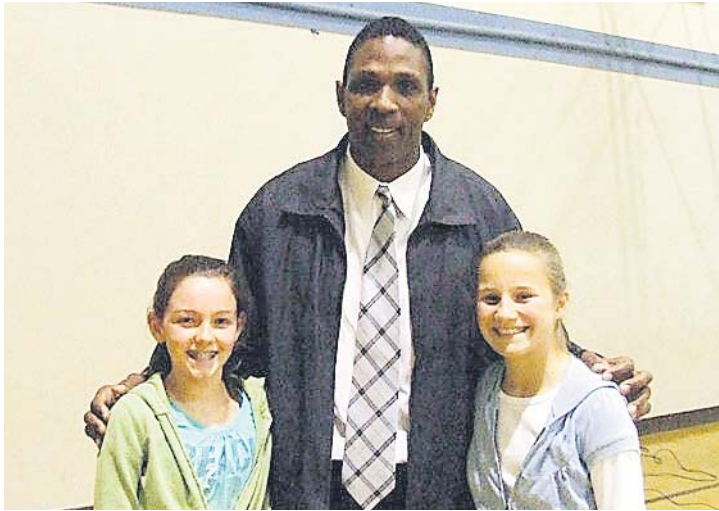


Keena Turner Visits Happy Valley School

By Jean Follmer



Keena Turner with Caroline Newman and Katharine Torchio Photo submitted by Julia Rock

Keena Turner recently visited Happy Valley School as part of its Brown Bag Lunch program. Students in third-fifth grades were invited to listen to Turner speak in the multi-purpose room while eating lunch. The students were clearly excited to see and hear the veteran 49er linebacker speak. One student ran up to him before the assembly and asked, “Excuse me...how tall are you?” Turner smiled at her and replied “I think I’m about six foot two.”

Turner started by saying, “Good afternoon, class. The only way I’d agree to do this is if I could tell you why I’m here. I’m here because school is really important. Everything you hear from your teachers and parents is really important.” At that point, Turner began talking about his career as a 49er. He said “I played for 11 years at the San Francisco 49ers and during that time I participated in and won four Super Bowls.” At that point, Turner removed the Super Bowl ring on his finger and generously passed it around the room for the students to look at.

He went on to talk about his current career. Turner said he was hired 13 years ago by Happy Valley parent Hank Stern to work as a “color analyst” for the San Jose SaberCats. He said the job of a color analyst is to be able to tell other people what just happened and how it happened. He said “John Madden is the most famous color analyst that’s ever been. Then there’s the play by play guy. Both talk the whole game and then talk about

why they lost or why they won.”

He opened up for questions and the first student asked what position he played. Turner told them he was a linebacker and shared the linebacker motto with the students: “It’s better to give than to receive.” Another student asked if he knew Joe Montana. Turner replied he does adding “He’s the best quarter back that ever played.” He also said his favorite player he ever played against was Walter Payton.

Turner said he always wanted to play football. “I was always in sports growing up. I always wanted to play and I got very, very lucky.” He said “The chances are greater that you’ll be hit by a meteorite than get to play (sports) professionally.” He also told the students that the average NFL player’s career only lasts about 3 ½ years. “You can only play as long as your body lasts and as long as they’ll pay you to play.” He then brought the students back to his real message, the importance of taking education seriously. He began playing football at Chicago Vocational High School, the home of Dick Butkus. After high school, he played college football for Purdue University. He was drafted by the 49ers before he finished his college degree. Eventually he “went back to the University of San Francisco to get my degree. I really wish I’d taken advantage of school when I was there.”

After the assembly, Student Body President Katharine Torchio said “I think all the boys and girls really liked it.” Student Body Vice President Caroline Newman backed her up saying “It was really cool to have someone famous at our school.”