

# Getting to Know Coach Tom!

The 2024-2025 season marks the 28<sup>th</sup> season 5<sup>th</sup> grade assistant boys Coach Tom McConnell has been in the hearts or in the presence of the Campbell Junior Basketball program. Coach Tom has had 2 sons (Kendrick and Kelvin) participate in this middle school program where they worked for fundamental reinforcement at a highly successful level.

Born in Riceboro, Ga., Coach Tom began his basketball career in Rochester, New York at the age of 12, shoveling snow to play at times when the Baden Street Settlement Recreation Center was closed. While growing up in a single parent home, Coach Tom became friends with local players and worked out as a teammate of future St. Bonaventure's Hall of Famer and Philadelphia 76er draftee **Glenn Hagan** and in the summer of his junior year of high school.

As a senior at High despite a reserve role as called him reached the year.



Edison School Technical and Vocational few starts, Coach Tom played mostly in a scorer off the bench. His teammates "McAdoo" and "Big Mac". His team state section 5 elite 8 during his senior

During summer visits to spend time with relatives in the south and after his high school career was done, Coach Tom decided to try out for basketball at Southern University. With a limited role as a reserve on the JV team, Coach Tom decided to concentrate on getting his degree in Communications as his undeveloped ball handling skills would not allow him to gain significant playing time in a guard heavy program. During his 4 years at Southern, there were 4 players drafted into the NBA.

Moving to San Diego California with a job offer after graduation with his wife to be allowed Coach Tom to continue to live his basketball dream. Coach Tom worked from '79-'83 as a photographer for the San Diego Clippers and worked out regularly with **Lionel Hollins**, **Michael Cage** (San Diego State, OKC Thunder Announcer), **Greg Kelsner** (Michigan State, Detroit Pistons Announcer), **Jim Brogan**, **Tony Gwynn** (San Diego State, San Diego Padres), **Zach Jones** and **Bob Carrington** (Boston College) among others.



Shortly after the Clippers moved to Los Angeles, Coach Tom began to referee basketball at the insistence of his pickup ball friend **Bob Carrington**, who traveled the same path after his release from the Clippers. Within 3 years he was being assigned games by **David Libbey** as a D1 official.

Moving to Atlanta after a 10-year vacation in San Diego with his wife and 2 young sons gave Coach Tom the opportunity to get his sons involved in sports. Coaching became his steady focus as he helped develop his youngest sons' (Kelvin) skills as a shooter. Kelvin competed on the circuit against **Kevin Durant** (Phoenix Suns), **Brandon Jennings** (Knicks), **Dwight Howard** (Hawks), **Chris Allen** (Michigan State), **Chandler Parsons** (Grizzlies) and **Andrew Goudelock** (Rockets) among others. His son **Kelvin** won a national 3-point shooting contest on the AAU circuit. After being scouted by **Reggie Theus**, **Billy Donovan**, **Pete Babcock** as well as college interest from Arizona State, Wofford, Tulane, Presbyterian, New Mexico State and other smaller schools, **Kelvin** was given the opportunity to stay home and walk on at Kennesaw State. At the completion of his career, he had amassed 1,000+ points and became the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading 3-point scorer in the history of the school. He now trains with Nike basketball and produces music.



**Q – What other Coaching experience does Coach Tom have?**

A – Having mentored and or coached HUNDREDS of Campbell basketball players, including current 5<sup>th</sup> grade boys head coach **Levi Walden**, (whom he will offer his experience to), Coach Tom was the program director at Osborne for a number of years and Coached future college stars **J.T Tiller** (Missouri) and **Garrison Johnson** (Jackson State) while at Osborne. While on the AAU circuit with his son, Coach Tom was the first coach for Richmond Spider Hall of Famer **Kevin Anderson** and Duke Tight End **Austin Kelly** (current WNBA Connecticut Sun lead assistant Coach).



**Q – What is Coach Tom’s Coaching philosophy?**

A – Coach Tom’s focus is **complete** player development and fundamentals. Coach Tom looks around and sees players moving in from other countries with a focus on fundamentals and hard work. “Quite frankly, they are taking spots away from players who are athletes only or are afraid to challenge themselves at higher levels”. After playing in and officiating thousands of games, Coach Tom realizes what it takes to be successful. It is the basics -- passing, teamwork, character, good judgement, respect and especially a **true** love to compete and dedication for the game that accompanies athleticism and focused conditioning.

Defense is really a priority for Coach Tom. There needs to be even more effort put on defensive fundamentals for a player to have success as they advance in their journey to be the best complete player that they can. “You don’t have to be sick to get better.” **Nick Saban**, 4 Time National Champion Alabama Football coach said. When you are playing **Playstation5**, the next **Steph Curry** is in the gym. If you can’t guard your position on defense, the end of the expectation runway will come quickly.

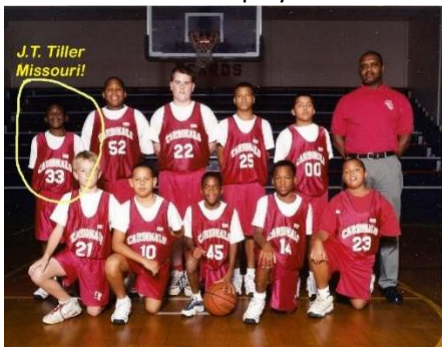
**Q – What satisfies Coach Tom the most about the game?**

A – As with life, being able to see the results of hard work, dedication and focus payoff in terms of improvement. Everyone wants to think that they are elite. But not everyone will put the work and the focus in to make enough of a difference in that direction. There are many players who only can do one thing. Complete players make sustained efforts and contribute on the floor in more than one area. I love teaching young players areas of the game where they can contribute and add on to their game. This is done in practice with the proper fundamentals and repetition.

At the middle school and high school levels, video analysis is so important to player development. It gives a player the opportunity to see what is being said and show growth when the opportunity to perform comes around again. The best players with the best future LISTEN, LEARN, and give their best effort in practices and in the classroom as student athletes.

**Q – At this level, what should players focus on?**

A – Academics **MUST** be number 1. I will really focus on academic progress and get bi-weekly reports for the duration of the season on each player. I coached a player a couple of years ago at Campbell who won a CCJBC Championship but hasn’t put on a Campbell uniform yet at the highest level because of academics. Help yourself now with your academic priorities. Sit in the **FRONT** of classes so that you are not distracted and soak up as much as you can.



Character also plays a huge part on our teams. Being a good teammate should be a focus. On the teams that Coach Tom is a part of there is winning, learning and having fun while building lifelong relationships.

**Q – What can you expect from Coach Tom?**

A – On our team there will be great things taught that can help you in the future. Coach Tom also has plenty of contacts at higher levels that could work to your benefit if you work hard enough! Justin Young and Junard Hartley of Hoop Seen ask him for recommendations all of the time. If Coach Tom sees potential and serious hard work, he can help steer you to an appropriate radar at the next levels!





