

MFF: Former NBA star Kenny Anderson shows the good, bad and ugly of retirement in 'Mr. Chibbs'



'Mr. Chibbs' follows former NBA star Kenny Anderson, center, as he deals with retirement and grapples with the sins of his past as he looks to the future. of Courtesy of Abramorama/BM-G Brokers

'Mr. Chibbs'

Saturday April 29, 2:45 p.m.

Sunday, April 30, 4:45 p.m.

Clairidge Theater

486 Bloomfield Ave.

by Andrew Garda

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Kenny Anderson was an NBA player. Kenny Anderson is becoming a

life coach.

The journey from the first sentence to the second is what “Mr. Chibbs,” a new documentary featuring the transition from professional basketball player to dad, coach and regular citizen, is all about.

Anyone who has followed basketball should be familiar with Anderson. A high school phenom from Queens, New York, Anderson dominated while at Georgia Tech and then played professionally for 15 years, from 1991 to 2006.

Once a guy like Anderson leaves the court, though, we lose track of him. That’s when things can get interesting, and that’s what director Jill Campbell was attracted to.

“I met him 10 years into retirement in a major midlife crisis,” she said. “To see what an athlete actually goes through in retirement and how Kenny really had to reconcile who he was going to be for the rest of his life. I thought it was a really interesting place to start a documentary.”

For Anderson, the movie was an opportunity to help people deal with issues like depression, lack of direction and fatherhood.

“I’m just trying to pay it forward and try to help others,” Anderson said. “And tell people how I felt going through this process.”

What was most important to him was being honest, though, even when that honesty was ugly.

That made things easier – though not easy – for Campbell. Anderson is so engaging that it was hard at times to show him in a negative light.

In one scene in the documentary, Anderson is coaching his son’s South Florida Elite youth basketball team and they lose an important game. Anderson’s reaction is raw, rough and will be uncomfortable to watch for some. Campbell knew it had to be

in the movie – it was too good a moment – but also knew it was a risk because it's not a great moment for Anderson.

In the end, the scene has garnered some of the biggest laughs as the movie has played in festivals. In retrospect, that makes perfect sense, she said.

“It's really real,” Campbell said. “And it's what really happens when you coach.”

As far as Anderson, the coach himself, was concerned, showing the uncomfortable moments was the point.

“I was telling the truth and not sugarcoating it.”

Over the course of the film, which spans four years, Anderson travels and debates whether he will pursue a career in coaching basketball or perhaps move in another direction.

At the time of the film's release, Anderson says he leans much more toward being a life coach – someone who helps people find positive direction in their life while avoiding bad choices. His time talking to young ballplayers while filming made him feel as though his calling should be helping kids avoid the type of pitfalls he fell into.

Anderson knows he didn't have it easy, and knows a lot of children – basketball players or not – have it just as bad, if not worse. If he can help just a few by mentoring them, teaching them or just being a shoulder to lean on,

Anderson feels as though his legacy would be much more important than titles or wins.

It's part of a humble point of view he has begun to cultivate later in life. Even the choice of the title for the movie –Mr. Chibbs – comes from a humble source. That's the name his family used to call him when he was a baby, and his mother would call him when he got a bit too full of himself later in life.

Campbell feels Anderson will be an easy person for audiences to connect with regardless of their background because of how honest he is about his flaws.

“In life we’re all on that journey, all circling, all trying to figure it out,” she said. “That’s why I feel like we can all relate to Kenny.”