

# Former NFL player encourages PY kids to

# READ

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**P**ENN YAN — Tim Green, a former linebacker and defensive end with the Atlanta Falcons and author of about 20 books, spent Thursday morning talking to Middle School students about the importance of reading and education.

Many of the fiction and non-fiction books Green has published focus on football. As part of Green's agreement with the schools he visits, they can buy copies in lieu of paying him an appearance fee.

Penn Yan Middle School purchased 450 copies of "Football Champ," a kids' book that Green published this year. The books were distributed to middle school students in their homerooms.

Thursday, Green told an audience of middle school students and some Academy football players that he writes books to compete with all the entertainment that's available to kids. He goes for short chapters that leave a question at the end, compelling kids to read on.

He compared a good book to a roller coaster, saying it might not start out very exciting — but then, "Whoosh!" If a book doesn't entertain a reader after four or five chapters, however, he

advised putting it down — unless, of course, it's an English class assignment.

He continued the amusement park analogy by comparing books to rides, with some people liking different kinds of rides.

Green also said the football locker rooms people see on TV, with players joking around and getting excited about the game or banging their heads on the lockers, aren't the same as in real life. He compared a real football locker room to a library, saying everyone is just trying to relax in a different way. Green said books were a way to relax and be transported to another time and place with different people.

"So a good book can have that power for you," Green said.

Although he noted his support for Long's Cards and Books in Penn Yan, where the district purchased his books, Green told the students they could go to the library anytime and pick up a book for free.

"That's a place you never have to buy a book to be a great reader," he said.

When kids return books to the library, Green suggested telling the librarian what they did or didn't like so the librarian can direct them to other books they might like.

Following his talk, Green gave



Gabrielle Plucknette / Finger Lakes Times

Tim Green, a former linebacker and defensive end with the Atlanta Falcons, talks to students at Penn Yan Middle School Thursday morning about the importance of reading and education.

kids a chance to ask questions. He said he would also answer any questions e-mailed to him.

When one student asked if Green intended to write another football book, he said the end of "Football Champ" is "incredible" and that the book he just finished — "The Big Time" — will continue where "Football Champ" left off. Asked later if the books, which include "Football Genius" and "Football Hero," were sequels, Green said they have the same characters but can be read in any order or alone and still be understood.

Wrapping up the talk, Green

encouraged kids to pick up a book to exercise their brains and hearts.

"Please go find a book that is entertaining for you, is fun for you and keep reading," he said.

Middle School Principal Rebecca Perrault said Green signed 300 books for students before he spoke and that students can read the books the school bought during their enrichment reading time, work periods or on personal time.

"I think it's an exceptional opportunity to have [someone who] can match education with talents to have a successful life,"

she said.

She said Green was brought in after the middle school faculty and staff saw him at a state middle school conference last year, where Green was the keynote speaker.

Bill LaRock, who coaches the varsity football team at the Academy, said Green is an inspiration who shows the true value of life, which the teachers and coaches try to instill: To be positive and accepting of fellow human beings.

"It was just kind of going along with our entire philosophy," he said.

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Times — 9/25/09