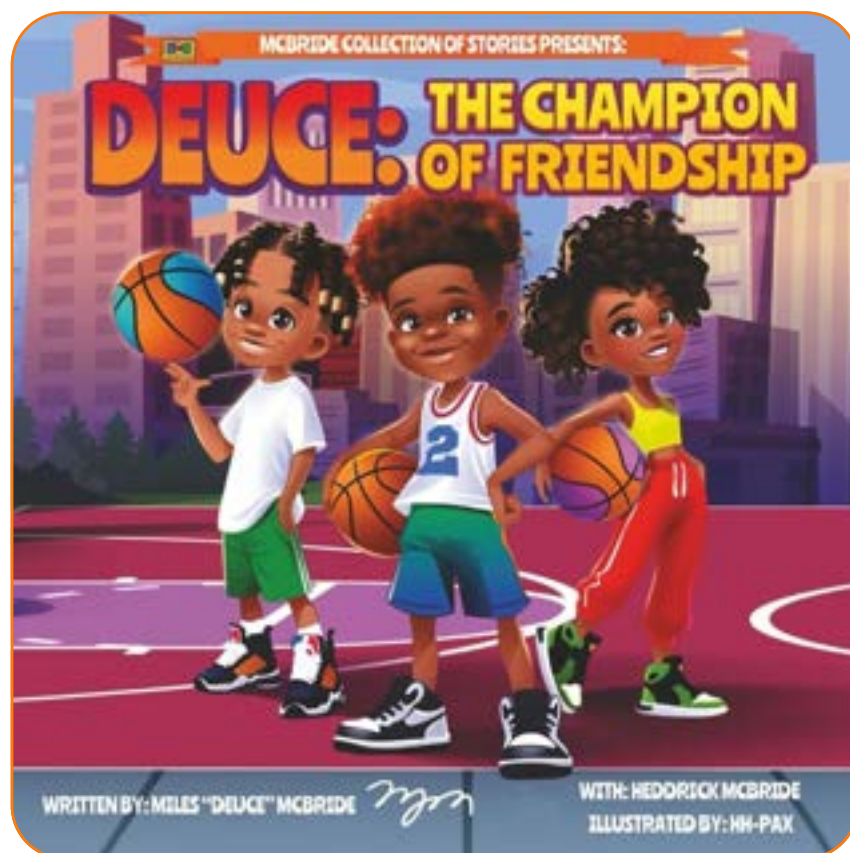
This history don't hang on walls
It runs
It drums
It hums in your chest when the clock get small.

Step between those lines, feel it...

Been live
Still live.

Suites

The Culture File

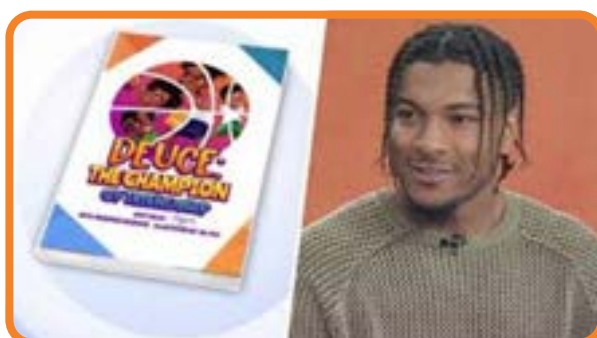


Reading Deuce: The Champion of Friendship during Black History Month reminds us that courage is more than just showing up to compete.

It's also about standing up for someone who feels left out.

Through a simple, relatable basketball storyline, the book celebrates friendship, inclusion, and the kind of leadership that lifts others up. What makes the story resonate is how Deuce models quiet strength, choosing empathy over ego and connection over comparison. The court becomes more than a place to score points; it becomes a space to build character.

The message lands clearly: greatness is not measured only by talent, but by how you make others feel when the game is on the line. Deuce shows that leadership can be steady, kind, and brave all at once, and that might be the most championship quality of all.



The Culture File

Building BELIEF * FREEDOM * FOCUS

From Inner Excellence by Jim Murpy

Three words.
One progression.

BELIEF

Trust your preparation.
Trust your work.
When results swing, your foundation doesn't.

FREEDOM

When belief is steady, hesitation drops.
You move instead of think.
You react instead of brace.

FOCUS

Lock into this possession.
This rep.
This defensive coverage.
Nothing else earns attention.

What Disrupts It?

Default thinking under pressure:

- Overthinking
- Negative framing
- Judgmental self-talk

That's the leak.

The Quick Reset

One breath.
One cue.
One next action.

Belief rebuilds through action.
Freedom returns when judgment drops.
Focus sharpens in the present.

That's Inner Excellence.

