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Business: D1 Sports stocks and breeds athletes

By Jennifer Bardoner
Community News Writer

At D1 Sports, athletes comprise the clients, staff and even owners. Those looking to become the athletic superstars of tomorrow have the opportunity to be guided by former players of the game while working out next to some of today's sports icons.

"A Super Bowl MVP liked it so much he bought half the company," said Cos DeMatteo, coordinator for the Chattanooga location.

He's referring to Payton Manning, who co-owns three of the seven locations. According to Mr. DeMatteo, money isn't the only thing Mr. Manning puts into these facilities, often coming into train during the summer. He said Mr. Manning made eight to ten unannounced appearances last year.

"It's neat for the kids to get to see that Payton and Eli Manning are doing the same things they're doing day in and day out," Mr. DeMatteo said.

What they're doing is working to increase their speed, strength and agility, the key components of any athlete. With young, developing athletes as its target market, those qualities also make up the roster of D1 Sport's mission statement. On Commons Boulevard just behind Hamilton Place, D1 offers serious athletes as well as those who just enjoy the game a place to get faster, stronger and more agile.

The boxy, nondescript aluminum building gives no clue to the impressive displays of athleticism that take place inside. Only after entering what looks like an airplane hangar posing as a workout facility does the picture begin to develop. Standing on the half-length, turf football field, the thundering drones of industrial fans become the wild screams of imagined fans.

"No other facility in the area offers that," Mr. DeMatteo said of the program. "You can go in



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and lift weights, but they're not going to get you quicker and faster."

Through a combination of cardio and strength activities, children age seven and up work with personal trainers in groups of no more than six per professional to develop these athletic abilities. With classes for three different age groups meeting five times a week, Mr. DeMatteo said these children have a chance to find out what they're really made of in a safe environment.

For those looking to prove what they've already got, D1 opens its doors twice a year to Prep Champs. This recruitment program is free to students and colleges. Similar to an NFL Pro Day, the students are taped performing a series of basic drills. Colleges then scout them online via prepchamps.com.

Through its sponsorship by Reebok, the program allows more kids and schools to come in contact, providing otherwise often unrecognized opportunities for non-MVP athletes as well as smaller schools with no recruitment money.

"If you just really love football, there's a place in college," said Kevin Fitzgerald, Prep Champs' director of athletics.

Even those who have already made it out of college but remain young at heart can stay on top of their game with the executive class that more closely resembles a small circuit exercise class. Those looking to get back into the game of life after an injury can work personally with a physical therapist on staff full-time and trained by the Center for Sports Medicine.

No matter what the goal, the effect of working toward it is the same.

"It's a great character building thing," said Mr. DeMatteo. "Any time you exercise and get in shape, you feel better and have more confidence. It is fun but hard, but there's a sense of accomplishment after you're done with it. I encourage everyone (to come in)."

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D1 Sports is located at 7430 Commons Boulevard. Call 499-9818 or visit www.d1sportstraining.com for more information. To learn more about Prep Champs, a free online college athletic recruiting service, visit www.prepchamps.com.

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