

# Tucker

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to call it."

Neale was 24 years old at the time.

The following summer, Midpark head coach Duane Sheldon hooked Neale up with his gym, and Neale put on a basketball camp.

"I think we had about 35 kids," he laughs. "It was fun."

Neale now runs eight Score More camps per summer. His final camp of the year, for girls, is taking place at the Omni Fitness Center in Middleburg Heights.

"We worked with 850 kids, both boys and girls," Neale says.

Neale's home bases are the recreation centers in Strongsville and Westlake, Omni and St. Columbkille. He also runs a camp in Norwich, N.Y., not far from the Colgate campus.

During the winter, Neale takes on 40 players of all ages along the North Coast.

"I work for an hour a week with each of them," he says. "That's a pretty good 40-hour week. I let the coaches handle them in terms of the team and what they need them to do. I work on individual skills and some of the mental approaches to the game."

In addition, Neale is the executive director of SMAC (Score More Athletic Club), a non-profit organization which sponsors travel basketball teams for boys and girls in the Greater Cleveland area.

"When we started three years ago, we had nine teams," Neale says. "Then it jumped up to 24 teams. Now, we sponsor 36 teams for players in grades 3-11, with 23 boys teams and 13 girls teams. We have about 400 kids in the program."

Brett Larrick, who played for Elyria and the College of Charleston, calls Neale, "the hardest working guy in the business." Larrick works with Neale at his camps.

"Tucker has some real good drills, and he has a great way of bringing enthusiasm to kids," Larrick says. "He knows how to teach shooting."

Neale's reputation is spreading.

He has been tutoring NBA 7-footer Calvin Booth for three years. The two work out together for 10-12 hours a week.

"This summer, Calvin has been working on improving his ability to face the basket," Neale says of Booth, who played at Penn State and for the Dallas Mavericks before signing with the Seattle SuperSonics last week. "I've been working with him on the jab-step series, air dribbles . . . teaching a big guy guard skills. The guy can shoot the ball well from the outside."

Neale also worked with former Kansas player Kenny Gregory, who went unselected in the NBA draft.

"Kenny came for a while this summer," Neale says. "He needed some work on his shot."

Former St. Edward player Steve LePore, who sat out last season after transferring from Northwestern to Wake Forest, also works with Neale in the off-season. So does B-W junior guard Johnny Carroll.

"They're all coming over tonight to play Nintendo," Neale laughs. "Calvin, his cousin, Steve, Johnny, (former Walsh Jesuit player) Nick Catanzarite. The whole gang."

"We're going to play Madden football."

Neale credits his father, Jim, a former star at Rhodes High School, with creating a love for the game of basketball.

"My father was always my shooting coach, no matter if it was in grade school, high school or college," he says. "If something was wrong, he could find it and help me fix it. He helps me out a great deal, going to high school games around the area and finding things about a kid's shot when I can't find it."

"I hope to someday say that I'm as good a shooting coach as he is."