

## HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING



COURTESY

The author competes in a triathlon.

## Mentoring on the move

BY ANDREW BROOKS

Special to the Daily Sun

I've spent a good chunk of my life not in Flagstaff, but this mountain town is my hometown and, happily, my home once again. I am a graduate of Flagstaff High School (1997) and Northern Arizona University (2001).

After the tragedy of Sep. 11, 2001, I enlisted in the Army and spent 22 years on active duty. When I retired from the Army, my wife and I decided to take a year sabbatical and drive around the country and run a half-marathon in each state. After completing our 50 half-marathons in all 50 states, we moved back to Flagstaff last year and have immersed ourselves back into the local running community.

While jumping in with the various groups here, I ran into one of Flagstaff running's leaders, Neil Weintraub, who founded the Northern Arizona Trail Runners Association (NATRA). I have been enjoying his community of runners and especially like when the crew wanders down to Sedona for runs in the winter.

Recently, becoming an empty nester, with our oldest child study-

ing in Australia and our youngest child in the Army, I decided to take on a Little Brother Big Sister organization. I was matched with a 14-year-old named Eli who loves distance running. Despite hardly being a teenager, he has already completed an ultra-marathon. While I have only known Eli a couple of months, I not only admire how he is an exceptional athlete, but also how much he enjoys going to the YMCA, playing instruments and singing.

In the past few months, I have introduced Eli to a variety of local running groups: the Monday night Beer Runners' group, the Wednesday night Peak Trail Runners' group, the Thursday night Run Flagstaff group and the NATRA group. Typically, Eli and I choose one run a week to go to. We mix up the terrain, distances, locations, and speeds. No matter which group we are with, Eli always seems to be at the front of the pack.

He has made such a name for himself already that when I attend a group's scheduled run without Eli, they are always asking about his absence.

Becoming Eli's Big Brother has helped to keep me accountable not only with my own running regimen, but the experience has also helped me to reflect on the importance of being a good role model. There are times when I am mentoring Eli and I find myself trying to be more intentional with regards to time management, healthy habits, good judgement and careful thinking.

Becoming a Big Brother is a responsibility I don't take lightly. While I hope to have a positive impact on Eli throughout his adolescence, I also know the opportunity of being his Big Brother encourages me to be a better version of myself, too. I not only hope to teach him valuable lessons, but also expect to learn quite a bit from him as well.

*Andrew Brooks is a Flagstaff native, Army veteran, Big Brother and running and triathlon enthusiast. He and his wife love being active and participating in the local running groups and races.*

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## FanDuel closing in-person retail betting at PHX Arena

BY TYLER WARGO

Cronkite News

PHOENIX - FanDuel Sportsbook is shutting down its downtown Phoenix location and replacing it with a lounge space.

The gambling company announced the news on a display outside its facility that's attached to PHX Arena. It opened on Sept. 9, 2021, coinciding with the day the state legalized sports gambling in Arizona.

"In-person wagering at the FanDuel Sportsbook located in the Phoenix Suns Arena will permanently cease at the close of business on July 24, as the space is converted to a FanDuel lounge," the display said.

That date is also the last time fans can finalize wagers.

The money generated by the sportsbook is far less than what comes in from FanDuel's website and mobile app, and the facility was more used as an advertising arm.

"(The lounge) still be the same experience, you just won't be able to place physical bets," said Samuel McQuillan, a writer at legal-sportsreport.com

Fans can enter the site from the street or in the arena, walking through metal detectors and scanning their I.D.s before entering.

The facility sports five betting windows, 26 kiosks, numerous TVs and an outdoor terrace, which includes a bar and food menu.

With the gradual takeover of mobile betting, fans have found it easier to bet



TYLER WARGO, CRONKITE NEWS

The FanDuel Sportsbook at PHX Arena opened on Sept. 9, 2021, the same day sports gambling was legalized in Arizona.

on their phones than in person.

The Phoenix Suns will continue to have a partnership with FanDuel. Attendees can still expect to see promotions regarding quick parlays and betting odds at the venue.

"I think we are going to see many of the major operators try to get into the media ecosystem with their own betting advice integrated with the live games," said Joshua Gubbs, an associate professor at the University of New Mexico who researches the impacts of sports gambling.

FanDuel took a big loss during the 2024-25 football season as bettors were winning more than losing, Morningstar.com reported.

Flutter, the owner of FanDuel Sportsbook, had lost \$370 million to NFL bettors.

"FanDuel had a big loss just in September as they took just about \$7.2 million in bets and had to payout up to \$10 million," McQuillan said.

FanDuel Sportsbook changed its rules on betting odds following the losses.

The Phoenix venue wasn't a big revenue

generator.

"FanDuel Sportsbook location at the PHX Arena typically only contributed about 1% of the operator's total Arizona handle for each month," said Robert Linnehan a writer and editor for Sportrader.

FanDuel's own streaming platform, FanDuel Sports Network, gained many subscribers and has partnered with 13 NBA teams, and nine MLB teams.

Arizona has not joined the platform.

FanDuel Sports Network seeks to expand to several other teams while also making its physical location available to in-person bets. McQuillan says that it would be a win-win scenario for PHX Arena and FanDuel.

"I view this as a money-saving move," McQuillan said.

Sportsbooks across the country have appeared in the proximity of live games. FanDuel plans to implement its live betting promotion during live games.

It is unknown if a physical location would come back to support the FanDuel partnership residing in Arizona.

## DeMarre Carroll leading Suns' summer league team

BY HENRY BUCHAN

Cronkite News

PHOENIX - Before DeMarre Carroll was popularly known as "Junkyard Dog" for his fearless approach to guarding the NBA's best, he was just another unproven player clawing for a roster spot in the Summer League. Now, as a Suns assistant and the head coach of the team's 2025 Summer League squad, Carroll returns to where his journey began — only this time, he's the one leading the charge.

Carroll's own path — from late first-round pick to journeyman to respected NBA role player — mirrors that of many young Suns players hoping to earn their place in the league. His connection with new Suns head coach Jordan Ott, who helped prolong Carroll's playing career during their time together in Brooklyn, adds another layer of continuity and trust within the organization.

"I've seen DC in multiple spots, as a player and now as a coach," Ott said. "You're going to see it, you're going to

feel it. When he talks to guys, he has a different way about him. He has a positive outlook on life. ... I'm lucky to have him here. We're lucky to have him here."

Carroll's own coaching journey started just a few years ago as an assistant for the Milwaukee Bucks in 2022. But, his shift in mindset was shaped before that — thanks in part to Ott.

"He was actually my player development guy when I was in Brooklyn," Carroll said. "He helped my career, helped me extend it a little bit longer. ... He gave me a real, genuine conversation.

"You know, every NBA player — when you get to the end — you think you've still got it. Sometimes you've got to help the next generation. He kind of talked me off that limb."

That conversation didn't just help Carroll accept the end of his playing career, it planted the seeds for his transition into coaching.

"It all lined up, right," Carroll said. "(Ott) changed my way of thinking. ... He's thinking outside the box.

I used to be kind of a traditional thinker, but now being around him, you've got to think differently. The NBA changes all the time. He tries to change before it changes."

Years later, that connection with Ott has carried over to Phoenix. Carroll is now taking on a leadership role in the Summer League — a proving ground he knows intimately.

"I just told (the players) there's going to be a lot of information thrown at you in a short period of time," Carroll said. "You're going to make mistakes. You've just got to play as hard as you can. I always live by the quote: 'Hard work is a talent.'"

Carroll once occupied a similar position to many of the Suns' Summer league players: fringe rotation guys, late draft picks and young athletes looking to leave a mark. And with Carroll now guiding them, that shared struggle resonates.

"I'm excited," said Oso Ighodaro, a second-year forward on the Suns. "Anytime you get a vet — a winning

player — that can come back and give more to the game, I'm trying to pick his brain as much as possible."

The Summer League players are learning a lot from Carroll, Dunn said.

"He's a very chill, laid-back guy," Dunn said. "He's also a trash talker, which I like. Him and coach Ott have been giving us tips on the fly."

Carroll is using that credibility to push players such as Rasheer Fleming and Khaman Maluach, an explosive wing and a developing big, as they try to establish themselves in the league.

"Rasheer, he's a freak athlete," Carroll said. "I'm just trying to help him along the path: help him with his shooting, help him understand the game, help him on the defensive side of the ball. The sky's the limit for that kid."

And Maluach? "Khaman's been great," Carroll said. "Even when he's tired, he's communicating on the back line. He's been great for this group."

That's the exact kind of intangible Carroll



PAYNE MOSES, CRONKITE NEWS

Phoenix Suns forward Ryan Dunn, right, practices with Suns Summer League coach DeMarre Carroll at Verizon 5G Performance Center in Phoenix on July 8, 2025.

himself used to build his own career. Ott still remembers how Carroll made himself valuable with his mastery of the little things — cutting, defending, rebounding, doing the dirty work that doesn't usually make highlight reels.

"His path — not only his style on the court, but first-round pick, really didn't get much playing time during his rookie deal. He had to find his own way," Ott said. "Then he was able to have some playoff success, and his career really took off. So his path is easily re-

latable to these guys. ... He took a couple of bounces."

That relatability, coupled with Carroll's authenticity, has made a strong impression in Phoenix. As he prepares to lead the Suns into the Summer League, Carroll is determined to instill the same grit that earned him his nickname all those years ago.

"I know I've been in their position before," Carroll said. "So I just try to tell them: Go out there and compete, be who you are. Just try to play as hard as you can."