

# Omri Casspi brings basketball camp to valley

By Ashley Zeldin | PUBLISHED Jun 21, 2011 | Community

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Playing in the NBA is Omri Casspi's dream come true. And he would like to help make that dream come true for kids. The Sacramento Kings forward is holding the first of what he hopes will be many basketball camps to instill core skills in young players.

“It was a big step for me to make it to the NBA, and now I have the ability to make basketball camps for young kids and share with them my experience playing in the NBA and overseas in Israel,” said Casspi, the first Israeli to play in the league.

Casspi's camp will be held at the Bernard Milken Jewish Community Center in West Hills, running June 27 to July 1, almost two years to the day from when he was selected 23rd overall by the Kings in the 2009 NBA Draft.

The program, for boys and girls ages 10 to 18, is designed to develop skills for all levels through instruction and drills. Athletes will learn individual fundamentals and team strategies from the same Impact Basketball staff who train Casspi and many other NBA players, including Kevin Garnett and John Wall.

“Omri has realized through his years in the NBA and with Maccabi [Tel Aviv], as any athlete would, that he has an effect on kids,” said Joe Abunassar, founder and president of Impact Basketball. “As a young player — a young Jewish player — the message he'd like to give to them is that succeeding is about being focused, setting goals and deciding what you want to do to achieve those goals.”

When he first began training with Impact Basketball in Las Vegas, Casspi attracted a crowd from the local Jewish community.

“I thought, ‘This guy’s very popular,’ ” Abunassar said. “After the session, many kids came up to him and introduced themselves. You see guys just walk out the door, but he was more than happy to take photos and sign autographs.”

Indeed, many professional athletes sponsor camps for young athletes but only make appearances to take photos and sign autographs. Not Casspi.

“I’ll be there from the morning until the last player leaves,” he said. “I’m doing this for a reason: I want to share my experience and work with them to [help them] get better. Everything I’m doing in my basketball career and my life in general I like to do it with commitment.”

Casspi will also run a basketball camp in Israel in July.

“It’s something I’ve wanted to do since the beginning,” Casspi said. “Obviously, me coming from Israel — and no one ever before from Israel has played in the NBA — shows that hard work pays off.”

At the end of July, he will join the Israeli National Team for practice in advance of EuroBasket, the FIBA European basketball championships, in Lithuania starting on Aug. 31.

“We’re in a really tough group,” said Casspi, who has played professionally since age 17. Israel’s group includes France, Germany, Italy, Latvia and Serbia. “We’re ready for the challenge.”

Then, provided the impending NBA lockout is avoided, Casspi will return to the Kings, despite expressing a desire to be traded late last season.

In the meantime, Casspi hopes to encourage young athletes all over to be motivated and play hard in basketball and in life, and he will lead by example.

After all, as he said, “Everything is possible.”

*For more information about Impact’s Omri Casspi Skills Camp, visit [impactbball.com/omri](http://impactbball.com/omri).*

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