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Players have a ball at NFL Youth Clinic

by Lanaly Cabalo - THE GARDEN ISLAND

Posted: Thursday, Feb 08, 2007 - 10:05:29 pm HST

San Francisco 49er Jeff Ulbrich lined the kids up on both sides of him.

"What does a linebacker do," he asked them.

They all took a guess at it, to which he responded: "We do everything. Most importantly you've got to stay low. And why do you have to stay low? Because you can't move if you're standing up like this," he said as he straightened himself out.

The former University of Hawai'i linebacker was one of several National Football League players and cheerleaders participating in yesterday's NFL Pro Bowl Youth Clinic at the Vidinha Stadium. There were approximately 300 Pop Warner players and cheerleaders attending. A handful of high school players from Kaua'i and Kapa'a High School also turned out for the clinic.

"The kids are so enthusiastic about being here and they're so willing to work with us here," Ulbrich said.

This was his second time conducting the youth clinic on Kaua'i.

"I've conducted camps on the Mainland and they're not as enthusiastic or as humble as the kids here," he said. "It's much more fun working with these kids."

Also in attendance were brothers Maake and Chris Kemoeatu of the Carolina Panthers and the Pittsburgh Steelers, Jacksonville Jaguar Nick Sorenson, Miami Dolphin Channing Crowder and former University of Hawai'i guard Jacksonville Jaguar Vince Manuwai.

Former Miami Dolphin Nate Moore assembled more than 50 football players to hold these clinics throughout the state.

"You must ask questions," he said as he addressed the mass of attendees. "If you don't ask questions, they won't know what to help you with."

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American Idol is down to nine contestants. Kauaiworld users predicted Chris would go. Who's your favorite this week?

Gina Glocksen

Haley Scarnato

Blake Lewis

Jordin Sparks

Lakisha Jones

Chris Richardson

Melinda Doolittle

Phil Stacey

Sanjaya Makikar

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Lihu'e Patriot Travis Kim attended the youth clinic for the first time.

"I play tackle," he said. "I heard it was fun and I wanted to learn more about football... and to see the NFL players."

Parent Bridget Pacleb was tipped off about the camp from another football mom who said the youth clinic was good for the kids. Pacleb brought her son, Chaz, who plays for Kapa'a Pop Warner, to the camp so he can get more football experience.

"He's not sure what position he wants to play yet, so hopefully he can get some advice on where he should go," she said.

But it wasn't all about the football players, the cheerleaders got a treat, too.

Koloa Pop Warner cheerleaders Tailee Brun, Casey Aguano, Amanda Limpert and Tianne Castillo were among the lucky attendees who participated in the opening ceremonies, giving the NFL pros their lei.

"It's fun and you get to learn new cheers," said Aguano.

This was Miami Dolphin cheerleader Stephanie Hautman's first trip to Hawai'i and her first time participating in the clinic.

"The reward is the excitement you see from the kids," Hautman said. "(The clinic) gives them a taste of what they can do in the future."

She and the other cheerleaders taught the girls a cheer and a dance routine.

The clinic was set up through a partnership between the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and the NFL. Each island was responsible for taking care of its respective clinics. The County of Kaua'i and the Kaua'i Economic Development Board took care of this one.

"I think it's a been a good thing for us," said Mattie Yoshioka, chief executive officer for the KEDB. "This really is a day for the kids. These players send a really strong message about staying in school, about staying away from drugs. These guys are good role models for them."

The attendees were split up into groups and at the horn, rotated from one NFL player to another. The players signed autographs for the kids and spent a few minutes doing drills with them.

In the end, Kealoha Furneux reminded a friend and fellow attendee of what the youth clinic was all about.

"It's not about the signatures," he said to his friend, "It's about what you learn from them that counts."

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