

My name is Mario Jackson and I'm a lifelong Chicagoan. Born and raised on the Southside of Chicago, I grew up in the projects. Playing sports was all we did as kids growing up. Playing basketball, football and softball was part of the norm but baseball was my first love. I played baseball almost every day for years growing up. Little league baseball was the first organized sport team I played on as a kid, and I loved it. I played for a couple years and after aging out I rejoined the team as an assistant coach.

I didn't commit to playing on an organized basketball team until 7th grade, this was the only sport team my elementary school had. During that time I learned the fundamentals of the game and built up my confidence. I attended Wendell Phillips high school where I played basketball, baseball, softball and volleyball. After high school, I worked two years before deciding to go back to school. A childhood friend of mine was enrolled at Malcolm X College and when it came time to register for class he invited me to go with him, just for the ride. While walking through the college, and seeing what they had to offer, I decided to register. I stayed at Malcolm X College for a year and half and I learned a lot. With a 3.4 grade point average, I decided to apply to four year colleges. I attended Chicago State University where I earned a Bachelor of Science in business administration with a concentration in finance. During my time at Chicago State University I learned a lot, made new friends and had a lot of fun. I participated in many different organized groups, including the National Association of Black Accountants and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.

After taking years off from playing basketball, I decided to coach it. This happened after I was asked to assist in coaching my son's youth team back in 2012. Since then, I've been coaching youth basketball. My goal has always been to teach our youth the fundamentals, show them how basketball can open their lives up to more than what they see in their communities.

As Program Director of the IDM Panthers, I supervise all aspects of IDM's traveling basketball program. IDM is a non-profit charitable organization that provides services to youth from disadvantaged communities in Chicago and surrounding suburbs. The IDM Panthers have five teams based on grade level in school (5th-6th, 7th-8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th -12th). The program is seasonal, March through August of every year. All grade levels participate in AAU sanctioned events. My responsibilities include scheduling and approving schedules completed by other coaches, supervising a staff of seven coaches, and ensuring that all coaches comply with the guidelines of the NCAA certification process which includes annual licensing.