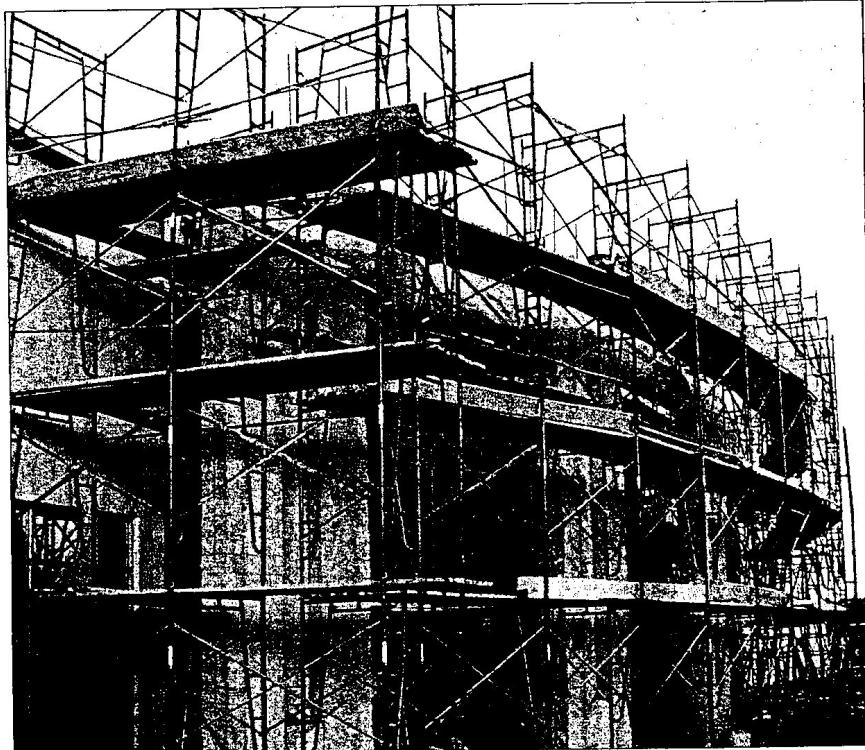




Local

HAMPTON



Boo Williams says his Sportsplex will be ready for its grand opening in March. PHOTOS BY DAVID SQUIRES/DAILY PRESS

Boo Williams Sportsplex races toward completion

Former Gov. Doug Wilder and other luminaries are expected to be on hand when it opens March 11.

BY DAVID SQUIRES

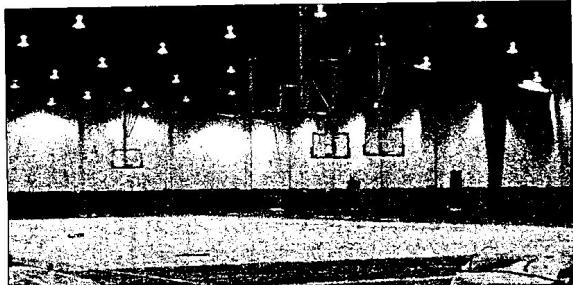
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HAMPTON — It's well known that Boo Williams can attract and mold some of the region's best high school talent into a championship team.

It's also true that Williams brings together some of the best talent in the country for his annual invitational basketball tournament.

Now he's putting together an all-star lineup for the March 11 grand opening of the Boo Williams Sportsplex in Hampton.

Nike executives, former Virginia Gov. Doug Wilder and Charlotte Bobcats owner Bob Johnson — founder of the BET television network — are among the guests for the invitation-only grand opening of the \$13.5-million 135,000-square-foot facility.



Basketball is just one of the activities that the Sportsplex will host.

The venue at North Armistead Avenue and Hampton Roads Center Parkway opens for competition March 12 with city recreation league basketball with city recreation league basketball championships. An official public grand opening will be scheduled later, Williams said.

Williams, whose summer basketball program is sponsored by Nike, said Jordan Brand Vice President Howard White, a Kecoughtan High graduate and longtime adviser to

basketball legend Michael Jordan, will be among the Nike executives on hand.

So too will former college coach George Raveling, Nike's global basketball sports marketing director.

Williams also has invited former North Carolina State women's basketball coach Kay Yow, who has battled cancer in recent years. "We

Please see SPORTSPLEX/B2

Ritchie-Curbow is the General Contractor for this Team Build Project slated to open March 11, 2008.

Ritchie - Curbow
Construction Company, Inc.

► **SPORTSPLEX** Continued from B1

Started summer program in 1982

know the Nike executives will be here," Williams said this week. "Howard (White), he'll be here, but I'm hoping to get Bob Johnson."

He also plans to invite Bobcats President Fred Whitfield, a member of Jordan's inner circle since his college days. Jordan is a minority owner of the Bobcats.

"I don't think I can get Michael (Jordan)," Williams said, "but I'm definitely hoping to get Bob Johnson."

Marcellus "Boo" Williams, 48, a Hampton native who played college basketball at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia and professional basketball in Europe, is a longtime advocate for youth sports. He currently is the AAU chairman of boys basketball.

Williams started his summer basketball program in 1982, patterning it in part after the Sonny Hill League in Philadelphia, which he observed while in college.

He pulled together the Sportsplex in a partnership with local investors and in conjunction with the city of Hampton. The venue will be the largest sports complex between Washington, D.C., and Greensboro, N.C., Sportsplex officials say.

"We're very excited about the Boo Williams complex in the city of Hampton," Mayor Ross A. Kearney II said. "Marcellus Williams is a pillar of strength in the Hampton community, not only as an athlete but as a businessman and citizen."

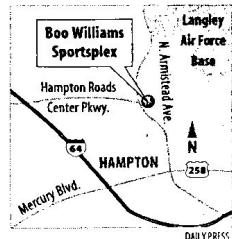
"This complex will be an economic engine for AAU competition and will affect the entire Hampton Roads region. I'm very excited about this facility."

City officials have said the venue could have an annual economic impact of \$1 million.

Although the ground-breaking ceremony was just last May, Williams says the opening is right on time. In addition to his summer league, Williams coaches an elite basketball team that through the years has featured a number of blue-chip prospects — Allen Iverson, Alonzo Mourning, Joe Smith — who have gone on to play professional basketball.

The showcase for his team, in addition to summer tournaments, is the April Boo Williams Invitational that features some of the top talent in the country.

In recent years, invitational participants have included Kev-



Boo Williams Sportsplex

135,000 square feet • Opens March 11

- 8 tournament play basketball courts
- 12 competition volleyball courts
- 8 competition indoor hockey fields
- 200 meter, six-lane indoor track with IAAF Certified synthetic surface, long jump, pole vault, triple jump and shot put
- Playing pavilions that are 64,000 square feet and 31,000 square feet

Features

- Computer scoring
- Retractable bleacher seating for up to 4,000
- Banquet room
- 2 training rooms
- High-speed Internet access
- Speed and conditioning center
- Hours of operation
- Open 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- 363 days a year. Closed on Christmas and New Year's Day.

Contact information

- Boo Williams direct line 757-825-0253
- boowilliamsportsplex.com

source: boowilliamsportsplex.com

in Durant of Washington, D.C., and Spencer Hawes of the Seattle area — each of whom left college early to play in the NBA.

Williams' invitational boys tournament, which has grown from four teams to 96, will now be played entirely in the sports complex.

The 192-team girls tournament, which starts up a week later, will be played in part at the Sportsplex but will continue to use local gyms.

The venue will also be used for a wide range of other sports and activities, including volleyball, track and field, field hockey, soccer, lacrosse and gymnastics.