

Shut Up and Dribble?

Creek Basketball says 'No thanks'

BY RAEGAN KNOBBE

Sports Editor



“There comes a time when **silence is betrayal**”
-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Arden Walker (left) and Julian Hammond
PHOTO BY RAEGAN KNOBBE

In 2018, conservative pundit Laura Ingraham told NBA superstar LeBron James to “shut up and dribble.” James refused to shut up about racial injustice, and you can be sure senior basketball players Arden Walker and Julian Hammond will also have something to say.

Arden Walker, varsity football’s highly-recruited defensive tackle, is also the starting power forward for the Bruins basketball team. Julian Hammond, the accomplished starting quarterback and starting shooting guard, has recently committed to play basketball at the University of Colorado.

These high-profile athletes are taking cues from stars like LeBron James and planning to use their platforms to promote change in the Creek community.

“In the Black community we look up to [Lebron James], and for him to speak out on racial injustice in America, that’s powerful,” Walker said. “We look for him to do it because there are a lot of athletes that don’t do it.”

Colin Kaepernick began kneeling during the national anthem at NFL games to protest police brutality and racial injustice in 2016. Senior Amanda Ampiah, President of the Black Student Union, remembers this moment.

“It’s important to speak about racial injustice because it could happen to me or my family members,” Ampiah said. “That’s why it hugely impacted me, and him raising awareness about the whole situation is spotlighting or highlighting things that go unnoticed in this country.”

Hammond also remembers Kaepernick kneeling, and he agrees that athletes should fight for what they believe in because you never know who you might influence to create change.

“There’s no reason why anybody - [no matter] how big or how small the stage is - shouldn’t be able to stand up for what they want to stand up for,” Hammond said.

People who disagreed with Kaepernick kneeling argued that athletes should “stick to sports,” but that comment strikes Walker and other athletes as ignorant.

“We’re human too,” Walker said. “That’s the reason why people like Lebron are speaking out - because we’re humans, we’re included in this situation. The people who say [“stick to sports”] - it’s an ignorant statement to me because they basically labeled me as just an athlete, and we’re more than just athletes.”

Varsity Boys Basketball Head Coach Kent Dertinger wants to help his athletes keep racial justice issues and the Black Lives Matter movement in the forefront of people’s minds.

“I know it’s something that my coaching staff and my players have talked a lot about,” Dertinger said. “Our goal is to be there to

support our players, our community, and a cause that we believe in.”

But Black Lives Matter is not the only movement in America. All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter also have many supporters. Hammond is frustrated with these two movements because he wants people to understand what it really means to support Black Lives Matter.

“You can’t argue something that you would never have to deal with,” Hammond said. “Of course every life matters, but when one part of the community is needing more healing than other parts, that’s the one you want to attend to, so to me it feels like it’s a counter way of saying ‘oh you guys are focusing in on you.’ And with Blue Lives Matter, you shouldn’t be killing cops, that’s an obvious thing, but I feel like it’s just to say something in response to go against Black Lives Matter.”

There is still uncertainty about the 2020 basketball season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but what we know for sure is that Walker and Hammond will be doing something to protest racial injustice.

“During the national anthem we can all lock arms, both teams, to show unity,” Walker said. “We’re showing that there’s no division. We’re all together.”

Hammond added that he is “not going to stand for the national anthem.”

The two athletes have the support of Athletic Director Jason Wilkins.

“I think it’s been really good for athletes in general to use their platform and to speak out about racial injustice,” Wilkins said. “There’s been a lot of solidarity that’s come about. That has been a real positive.”

The Varsity boys basketball team also wants to make warm-up shirts that say Black Lives Matter or another phrase that shows solidarity. Walker was thinking about adorning the warm-up shirt with the name Elijah McClain, the 23-year-old

Black man who was stopped by three police officers in Aurora in 2019, put in a chokehold, and declared brain dead three days later. He was “a part of our community,” Walker said.

But no matter what the warm-up shirts end up saying, the end goal is the same: to keep Creek talking about racial injustice and to improve the community.

“By the time that we are able to play the game, I hope it sends a message to the people at Cherry Creek because there’s probably some people who are ignorant to this idea, or they have a different belief,” Walker said. “But I feel like my voice, and my other teammates, is powerful enough to create a movement or change.”

“When one part of the community is needing more healing than other parts, that’s the one you want to attend to.”

-Julian Hammond