

## Teaching the young

# USW's 1st basketball camp concludes

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Coaches (left to right) Eddy Martinez, James Voight and Joe Batyko award medals to attendees of Voight's basketball skills camp, which concluded Wednesday morning at University of the Southwest's Jack & Mabel Maddox Student Life Center in Hobbs.

It's summer in New Mexico, and that means hot. Not exactly a time of year when a lot of people's minds are on basketball season.

But, a group of just over 30 basketball players ages 8 through 15 thought otherwise. For the past three days they were attendees of the Coach James Voight Basketball Skills Camp at University of the Southwest's Jack & Mabel Maddox Student Life Center in Hobbs.

Students from Hobbs and from as far afield as Denver City, Artesia, Roswell and Hondo came out to the camp in the hopes of developing new skills, and building on existing ones.

"It went very well," said Voight, the USW men's basketball head coach. "It's probably the first time USW's actually had a basketball camp. I played here and we didn't do it, but I was a part of T-birds camp when we'd have it at NMJC. It's a great time for us to try to get into the community of Hobbs, and work with the youths and teach them basic fundamentals and concepts of basketball. We had over 30 campers here, and that was good for us for the first year."



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Zariah Waldron, 8, of College Lane Elementary School gets congratulated for earning a medal on the last day of the Coach James Voight Basketball Skills Camp Wednesday.

“I think it went real well,” said Eddy Martinez, who will be part of Voight’s staff this year after spending a decade as a Hobbs High assistant basketball coach. “We got a lot of one-on-ones, we had multiple coaches at each basket, the kids got age-appropriate drills. We split it up by age, so we had the smaller guys getting to work on one basket, then the middle-of-the-pack drills, and then the older, more advanced kids got to do a little more advanced concepts, so they got a lot of reps, they got a lot of age-appropriate reps, and we had good numbers. So I thought it was a pretty good week.”

The numbers were relatively good considering it was the first Mustang camp. But also relatively small compared to

more established camps, which was a plus not a drawback. Voight estimated that a Hobbs High camp might draw as many as 300 kids some years, 100 or so for an NMJC camp. “They’re getting a lot more one-on-one here,” he said.

And they had plenty of opportunities to learn.

“Really, how we structure our camp – it’s 8 (a.m.) to 12 (p.m.), so it’s four hours,” Voight said. “But the first hour and a half to two hours is really the meat. We had six different stations that they would do daily as far as skill work, and we would hit 15 minutes a station. And that really helps them grow their game. We’re promoting the game of basketball; it’s more than rolling a ball out. And this camp *was* more than that.”

Not that all the important instructions occurred in the early stages of the camp.

“The third hour we spent with competitions such as hot shot, free throw competitions,” Voight said. “We would play some king of the court with rules, and then the fourth (hour) we would let them scrimmage. But **from PAGE 7** just getting the basic concepts and fundamentals for the kids I thought was the best takeaway of this camp.”

Those fundamentals are more obviously important, and more crucial for some older kids than a lot of people might think.

“When they get to the high school level they still struggle,” Martinez said, “with simple wrap-around passes and simple basic moves.”

So Martinez thinks those fundamentals are good to emphasize at camps.

“Simple ball-handling, simple passing,” he said. “A lot of kids don’t enjoy that stuff, but that’s probably the most important stuff.”

By camp’s end, the attendees seemed to be absorbing the fundamentals, and everything else being taught.

“I think they took it in really well,” Voight said. “Especially our younger ones, our 8 to 10s. The first day when we had them play at the very end, it looked more like rugby than actual basketball because everyone runs toward the ball, but they became able to break down simple defensive drills and things like that. We did a thing where they would have to play tag with their partner so that they knew there was more spacing to basketball, and it looked a lot better when everyone wasn’t just running at the basketball.”

The attendees made use of their time by asking questions.

“There were a lot,” Voight said. “The older group, a lot of things were like footwork-type stuff, when we’re triple-threat and we’re jab-stepping downhill instead of side-stepping or having to zero-step and things like that. ... We were teaching them those types of concepts. They were used to doing it from one way because that’s how they get their shot off, maybe left-right into their shot, but they didn’t understand the concepts of why we’re going right-left, and that’s what we were teaching.

“So,” Voight added, “there were a lot of good concepts that they took away from this camp.”