

Noted basketball coach Ken Carter to speak at St. Thomas Feb. 23

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St. Paul, Minn. -- A coach who became famous for locking his undefeated high school basketball team out of the gym because of poor grades will speak later this month at the University of St. Thomas.

Ken Carter, whose life was chronicled in the 2005 film "Coach Carter," will speak at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23, in the auditorium of O'Shaughnessy Educational Center on the St. Paul campus of the University of St. Thomas.

His talk, "Average is Just Not Good Enough, Period," is free and open to the public. It is sponsored by the University Lectures Committee at St. Thomas.

He will talk about accountability, integrity, teamwork and leadership both on and off the basketball court.

Carter was a successful businessman when in 1997 he accepted the head coaching job at the Richmond, Calif., high school. He had a monumental task. The students were failing academically at an alarming rate, and the athletic programs were in a pathetic state. Within two years, he helped turn the school around, cleaning up trash, graffiti and drug dealers.

The coach had each member of his team sign a contract that spelled out rules of conduct: treat others with respect; shun drugs and alcohol; sit in the front of class and participate; wear a suit and tie on game day; and maintain at least a 2.3 grade-point average.

He came under fire in 1999 for what became known as "the lockout." Although his team was undefeated and headed for the state play-offs, some members weren't living up to their contracts. Carter sent a powerful message when he locked the entire team -- including his own son -- out of the gym and forced them to hit the books. Academically solid players tutored weaker ones, and the whole team improved their grades.

Carter later was praised for his efforts and has received a host of awards for his efforts to promote well-rounded priorities for student-athletes. In 2002 he carried the Olympic torch for the Salt Lake City Olympics. Now coaching a championship team in the sport of SlamBall, he is an author and owns Prime Time Publishing and Prime Time Sports. He also chairs the Coach Ken

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Carter Foundation, a nonprofit organization that promotes education and mentoring programs for minority youths.

More information is available at Carter's Web site: <http://coachcarter.com/>