

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now Minnesota Now - Boys in Blue follows North High School Football team in Minneapolis 01GNZ54RCDJGY41ANJGT5R7CPV

CATHY WURZER: A new documentary series is putting a national spotlight on a Minneapolis football team. The series *Boys in Blue*, premieres this Friday, January the 6th on Showtime. The series follows the North High School football team during the 2021 season.

[AUDIO PLAYBACK]

- Go!

- I'm a police officer for North Minneapolis and Coach for the North High School.

- Go!

- Kind of weird, but I'm building bonds with police.

- Go!

- I love coaching North, but it's definitely a difficult time right now.

- Go!

- The presence of police creates irreparable harm.

- This council is going to dismantle this police department.

- We've got to
be ready to
fight.

- Before you
judge
anything
about me, get
to know me.

[END PLAYBACK]

CATHY Charles Adams III is the coach of the North High Polars, and he's featured prominently in the documentary. He's on
WURZER: the line with us right now. Say, welcome to the program, coach. How are you?

CHARLES I'm good, glad to-- glad to be here. Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.
ADAMS:

CATHY Nice to hear your voice again. I understand the concept for this documentary is based off of a 2020 *New York Times*
WURZER: column about the team, which is a team of mostly Black student athletes coached by members of the Minneapolis
Police Department. You are a former officer, right?

CHARLES Yes, correct. I was with the Minneapolis Police Department for 20 years. And then now currently, I am the director of
ADAMS: team security for the Minnesota Twins.

CATHY So when this idea of a documentary came up, what did you think?
WURZER:

CHARLES You know, it's kind of funny, because when I initially got the email, I didn't really realize it was Peter Berg. And then
ADAMS: when I got on the Zoom call and I seen his face, I'm like holy smokes, like, everybody knows who Peter Berg is,
especially if you're a football guy. So it kind of blew me away. But I think it was a great opportunity for people to
see, like, the grind of our football program and just see what the challenges that the kids face but still being able to
put out there a good product on the football field.

CATHY Now, for folks who are not familiar with Peter Berg, can you tell us who he is?
WURZER:

CHARLES Well, for the football fans, Peter Berg, anybody that has ever watched *Friday Night Lights*, [CHUCKLES] he's a guy
ADAMS: that's made that. So a lot of our kids reference a lot of the characters in *Friday Night Lights*, specifically, BoobieM
Miles. So anybody that's a football fan that loves movies like that, Peter Berg was the guy that made that happen.

CATHY Yeah, and he is a big deal. So I would think that when you got that email, that means that the actual piece, the story
WURZER: was going to be a good one. What did they focus on specifically, relationships between coaches and the kids, how
the school views the team, the community views the team?

CHARLES ADAMS: Yeah, you know, it's a mixture of that. Definitely how important it is for the relationship with the kids and the coaches but also the unique situation of-- for the most part, we have multiple police officers that are coaches on the staff. I'm no longer a police officer, but when I-- obviously, when I started, being the head coach, I was a police officer. And that kind of drew other police officers in the city and from other departments wanted to coach on the staff as well and be a part of the community. So it really mainly focuses on our relationships but also follows the kids in their day-to-day lives and just kind of individual stories of each kid that was in the program.

CATHY WURZER: What keeps you-- of course, your story is very interesting-- what keeps you coming back to coach?

CHARLES ADAMS: You know, it's just, it's just the drive of being successful and being from this community. I graduated from North High, so I played football just like those kids did. My mother and my father went to North High and my uncles. So it's prideful, like, literally prideful coaching and being successful in that community and with that school.

CATHY WURZER: For folks who might remember this terribly sad story, one of your athletes, Deshaun Hill, was shot and killed last February, and he was just only 15 years old. Because you coach these kids, I bet they feel like your own kids. How have you-- how has the team-- how has the team responded? How have they been since Deshaun's death. And was his death included in the documentary?

CHARLES ADAMS: Yeah. I'm going to let the listeners get an opportunity to tune in and see how things play out. But what I will say is that Deshaun Hill was definitely a focal point of the documentary. And obviously, tragedy hit. And obviously, we did not know that something like that would happen. So it did have to take a turn to kind of focus in on the aftermath of him being murdered.

But you will definitely get a opportunity to see how great of a kid, not just him but all of our kids are and our families. And it just sheds light on just a lot of the stereotypes that people may have. But then, kind of just see firsthand how these kids put things together.

CATHY WURZER: So you've got a chance to see the documentary. Do you think the filmmakers got it right?

CHARLES ADAMS: Oh, yeah, 100%. I mean, like, man, when I first got a viewing of it, and it was probably early this summer, and things weren't all the way put together, Pete Berg said something to me that it really stuck. And he said, this is probably one of the best things he's ever done. And I'm, like, come on, Pete. Like, really? He's, like, no, like, seriously. I think this is some of my best work.

After I've seen it, I was like, oh, huh, this is pretty good. It's very powerful, emotional for us, obviously, just because we're seeing things lead up to our tragedy. But it definitely is-- I think people will really enjoy it.

CATHY WURZER: What do you hope folks take away from seeing the story of the Polars?

CHARLES ADAMS: Well, the biggest thing is just genuine and just being true. And I know that we talk about family and being there for one another. I think it shows that. But it shows how genuine we are as people trying to make sure that these young men succeed. And it's raw, it's with emotion. It's not-- it's uncut. And sometimes, we don't hold back our opinions. And I think it's just true genuine perspective of how things are day to day on the North side.

CATHY A good friend of mine is the Head Coach at Minneapolis South. And we were talking, in the days after the murder of
WURZER: George Floyd, about how hard it was to hold his team together. Because, of course, that happened right in the backyard there at South, practically. How did you hold your team together in the aftermath of George Floyd, of course, given that you're a former officer, and was that reflected in the movie?

CHARLES Yeah, that is. It was reflected in the movie and really, just started from the *New York Times* with Kurt Streeter. When
ADAMS: you talk about post-traumatic stress, you know, I still kind of get-- kind of get emotional about just thinking about that time. Just because I know I have put my family through a lot during that time just because of my mindset and just being afraid, having them being afraid.

And, you know, my wife and kids were restless and didn't know if I would return home and just a lot of emotions with that night. But they kind of do-- we do talk about that. And it-- I mean, but that's the reality. I mean, that's the reality of how things happened. It affected all of us. And I make it known, you know, my displeasure of not being an SRO anymore but using these new opportunities to kind of shed positive light.

CATHY SRO meeting a School Resource Officer.

WURZER:

CHARLES Correct, school resource officer.

ADAMS:

CATHY Mm-hmm. Say, before you go, about a minute left here. This is going to debut on Friday. Has the whole team seen
WURZER: the movie? Are you get together to watch?

CHARLES So we actually were going to get together today to preview all four episodes to the team. I know we did a staff-- We
ADAMS: did it for the staff, school staff on Monday just so that they can be prepared emotionally for the kids just ahead of before they see it. But I think we're going to postpone that til tomorrow because due to the weather. But kids are-- they want to see it. They're anxious, but, you know, they're worried, though, because it's going to be a lot of stuff that they see that is going to probably bring back some things that they don't like.

CATHY But generally speaking, you think that this is a good documentary.

WURZER:

CHARLES Absolutely. I think it's a-- I think it's a great opportunity for the world to see great young men in this Northside
ADAMS: community. And I think it's a good perspective on how important it is to build the relationship between the police and community.

CATHY All right. Coach, I appreciate your time. Thank you so very much.

WURZER:

CHARLES Thank you. My pleasure, appreciate you.

ADAMS:

CATHY I appreciate you as well. We've been talking to Charles Adams III. He's the coach of the Minneapolis North Polars. He
WURZER: is, of course, featured prominently in this documentary that airs this Friday. It's called *Boys in Blue*. It's on Showtime.