

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Once Disgraced, Mike Rice Finds Redemption in Youth Basketball

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By WILLIAM C. RHODEN MAY 29, 2016

1 NEPTUNE, N.J. — Mike Rice was waiting outside the blue warehouse where he works as the director of team tournaments for Hoop Group, putting on high school and Amateur Athletic Union basketball tournaments.

2 He had put in a full morning and was preparing for a full afternoon and evening
3 in the big business of youth basketball.

3 The college basketball season may have ended last month on Kris Jenkins's dramatic winning shot for Villanova. But for Rice, the former Rutgers coach, that ending was the beginning of an all-important second season: recruiting season.

4 Rice's career nearly disintegrated three years ago when a widely viewed
5 videotape showed him cursing Rutgers players, throwing balls at them and using homophobic slurs. Rice became the face of coaching abuse, and he was fired.

5 For most of his career, Rice was involved in the demand side of the college basketball industry. He was an assistant coach at Fordham, Marquette, Niagara, Chicago State, St. Joseph's and Pittsburgh. Then he became the head coach at
15 Robert Morris in Pittsburgh, his hometown.

6 For the last three years, Rice has worked feverishly in the ever-expanding supply side of the college basketball industry, putting on camps, A.A.U. tournaments and workout regimens for players who range from elementary school to high school.

7 The day we met was typical: morning practice and workouts at the Hoop Group training facility, then an evening workout with middle school players. On Friday, Rice flew to Anaheim, Calif., with Team Rio, an elite 15-and-under A.A.U. squad, for a four-game tournament.

8 The supply side of the industry has sustained a coach like Rice in a way that might have been impossible a decade ago.

9 In addition to his work at Hoop Group, he is a coach for the Patrick School in New Jersey, the coach of a top A.A.U. team and the coach of his son's and daughter's A.A.U. teams.

10 "This has given Mike a platform to stay involved with basketball," said Rob Kennedy, the president of Hoop Group. "Years ago, he may have had to completely change course and go into some other line of work."

11 This will be Hoop Group's 54th summer of basketball camp in the Poconos.

12 The group was founded by Kennedy's parents as a weeklong instructional camp. Now Hoop Group has expanded from instruction to elite camps. It also runs some of the biggest A.A.U. tournaments on the East Coast.

13 There are tournaments for high academic performers who want to be recruited by Ivy League programs and other similarly selective Division I schools. There are the tournaments coming up in July for elite players looking to compete for schools in Power 5 conferences.

14 There are also showcase tournaments coming in July that cater to players bound for junior college.

15 The industry has provided a safety net for coaches like Rice.

16 Meanwhile, Rice is busy on the all-consuming supply side of the industry, a side driven by the dreams of children — and the hopes of parents — to play for their high schools and, if things work out, at the college level.

17 Rice said he was part of the “basketball events” management business.

18 “I laugh at that,” he said. “You never heard of anything like that when I was growing up.”

19 Rice grew up in Pittsburgh and spent time in Youngstown, Ohio, where his father was the basketball coach at Youngstown State. When he was a junior in high school, he began to play with an A.A.U. team made up of players from the Akron-Youngstown area. They played teams from Columbus.

20 “At that time, only the best players would be chosen for the teams,” Rice said. “Nowadays, there are millions of grass-roots basketball teams, and they’re all different levels.”

21 “This has definitely been good for the business of basketball and, to an extent, great for producing battle-tested young players used to top-flight competition.

22 “The best players playing against the best players is never a bad thing,” he said.

23 But what about the soul of the youth industry?

24 There has been mounting criticism of the A.A.U. system.

25 “The negatives are lack of loyalty, no patience, players who switch A.A.U. teams at the drop of a hat.

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Article Analysis

"Once Disgraced, Mike Rice Finds
Redemption in Youth Basketball"

1. Based on its use in the fourth paragraph, the word "disintegrated" means
_____.
2. Which line implies that Rice's actions/behavior affected his reputation?
3. Based on its use in the first paragraph on the second page, the word "feverishly" means
_____.
4. Look back at the article's title. Based on the story, how would you define "redemption?"
5. According to the article, how did Mike Rice redeem himself? Use text evidence to support your response.