

Chapter 11 - Anthony Ianni



Anthony Ianni

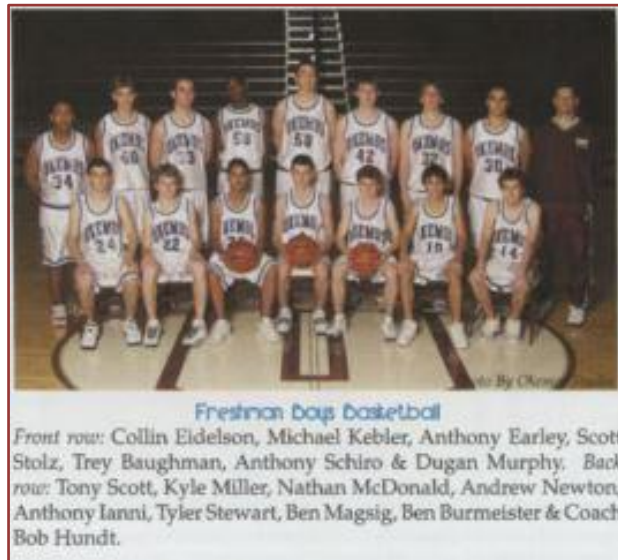
Personal

Anthony J. Ianni was born on January 10, 1989, the son of Gregory and Jamie Ianni. Ianni comes from a family of collegiate athletes: his father played baseball at Michigan State and has been the university's deputy athletic director; his mother played basketball, volleyball and softball at Adrian College; and his sister, Allison, played volleyball at Pacific and Michigan State.

Okemos High School

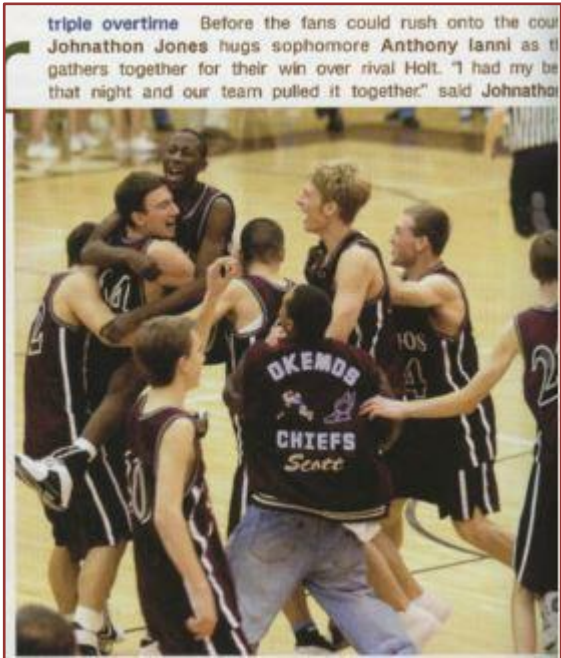
2003-04

As a freshman, Ianni played on the freshman team that went 15-5.



2004-05

As a sophomore, earned Varsity Most Improved Award, contributing to a squad that posted a 16-5 record.



triple overtime Before the fans could rush onto the court, Johnathon Jones hugs sophomore Anthony Ianni as they gather together for their win over rival Holt. "I had my best game that night and our team pulled it together," said Johnathon.

L	Sexton	58	63
W	E Lansing	34	30
W	Everett	66	56
W	Jackson	67	58
L	Waverly	65	73
L	Holt	69	78
W	LCC	59	56
W	Eastern	78	52
W	G.Ledge	67	38
L	Sexton	77	82
W	E Lansing	63	42
W	Everett	62	61
W	Jackson	75	69
W	Holt	93	87
W	Eastern	76	39
W	G Ledge	62	53

2005 Okemos Yearbook

2005-06





Regular Season

On December 6, in a nonconference game, Okemos defeated **Howell**, 79-48, with Ianni scoring 13 points on six baskets and 3-6 from the stripe ([Source](#)).

On December 9, Okemos topped **Waverly**, 76-64. Ianni scored four points on two baskets ([Source](#)).

On December 13, Okemos beat **Grand Ledge**, 64-54. Ianni notched six points on two baskets and 2-2 from the stripe ([Source](#)).

On December 16, Okemos downed **Sexton**, 58-45, with Ianni scoring four points on two baskets ([Source](#)).

On December 20, Okemos scored a nonleague win over **Mason**, 60-32, with Ianni scoring seven points on two baskets and 3-6 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 29, **Buena Vista** fell to Okemos, 73-62, with Ianni scoring 14 points on seven baskets ([Source](#)).

On January 6, Okemos toppled **East Lansing**, 55-38, with Ianni scoring three points on a basket and 1-2 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On January 10, in a nonleague game, Okemos (8-0) defeated **Hartland**, 73-35. Ianni scored 12 points on four baskets and 4-5 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 13, Okemos left **Everett** in the dust, winning 81-49, the win keeping the Chieftains unbeaten (9-0, 4-0) and tied with Holt atop the Capital Area Activities Conference Division 1. Ianni contributed four points on two baskets ([Source](#)).

On January 20, Okemos (10-0, 5-0) topped **Jackson**, 63-41, with Ianni sinking seven baskets for 14 points ([Source](#)).

On January 23, Okemos (11-0) defeated **Lansing Catholic**, 70-58, with Ianni tossing in 14 points on six baskets and 2-3 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On January 27, Okemos (11-1, 5-1) suffered its first loss of the season to **Holt**, 65-60. Ianni scored two points on a basket ([Source](#)).

On January 31, Okemos (12-1, 6-1) defeated **Eastern**, 70-53, with Ianni scoring six points on two baskets and 2-6 on free throws ([Source](#)).



2006 Okemos High Yearbook

On February 3, Okemos (13-1, 8-0) squeaked past **Grand Ledge**, 54-51, with Ianni racking up 11 points on four baskets and 3-4 from the stripe ([Source](#)).

On February 7, Okemos (13-1, 8-1) defeated **Sexton**, 64-56, with Ianni scoring two points on one basket ([Source](#)).

On February 10, Okemos trounced **East Lansing**, 65-34. Ianni's two baskets scored a total of four points ([Source](#)).

On February 14, Okemos (17-1, 10-1) downed **Everett**, 63-52. Ianni scored six points on three baskets, helping to keep the Chieftains in a first-place tie with Holt in the CAAC-1 ([Source](#)).

On February 17, Okemos (17-1, 11-1) notched a 75-60 victory over **Jackson**. Ianni's 11 points came on four baskets and 3-4 from the stripe ([Source](#)).

On February 24, Okemos (18-1, 12-1) beat **Holt**, 56-49, to avenge the Chieftains' only loss of the season. Ianni scored nine points on four baskets and 1-3 from the stripe ([Source](#)).

On March 3, Okemos (19-1, 13-1) defeated **Eastern**, 83-63, to win the CAAC-1 crown with Ianni scoring nine points on three baskets and 6-9 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

Scoreboard			
W 64:54	Grand Ledge	L 60:65	Holt
W 58:45	Sexton	W 70:53	Eastern
W 60:32	Mason	W 54:51	Grand Ledge
W 73:62	Saginaw	W 64:56	Sexton
W 48:34	Sexton	W 70:62	East Lansing
W 55:38	East Lansing	W 63:52	Everett
W 73:35	Hartland	W 75:60	Jackson
W 81:49	Everett	W 56:49	Holt
W 63:41	Jackson	W 83:63	Eastern
W 70:58	Lansing Cath.		

Okemos 2005-06 Regular Season 18-1 Record (2006 *Tomahawk*)

Districts

On March 8, Okemos (20-1) downed **East Lansing**, 70-62, in a Class A district game. Ianni contributed five points on two baskets and 1-3 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On March 10, No. 1-ranked Okemos (21-1) defeated **Jackson Northwest**, 52-40, securing the Class A district title, with Ianni scoring four points on two baskets ([Source](#)).

Regionals

On March 14, No. 1 Okemos (22-1) topped No. 4 **Holt**, 62-58 in a Class A regional semifinal, with Ianni scoring six points on three baskets ([Source](#)).

On March 16, Okemos (23-1) won its first regional title as a Class A school, beating **Dexter**, 56-48. Ianni tossed in eight points on four baskets ([Source](#)).



Quarterfinals

On March 21, Okemos (24-1) defeated **Grand Rapids Northview**, 55-47, in overtime in a Class A quarterfinal game. Ianni scored six points on two baskets and 2-2 on free throws ([Source](#)).

Semifinals

On March 24, Okemos (25-1) downed **Orchard Lake St. Mary Eagles**, 57-56, in a Class A semifinal matchup in which Ianni scored a basket for two points ([Source](#)).



Sharing the fun: Okemos' Anthony Ianni jumps into the student cheering section to celebrate with fans after the Chieftains' win Friday.

Final (Championship Game)

On March 25, the Chieftains' season came to an end with Okemos losing, 95-94, in double overtime to **Saginaw Arthur Hill** in the Class A state championship game. Ianni led the Chieftains in scoring with a career high 23 points (on 9-12 field goals and 5-7 free throws ([Source](#))).

Okemos
center has
best game

Career-high 23 points
not enough to help
Chiefs win, though

EAST LANSING — Something just wasn't right with the picture.

Anthony Ianni just had the breakout performance of his career, and yet tournament officials were draping silver medals around Ianni's neck and those of his fellow Okemos Chieftains.

Ianni's career-high 23 points and nine rebounds weren't enough to help Okemos to its first Class A state championship. The Chieftains suffered a double-overtime 85-84 loss to Saginaw Arthur Hill at Breslin Center.

Fighting to hold back the tears and disappointment as cameras flashed all around him, the 6-foot-10 Ianni reached forward and rested a hand on the shoulder of teammate Tyler Stewart.

"It's hard to lose, you know," Ianni said. "I kind of needed somebody to be there, and I've known Tyler a long time."

As a freshman, Ianni had entered the Chieftains basketball program at 6-foot-4. Two years later, he stood six inches taller and weighed at least 15 pounds heavier.

As a sophomore Ianni averaged only four points a game. He nearly doubled that this season, putting up 7.2 per contest.

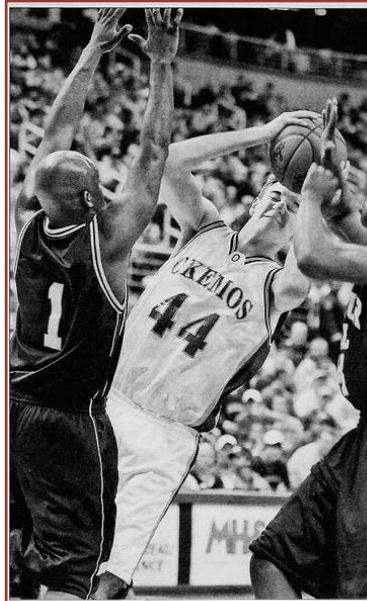
Before Saturday, Ianni's career high was 14 points, which he had in three games this year.

Nobody expected Saturday's offensive outburst. Not even Ianni. So, how did it happen?

Early on, with all eyes on Okemos' star guard Johnathon Jones and Arthur Hill employing a full-court press, Ianni almost became the Chieftains' go-to guy by default.

In the first quarter, while Jones struggled to break free of Arthur Hill's press, Ianni often found himself open beneath the basket. In just three minutes, he scored eight points and grabbed two rebounds, both of them putbacks.

"In a championship game, guys are going to step up," Arthur Hill coach Greg McMath said. "(Ianni) did what he was supposed to do - make layups."



Best game: Okemos junior Anthony Ianni scored a career-high 23 points Saturday against Saginaw Arthur Hill in the Class A state championship game. Still, the Chieftains lost 85-84 in double overtime.

lot."

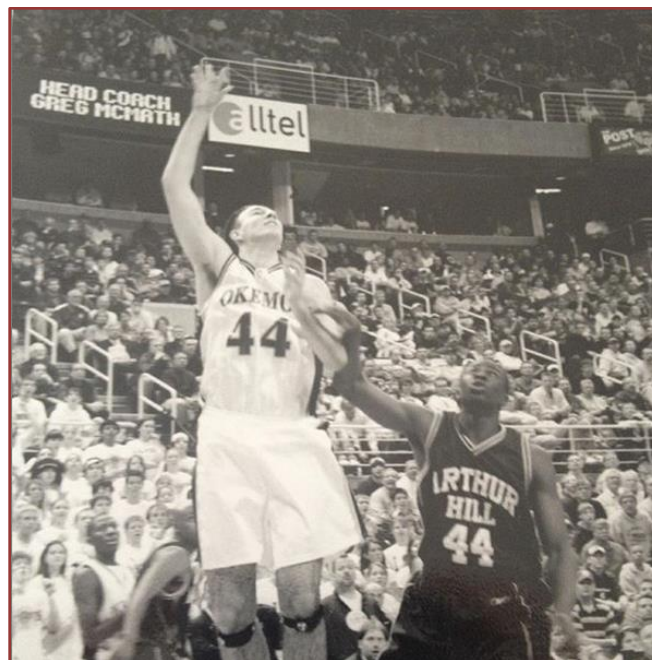
Ianni's contributions were particularly helpful in the third quarter, when Okemos outscored Arthur Hill 23-16 to take a 55-54 lead. Ianni had seven points in the period.

Ianni was still at it late in the game, scoring a combined six points in the two overtime sessions.

Despite his high level of play, Ianni was left hoping that he could have done more.

"It's awesome playing on the Breslin floor," he said. "It could have felt even better if we had won."

For Ianni and the rest of Okemos' junior class, there's always next year.



Ianni Battles for a Rebound

Laurels

As a junior, Ianni averaged 9.5 points and 8.2 rebounds, as well as 3.1 blocks, helping Okemos to a 25-2 record, league championship, and to the Class A State Final against Saginaw Arthur Hill, losing 85-84 in double overtime. He earned All-state honorable mention and CAAC All-league honorable mention. According to Anthony “What you talkin’” Ianni, the season was a “magical ride that nobody will ever forget” (2006 *Tomahawk*). The *Tomahawk* (2006) reflected on this season:

Rarely has there been a team that has sparked so much triumph, love, and personal pride in the hearts of Okemos citizens and students. The Boys' Varsity Basketball season wrote history by being the first team at OHS to make it to the State Championships in the Class A Division. Through sheer determination and talent, the Chiefs pushed a championship rumble to double overtime and created what the Lansing State Journal has called “one of the greatest championship games in Michigan prep basketball finals history.” Despite losing on an arguable technicality, this season was by no means a disappointment. “I couldn’t be more proud,” said Senior Super-fan **Jeff Beck**

2006 *Tomahawk* (p. 59)

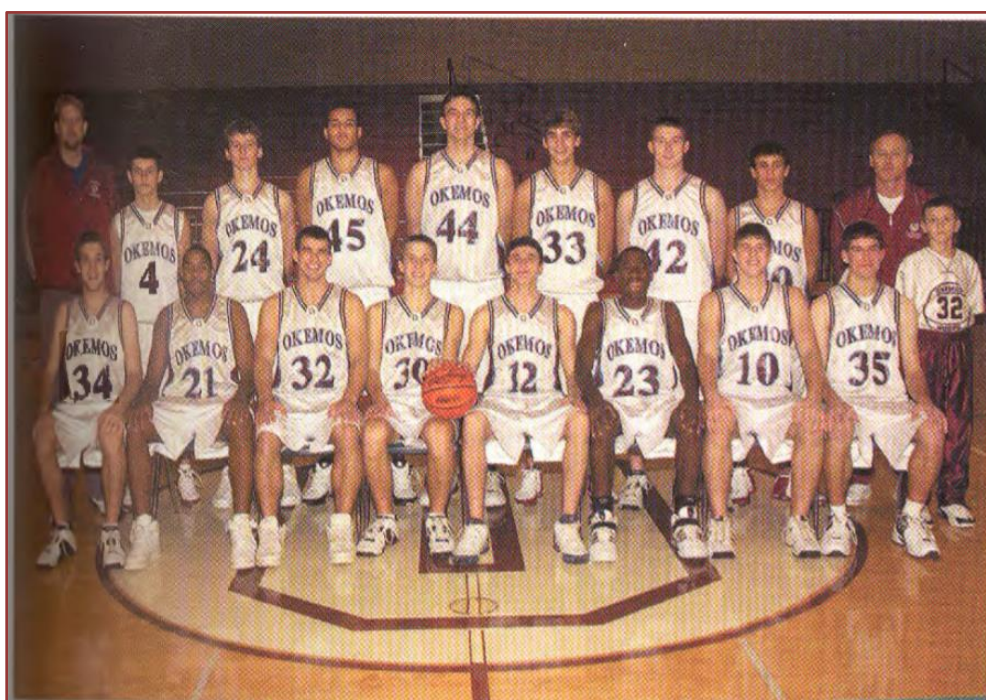


Photo | Okemos Studios

Boys' Varsity Basketball

Front Row: Tom Staudt, Jasper Bibbs, Mike Emerson, Ivan Parker, Dan Hess, Johnathon Jones, Brad Pemble, Bobby Albers **Back Row:** Coach Briggs, Scott Stolz, Mike Kebler, Denny Means, Anthony Ianni, Kyle Miller, Tyler Stewart, Anthony Schiro, Coach Stolz, Brock Edwards

Okemos 2005-06 Boys' Varsity Basketball Squad (2006 *Tomahawk*)

2006-07

In Ianni's senior year, the Chieftains were 17-6 and shared a CAAC-1 tri-championship with East Lansing and Holt.



Regular Season

In early December the *Lansing State Journal* shared its outlook on the Chieftains' upcoming season.

Okemos

- **Last season:** 25-2, first
- **Coach:** Dan Stolz, 13th season
- **Returning starters:** Anthony Ianni (6-10 C) sr., Mike Kebler (6-4 G) sr.
- **Other contributors:** Tyler Stewart (6-3 F) sr., Denny Means (6-6 F) sr., Scott Stolz (5-10 G) sr., Anthony Schiro (5-10 G) sr., Kyle Miller (6-4 F) sr.
- **Outlook:** The Chieftains graduated a ton of backcourt experience and depth from last year's Class A state runner-up. But the front line returns intact, and should lead a team that will improve as the guards gain experience.

On December 5, Okemos notched a nonleague victory over **Howell**, 63-38. Ianni grabbed 11 rebounds and scored 12 points on five baskets and 2-5 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

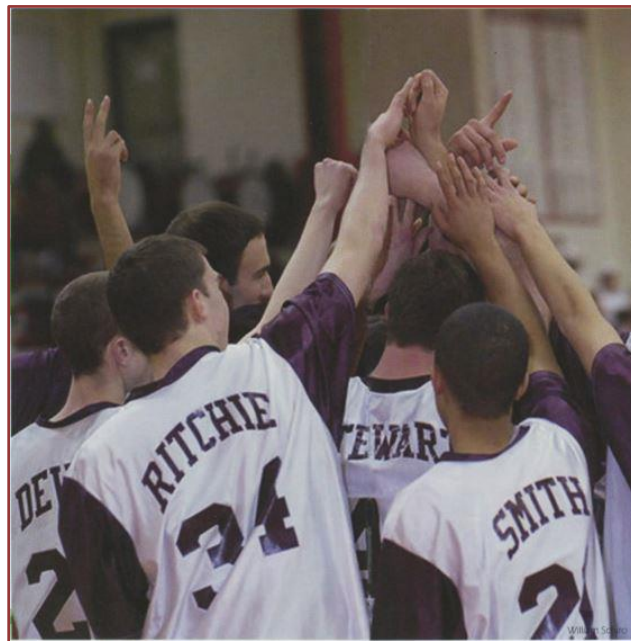
On December 8, Okemos scored its second nonleague victory, downing **Waverly**, 79-43. Ianni had seven points on two baskets and 3-4 on free throws ([Score](#)).

On December 12, Ianni scored 15 points for Okemos (3-0, 1-0) in a 63-55 in a CAAC-1 victory over **Grand Ledge** ([Source](#)).

On December 14, Okemos upped its record to 4-0 overall and 2-0 in the CAAC-1 with a 66-55 win over **Sexton**, with Ianni scoring six points on three baskets ([Source](#)).

On December 19, Okemos (5-0) defeated nonleague opponent **Mason**, 73-51. Ianni blocked four shots, grabbed ten rebounds, and scored 14 points on six baskets on 2-5 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

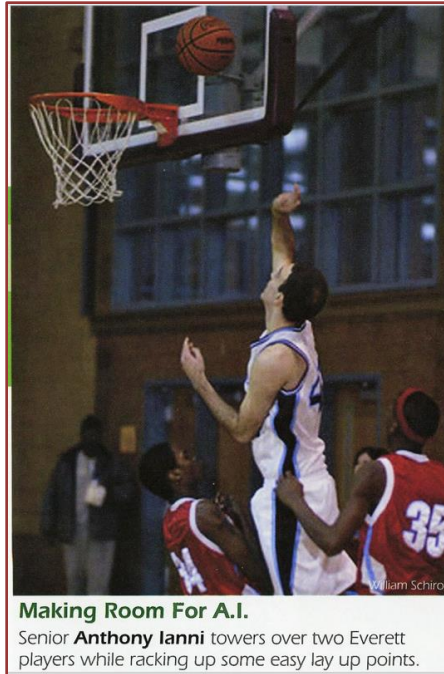
On December 23, Okemos (5-1) lost to **Ann Arbor Pioneer**, 41-52, in the Holiday Classic at Ypsilanti Lincoln. [Additional information on this game not yet identified on the Internet.]



Anthony Ianni (center rear) in Pre-Game Chant (2007 Okemos High Yearbook)

On January 5, Okemos (5-2, 2-2) lost to **East Lansing**, 54-40. Ianni scored 11 points on two baskets and 7-8 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 12, Okemos (6-2, 3-2) held off **Everett**, 49-46, with Ianni scoring five points on two baskets and 1-2 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).



Okemos Tomahawk (p. 84)

On January 19, Okemos (7-2, 4-2) defeated **Jackson**, 57-55. Ianni scored 12 points on three baskets and 6-8 from the free throw line, with five of his points tallied in the fourth quarter ([Source](#)).

On January 22, Okemos (8-2, 4-2) topped **Lansing Catholic**, 72-65 in a non-league game, with Ianni scoring 17 points and grabbing ten rebounds ([Source](#)).

On January 26, Okemos (8-3, 4-2) fell to **Holt**, 55-47, with Ianni leading all scorers with 20 points on ten baskets and 0-1 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 30, Ianni tallied seven points on three baskets and 1-3 from the charity stripe as the Chieftains (9-3, 5-2) downed **Eastern**, 62-42) ([Source](#)).

The Chieftains' Anthony Ianni, a 6-foot-10 center, sat for the majority of the game as he battled foul trouble. He finished with seven points and nine rebounds.

"When (Ianni) is not scoring, it's time for everybody else to pick it up," Kebler said. "We just got the ball moving, and we're going to get good shots."

On February 2, Okemos (10-3, 6-2) downed **Grand Ledge**, 61-41, with Ianni scoring 14 points on four baskets and 6-7 from the stripe ([Source](#)).

On February 6, Okemos (11-3, 7-2) defeated **Sexton**, 60-46, with Ianni scoring nine points on four baskets and 1-2 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On February 9, **East Lansing** edged Okemos (11-4, 7-3), 38-35. Ianni scored 11 points on four baskets and 3-5 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On February 13, the Chieftains (12-4, 8-3) bounced back with a 54-49 win over **Everett**. Ianni scored 13 points on six baskets and 1-3 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On February 16, Okemos (13-4, 9-3) downed **Jackson**, 67-62, to take a one game lead in the CAAC-1 over East Lansing and Holt. Ianni chipped in 13 points on five baskets and 3-3 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On February 23, Okemos (13-5, 9-4) suffered a setback, losing to **Holt**, 50-42. Ianni scored 10 points on four baskets and 2-4 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On March 2, with three CAAC-1 teams (East Lansing, Holt, and Okemos) each winning, all three tied for the CAAC-1 championship with 10-4 records. Okemos (14-5, 10-4) rolled to a 75-47 victory over **Eastern**, with Ianni scoring eight points on four baskets ([Source](#)).

Districts

On March 6, in a Class A district victory, Okemos (15-5) downed **St. Johns**, 76-49. Ianni scored ten points on three baskets and 4-5 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On March 8, Okemos (16-5) defeated **Eastern**, 71-56, for a Class A semifinal victory. Ianni scored seven points on three baskets and 1-4 on free throws, while Kebler scored 28 points on ten baskets, including four three-point goals, and 4-6 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On March 10, after falling twice to East Lansing during the regular season, Okemos (17-5) defeated **East Lansing**, 54-51 for the Class A district title. Ianni scored 11 points on five baskets and 1-1 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

Regionals

On March 13, the Chieftains' season ended with a 17-6 record in a 50-42 loss to **Ann Arbor Pioneer** in a Class A regional semifinal match. Ianni scored two points on 2-2 from the stripe ([Source](#)).



Varsity Basketball

Front Row: Ryan Mitchell, Ryan Erickson, Scott Stolz, Anthony Schiro. Second Row: Coach Dan Stolz, Michael Kebler, Jordan Ritchie, Kyle Miller, Anthony Ianni, Dennis Means, Tyler Stewart, Charlie Dewey, Nathan McDonald, Ball Boy Broe Edwards

Scoreboard					
W	Howell	63:38	W	Grand Ledge	61:41
W	Waverly	79:43	W	Sexton	60:46
W	Grand Ledge	63:55	L	East Lansing	35:38
W	Sexton	66:55	W	Everett	54:49
W	Mason	73:51	W	Jackson	67:62
L	Pioneer	41:52	L	Holt	42:50
L	East Lansing	40:54	W	Eastern	75:47
W	Everett	49:46	W	St. Johns (Districts)	76:49
W	Jackson	57:55	W	Eastern (Districts)	71:56
W	Lansing Catholic	72:65	W	East Lansing (Districts)	54:51
L	Holt	47:55	L	Pioneer (Regionals)	42:50
W	Eastern	62:42			

Okemos Tomahawk (p. 85)

Nothing Left To Prove

Season of Varsity Boys' Basketball exceeds expectations

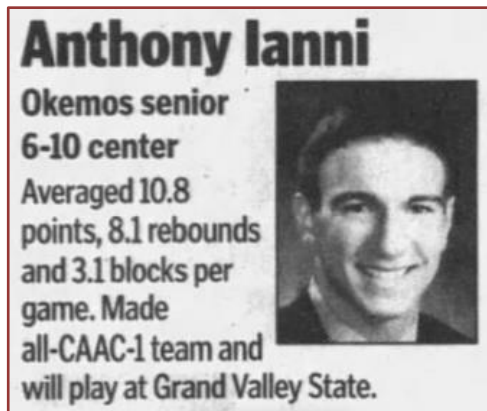
Destiny Tyson

Coming into the year many people questioned the Varsity Basketball team's capability of having a promising season with only having two returning starters, Seniors **Michael Kebler** and **Anthony Ianni**. Fortunately, the team pulled together and was able to defeat the East Lansing Trojans for the district title. When team captain, Senior **Anthony Ianni**, was asked how the team felt about fans doubting the team's potential, he replied, "After winning leagues and districts we proved to everyone who didn't think we were going to make it as far as we did, that we were just as good as last years' team".

Okemos High Yearbook (p. 84)

Laurels

As a senior (#44), Ianni averaged 10.8 points, 8.0 rebounds, and 3.0 blocks, helping Okemos to 17-6 record as well as back-to-back League and Class A District titles. Ianni earned 5th-Team All-State accolades, First-Team All-CAAC, and Lansing *State Journal* All-Area selection.



Grand Valley State University

2007-08 – As a freshman, Ianni played in 25 games, averaging 0.8 points and 1.2 rebounds. He scored six points against Marygrove College (11/27), grabbed five rebounds against Tiffin (1/8), and blocked two shots against Kalamazoo College (11/20).

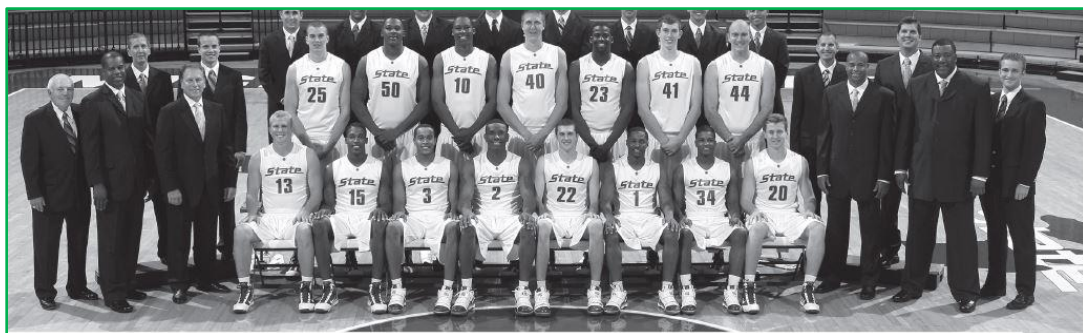
2008-09 - As a sophomore, Ianni played in 27 games, averaging 3.3 points and 2.2 rebounds. He scored a career-best 11 points against Michigan Tech (1/29), adding six rebounds. He scored 10 points against Tiffin (1/17) and grabbed a career-high 11 rebounds against Marygrove (12/28). Ianni led the Lakers with a .648 field-goal percentage, connecting on 35 of 54 shots. Against Saginaw Valley State (1/8) he blocked three shots.

Michigan State University

At MSU, Ianni was a 6'9" / 250 lbs. Guard (#44), majoring in Sociology.

2009-10

After transferring from Grand Valley State to Michigan State, Ianni (#44) sat out one season due to an NCAA regulation.



Anthony Ianni (#44) on 2009-10 Spartan Squad

2010-11

During the Spartans 2010-11 season, Ianni had a partial scholarship and appeared in six games, totaling eight minutes. He received MSU's Tim Bograkos Walk-On Award. His only two points of the season came on December 18 against **Prairie View A&M** (see photo below which also shows former Okemos High Chieftain **Dan Chapman** (#14) playing in one of the four games in which he appeared during this season.



Former **Okemos Chieftains** (#14 **Chapman** and #44 **Ianni**) on the floor as a third Spartan drives to the basket for a layup against **Prairie View A&M** (December 18, 2010)



#44
Anthony Ianni
C, 6-9, Jr.
East Lansing, Mich.
Okemos



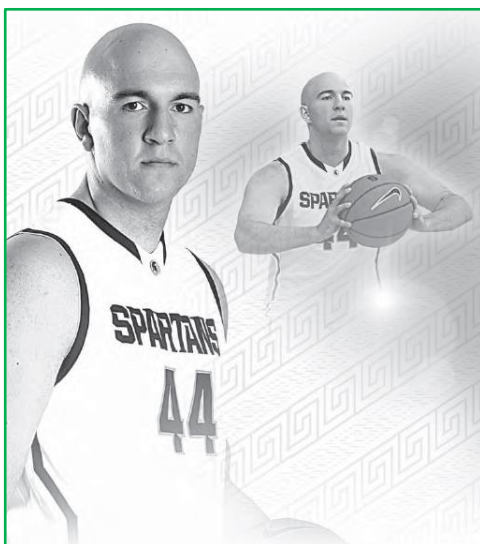
Anthony Ianni (#44)

The Spartans finished 19-15 overall and in the Big Ten tied for 4th place (9-9). In the Big Ten Tournament, the Spartans beat Iowa and blew out Purdue (#9), before falling to Penn State in the semifinals. The win over Purdue strengthened the case for the Spartans inclusion in the NCAA Tournament, where they seeded No. 10 in the Southeast Region. While this was the Spartans 14th straight appearance in the NCAA Tournament, this was their lowest seed since 2002. In their first game in the Tournament, the Spartans faced No. 7 seed UCLA. Trailing by as many as 23 points in the first half and 42-24 at the half, the Spartans rallied in the second half, fouling on nearly every possession and closing the lead, outscoring UCLA 52-36 but coming up short in a 78-76 loss.

Player	Class	Pos	Height	Summary
Keith Appling	FR	G	6-1	6.4 Pts, 2.8 Reb, 1.3 Ast
Dan Chapman	FR	G	6-3	0.0 Pts, 0.0 Reb, 0.0 Ast
Nick Giard	FR	G	6-3	0.0 Pts, 0.0 Reb, 0.0 Ast
Draymond Green	JR	F	6-7	12.6 Pts, 8.6 Reb, 4.1 Ast
Matt Heneveld	JR	G	6-5	0.0 Pts, 0.0 Reb, 0.0 Ast
Anthony Ianni	JR	C	6-9	0.3 Pts, 0.7 Reb, 0.0 Ast
Mike Kebler	SR	G	6-4	1.5 Pts, 1.0 Reb, 0.5 Ast
Kalin Lucas	SR	G	6-1	17.0 Pts, 2.1 Reb, 3.4 Ast
Korie Lucious	JR	G	5-11	6.5 Pts, 1.7 Reb, 4.1 Ast
Derrick Nix	SO	C	6-9	2.7 Pts, 2.0 Reb, 0.3 Ast
Adreian Payne	FR	C	6-10	2.5 Pts, 2.4 Reb, 0.1 Ast
Delvon Roe	JR	F	6-8	6.1 Pts, 5.0 Reb, 1.4 Ast
Garrick Sherman	SO	C	6-11	3.1 Pts, 2.7 Reb, 0.4 Ast
Durrell Summers	SR	G	6-5	11.6 Pts, 4.2 Reb, 0.6 Ast
Austin Thornton	JR	G	6-5	2.0 Pts, 2.1 Reb, 0.7 Ast



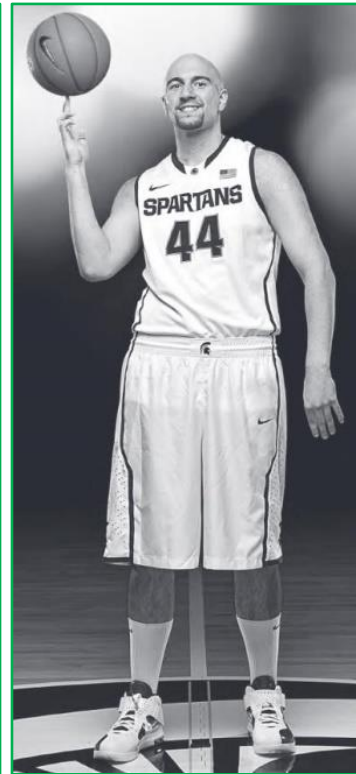
Key teammates this season were Kalin Lucas (17.0 PPG), Draymond Green (12.6 PPG), and Durrell Summers (11.6 PPG). The Spartans roster also included two former **Chieftains**, senior **Mike Kebler** (1.5 PPG) and freshman **Dan Chapman** (0.0 PPG).



2011-12

Ianni's most active season as a Spartan was the 2011-12 season, appearing in 21 games.

Player	Class	Pos	Height	Summary
Keith Appling	SO	G	6-1	11.4 Pts, 2.9 Reb, 3.9 Ast
Russell Byrd	FR	G	6-7	1.5 Pts, 0.6 Reb, 0.4 Ast
Dan Chapman	SO	G	6-3	0.0 Pts, 0.4 Reb, 0.1 Ast
Branden Dawson	FR	G	6-6	8.4 Pts, 4.5 Reb, 0.9 Ast
Alex Gauna	FR	F	6-9	1.8 Pts, 0.8 Reb, 0.0 Ast
Draymond Green	SR	F	6-7	16.2 Pts, 10.6 Reb, 3.8 Ast
Anthony Ianni	SR	C	6-9	0.1 Pts, 0.3 Reb, 0.1 Ast
Brandan Kearney	FR	G	6-6	1.2 Pts, 0.8 Reb, 0.6 Ast
Derrick Nix	JR	C	6-9	8.1 Pts, 3.8 Reb, 1.0 Ast
Adreian Payne	SO	C	6-10	7.0 Pts, 4.2 Reb, 0.3 Ast
Joe Sweeny	SR	G	6-0	0.2 Pts, 0.1 Reb, 0.1 Ast
Austin Thornton	SR	G	6-5	5.2 Pts, 3.3 Reb, 1.1 Ast
Travis Trice	FR	G	6-1	4.5 Pts, 1.8 Reb, 1.8 Ast
Keenan Wetzel	FR	G	6-4	0.4 Pts, 0.0 Reb, 0.0 Ast
Colby Wollenman	FR	F	6-7	0.2 Pts, 0.1 Reb, 0.0 Ast
Brandon Wood	SR	G	6-2	8.8 Pts, 2.8 Reb, 1.9 Ast



Big Ten Conference

For the regular Big Ten Conference season, the Spartans tied for 1st (13-5). During the season Ianni scored two points vs. **Nebraska Omaha** and one vs. **UMKC**. Further, he grabbed two rebounds against **Texas Southern** and at home vs. **Nebraska**.

Notable 2011-2012 teammates, including former Chieftain Dan Chapman (0.0 PPG), were Draymond Green (16.2 PPG), Keith Appling (11.4 PPG), and Durrell Summers (11.2 PPG). Several of Ianni's 2011-12 Spartan teammates later played professional basketball, including Draymond Green (NBA Golden State Warriors), Keith Appling (Atlanta Hawks), Branden Dawson (Los Angeles Clippers), Derrick Nix (various European league teams), Adreian Payne (Atlanta Hawks and Minnesota Timberwolves), and Travis Trice (several overseas basketball teams).

On the eve of the Spartans last home game of the season against **Ohio State**, the *Lansing Sate Journal* published the following article on Ianni.

Finale a great one for Ianni

Okemos product has savored senior year

Joe Rexrode
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EAST LANSING — Anthony Ianni was struggling and needed some counsel. He went to an obvious source — Michigan State coach Tom Izzo.

They talked for a half hour as Ianni recalls it, and much of the conversation was Izzo reminding Ianni of what he had been telling him since he was a grade-school kid attending Izzo's basketball camps. That hard work cures all.

"Either you're getting better or you're getting worse," Ianni said. "He gave me that fire to compete again."

The thing is, Izzo wasn't Ianni's coach at the time. Ianni was a sophomore center at Grand Valley State. A few months later, he called Izzo again and told him he wanted to come home.

Three years after that, Ianni is wrapping up a dream finish to his basketball career, an Okemos kid helping Michigan State to a Big Ten championship. And make no mistake, even though he hasn't had a lot of floor time (32 minutes, three points, seven rebounds), he has helped.



Ianni

"He's given us all he's got in practice this year," MSU junior center Derrick Nix said of the 6-foot-9, 250-pound Ianni, who will be honored along with seniors Draymond Green, Austin Thornton and Brandon Wood after Sunday's home game against Ohio State for the outright title.

"What he's done for us, not many people can do," Izzo said. "He still hasn't really been a big part of the games, but he's probably been the captain of our scout team. Bangs Nix and (Adreian) Payne and (Alex) Gaudna and (Green) every day, and that's no fun job. He does the dirty work, and that's what I respect about him the most."

Ianni, on scholarship this season for the first time, said this season has been the most fun he's had in college basketball. It reminds him of his junior season at Okemos High, when the Chieftains reached the 2006 Class A title game before falling by a point to Saginaw Arthur Hill.

"They're so close, they all like each other and they've got each other's back," said Anthony's father, Greg, MSU's deputy athletic director. "It's a very unique group of young men and that's a large portion of why they're successful."

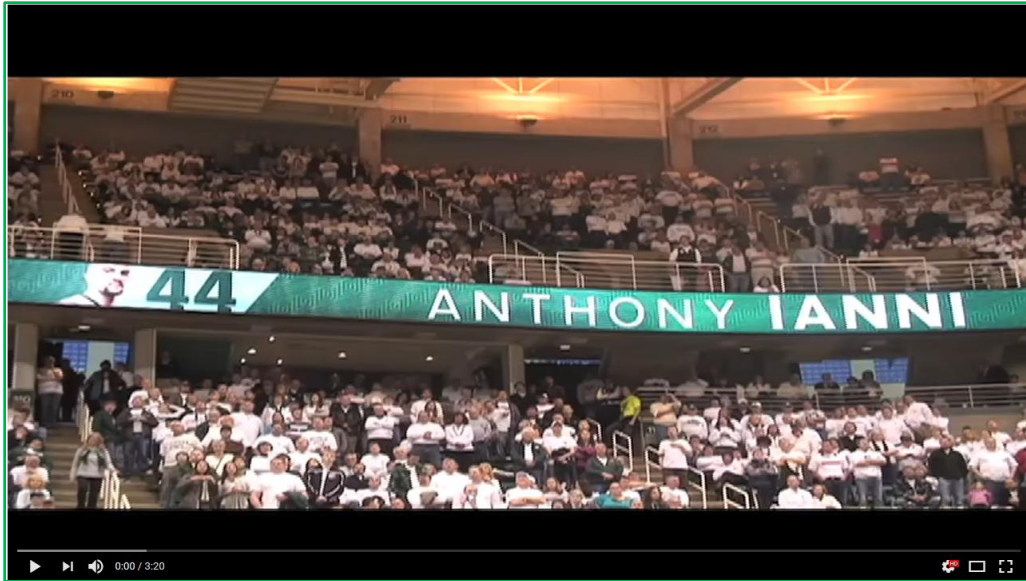
Ianni dreamed of playing for Izzo from the time he was a 6-year-old learning at Izzo camps. Izzo gave Ianni a chance to walk on, but Ianni opted for an offer from Grand Valley instead. After two years there, he decided he wanted to come home. The move has benefited Ianni and MSU.

Ianni, a sociology major, plans to enter what he calls "the family business" of athletic administration. He'll work with MSU's events staff and has his eye on a job with the Detroit Lions.

First, he'll try to fulfill words that seemed overly optimistic in October. Back then, he said: "The toughest team is gonna win championships, and that's gonna be us this year."

"I want this one so bad," he said Thursday. "We just want to go out on top. There's a lot left to be done and I'm just gonna enjoy the rest of the ride."

While the Spartans lost the game against Ohio State, Ianni was one of the seniors honored post-game (see video below).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvluRadInSA>

MSU Men's Basketball: Seniors Honored

Big Ten Tournament

The Spartans won the **Big Ten Tournament**, defeating **Wisconsin** and **Ohio State**.



George Cutting down the Net as 2012 Big Ten Tournament Champions



2012 Big Ten Tournament Champions

NCAA Tournament

During the NCAA Tournament, the Spartans made a run, beating **LIU Brooklyn** and **Saint Louis**, before losing to **Louisville**.

Laurels

Ianni was a co-recipient of the Spartans 2011-2012 Unsung Player Award. Izzo noted:

“What he’s done for us, not many people can do,” Izzo said. “He still hasn’t really been a big part of the games, but he’s probably been the captain of our scout team. Bangs Nix and (Adreian) Payne and (Alex) Gaudna and (Green) every day, and that’s no fun job. He does the dirty work, and that’s what I respect about him the most.”



Spartan Coach Tom Izzo and Anthony Ianni

Career Statistics as a Spartan

The table below summarizes Ianni's statistics, per game and totals, for the two seasons (2010-12) he played on the Spartan varsity squad.

Per Game

Season	School	Conf	G	GS	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	2P	2PA	2P%	3P	3PA	3P%	FT	FTA	FT%	ORB	DRB	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS	SOS
2010-11	Michigan State	Big Ten	6	0	1.3	0.2	0.3	.500	0.2	0.3	.500	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.3	11.67
2011-12	Michigan State	Big Ten	21	0	1.7	0.0	0.1	.333	0.0	0.1	.333	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.1	.500	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	9.81
Career	Michigan State		27	0	1.6	0.1	0.2	.400	0.1	0.2	.400	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.1	.500	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	10.74

Totals

Season	School	Conf	G	GS	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	2P	2PA	2P%	3P	3PA	3P%	FT	FTA	FT%	ORB	DRB	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS	SOS
2010-11	Michigan State	Big Ten	6	0	1.3	0.2	0.3	.500	0.2	0.3	.500	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.3	11.67
2011-12	Michigan State	Big Ten	21	0	1.7	0.0	0.1	.333	0.0	0.1	.333	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.1	.500	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	9.81
Career	Michigan State		27	0	1.6	0.1	0.2	.400	0.1	0.2	.400	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.1	.500	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	10.74



Anthony Ianni (#44) Photo on Display in MSU's Breslin Center

After Michigan State

While several of Ianni's Spartan teammates went on to play basketball professionally, his future on the basketball court was not to be in the NBA but rather returning to the hardwood where he has become a prominent Autism and anti-bullying advocate and one of the most sought after motivational speakers in America. Today, employed with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Ianni leads [The Relentless Tour to eradicate bullying in Michigan and Beyond](#), traveling throughout Michigan and across the county "to tell his story and share his message" and inspire "countless individuals to 'LYD'- Live Your Dreams."

"Bullying can affect everybody today, including people with Autism. A stat most people don't know is that 65-90% of kids with Autism are the prime target for bullies. I myself was one of those victims when I was younger and it continued until I was a freshman in high school. After I heard this stat I knew I had to take action!" (Anthony Ianni)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwPZgDAzz1A>

Interview with Anthony Ianni (October 16, 2014)

Examples of Ianni giving presentations on anti-bullying are presented in the videos below:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLdz4GK3fBc>

Anthony Ianni visits Northwest's Kidder Middle School



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVgBXtcYt-I>

Specialty Athletic Training and the Autism Society of Oregon bring Anthony Ianni to Portland



Anthony talking to students after his anti-bullying presentations



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLkHPfP_zWI

2015 BOOM Awards Athlete of the Year, Anthony Ianni

Looking Back

Success was not handed to Ianni on a silver platter. Anthony was diagnosed when he was four years old with Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), a form of autism. His doctors and other specialists told the boy's parents that it was likely that Anthony would barely graduate from high school but wouldn't graduate from college. They projected that he would never become an athlete and as an adult likely would live in a group institution with other autistic patients. While this was devastating to Anthony's family, they made a commitment to help him to be successful no matter what ([Source](#), [Source](#), and [Source](#)).

Anthony didn't fully learn of his condition until his freshman year in high school, and his reaction was defiant: "I said, 'OK, you know what? I'm going to show those people up,'" he recalled. "My goal every day was to be as good as I could be in basketball, to play college basketball and graduate" ([Source](#)).

Nick McWherter (MSU Athletic Communications) wrote in a "[Spartan Senior Profile](#)" on Ianni, he "was born Spartan, truest to the cliché." His father Greg had played baseball at Michigan State and has been a member of the MSU Athletics department since 1993. While Ianni played basketball at Okemos High and Grand Valley State University for two years, he yearned to play basketball for Michigan State. Ianni recalled:

I am always going to bleed green forever, even when I went to Grand Valley for two years. I told (MSU play-by-play announcer) Will Tieman this story; they had the chant 'Go Blue!' out there, and I could never do it. I never had the heart to do it, and I probably never will.

After two seasons at Grand Valley, Ianni transferred to Michigan State after having been offered a walk-on spot on the team. Ianni knew that he'd face challenges transitioning from Grand Valley to Michigan State, recalling that it "was difficult, but at the same time I kind of knew what was going on, watching the practices at Michigan State and being around it, so I kind of knew what to expect." Mike Vorkapich, the Spartans strength and conditioning coach, "did a heck of a job with me, getting me bigger and stronger. It was a huge transition, but I feel that I adjusted to it very quickly." Ianni's perseverance and determination paid off when, over the summer, Spartan coach Tom Izzo awarded a scholarship to Anthony.

Ianni recalls learning about the scholarship: "Coach Izzo brought me in a couple days before school and said 'I'm 99 percent sure you are going to be on scholarship.' When he told me that it really was a dream come true for me. I enjoyed every moment and I am still enjoying every moment of it." "Ever since I was a kid growing up around here, I always wanted to play for Coach Izzo, and then to be on scholarship here, that was always my dream and my goal. ... And to live it, it is awesome."

Looking back, despite bullies, adversity, and numerous personal challenges, Ianni worked hard and never gave up. He earned his Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from MSU – and, further, was the first known athlete with autism to play basketball in the Big Ten Conference and, indeed, in the NCAA Division I.



Graduation (May 5, 2012)

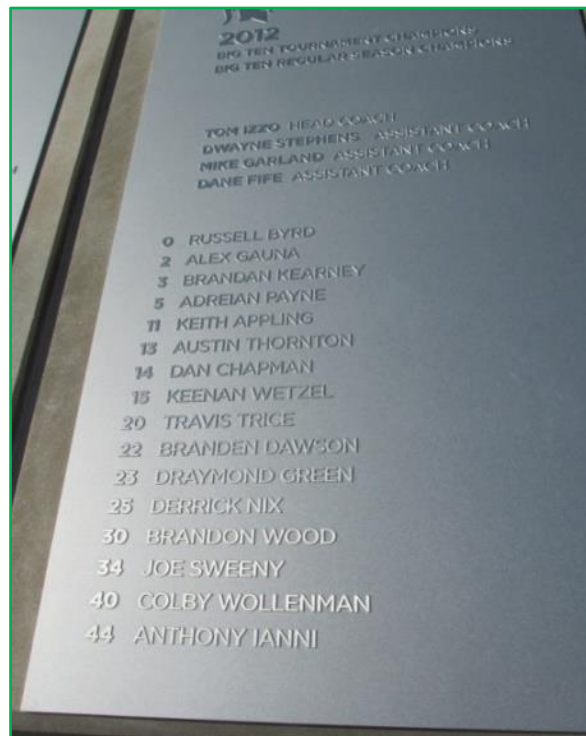
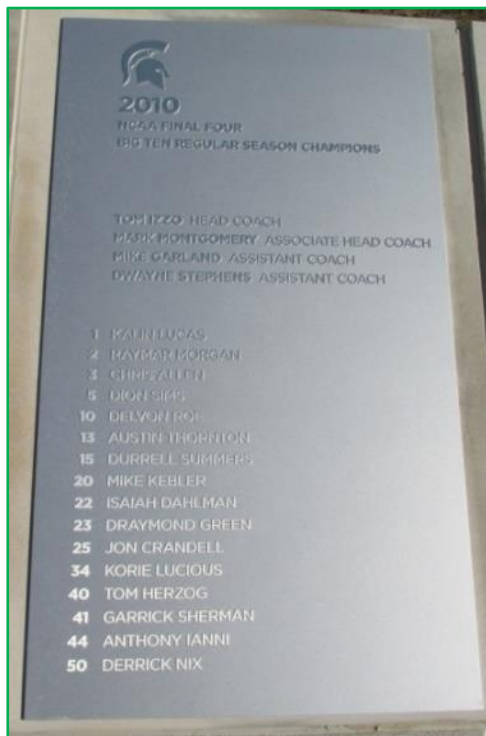
On the Spartan basketball squad, Ianni contributed to the team winning two Big Ten Championships and a Big Ten Tournament Title. He was the recipient of the 2011 Tim Bograkos Walk On Award and the 2012 Unsung Player Award, and was also a member of the 2010 Final Four team.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTBTfIFAPAE>



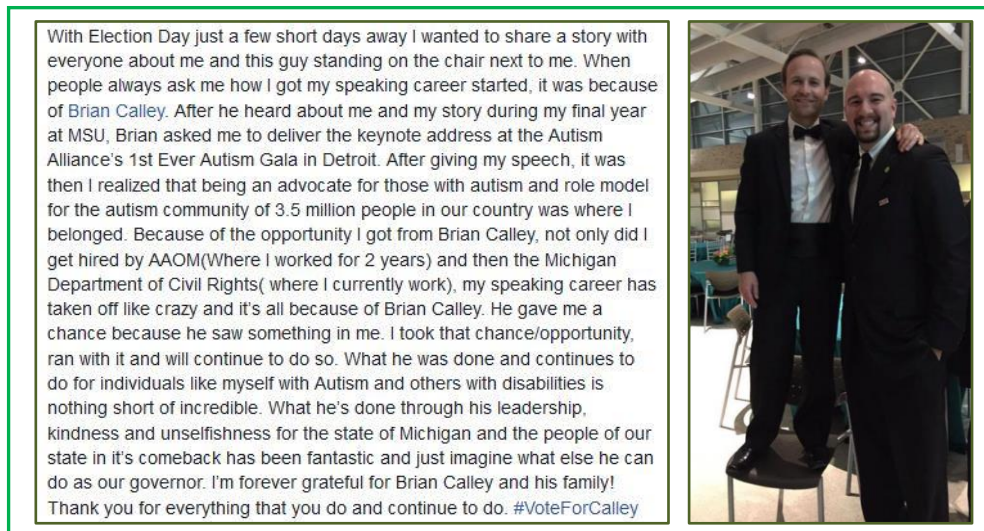
Anthony Ianni, First Division I College Basketball Player with Autism



**Breslin Center Plaques Honoring 2010 & 2012 Spartan Teams
(including 44 Anthony Ianni)**

But if it was challenge for Ianni to transition from NCAA Division II basketball at **Grand Valley State** to NCAA Division I basketball at Michigan State, how did he transition from being a member of the Spartans basketball squad to being a highly sought after anti-bullying advocate and motivational speaker?

The question's answer surfaced in a Facebook post Ianni made on August 5, 2018. The post (see below) refers to Election Day being "just a few short days away" and to Brian Calley (Michigan's Lt. Governor who was on the August 7th primary election ballot to be the Republican Party's nominee to run for Governor in the general election in November 2018). Here is Ianni's Facebook post ([Source](#)):



When I contacted Ianni to share a draft of this vignette and ask if he could share some of his own "looking back" reflections, he replied with the following:

Okemos High School and basketball helped make me into the person that I am today. My teachers helped me tremendously in making sure I was successful in the classroom and that also helped prepare me for academic life in college at Michigan State. Because of this, I was able to use the same strategy techniques and communication process I had at Okemos with my teachers and tutors at MSU. Without those folks and the sacrifices they made for me, I don't know how I would've gotten through both Okemos and MSU. Basketball helped me become a better person and a better man and that came from the two great coaches I played under—Coach Stolz and Coach Izzo. They both are so much alike and I was able to have success under them because they had the same coaching style and philosophy. My teammates though at both levels are what made basketball so memorable for me. It wasn't the games or great players I played against in high school and college that made the memories so incredible, rather just being around my teammates and sharing our successes as a team together and spending a lot of time together off the court as well (Anthony Ianni, personal communication).

But a fuller picture of how Ianni met his autism challenge was later reported by Martin Kessler in the following February 21, 2020 [post](#):

Why Didn't You Tell Me About Your Autism?': Anthony Ianni's Friendship With Draymond (by [Martin Kessler](#))



Draymond Green (center) and Anthony Ianni (right) became closer teammates and friends after an argument. (Andy Manis/AP)

Growing up near East Lansing, Michigan, Anthony Ianni knew he was different from other kids. Through fifth grade, he had an aide with him in class. In middle school, he'd go to a resource classroom.

"So I was like, 'OK, you know, I have a learning disability — I'm just going to put it that way. And I don't know what it is, but I have a type of learning disability, just plain and simple,'" Anthony says.

Anthony's differences affected him beyond the classroom.

Anthony loved the Michigan State sports teams — his dad worked in the athletic department — but attending games was rough.

"Just, like, the crowd noises and the horns from the scoreboard — you know, it was really too much for me early on," Anthony says. ...

Anthony also had a hard time understanding jokes and sarcasm. He took everything literally.

"So, for example, if somebody had told the 5-year-old me that 'It's raining cats and dogs outside,' well, a majority of the population knows that it's pouring down rain. Where the 5-year-old me would have ran out the door, you know, going outside and hoping that a cat or a dog will literally fall into my arms."

Anthony wanted to fit in at school.

"I wanted to be the cool guy," he says. "I wanted to be the guy that made people laugh."

And Anthony thought the best way to do that was to re-create what he saw on TV.

"Curly was my favorite of The Three Stooges," Anthony says, "and so, for example, Curly did a sound effect where he goes '[nyuk, nyuk, nyuk](#),' and I did that all the time in the hallways. I mean, I did the hand gestures that The Three Stooges did all the time.

"And people who weren't my friends, who got a glimpse of it in the hallways, encouraged me to go on and on and on. And, you know, looking back on it, I wasn't the guy who was making people laugh. I was the guy that people were laughing at."

Bullies targeted Anthony. He says it didn't help that he was bigger and taller than pretty much everyone at school.

"When I started off in sixth grade I was 6-feet tall with a size 13 shoe," he says. "And, you know, people called me so many names, like the 'Jolly Green Giant' or, you know, the Giant Peach from 'James and the Giant Peach.' I had people call me that one time, and it's, like, you know, people kept egging on and on and on and on about it. And it drove me crazy to the point where I was on the floor crying and just telling people to stop."

'Son, We Have To Tell You A Little Story'

After Anthony finished middle school, he learned something that helped this all make a bit more sense.

"Going into my freshman year of high school, my parents sat me down in the living room and said — my dad looked at me and said, 'Son, we have to tell you a little story,' " Anthony recalls. "So they told me the story about my diagnosis."

At 4 years old, Anthony had been diagnosed with Pervasive Development Disorder, which Anthony describes as "a higher-functioning form of autism."

"Along the same lines as Asperger's syndrome," he says.

Anthony also learned that doctors and experts had told his parents not to expect much from him.

"They told my parents that I was barely going to graduate from high school, never go to college, never be an athlete — and, eventually, one day I was going to end up in a group institution with other individuals like myself," Anthony says.

Anthony says his first reaction was, "Who would say that about a little kid?"

But soon he started thinking something else:

"Let's go shut people up," he remembers thinking. "Let's go prove these doctors and experts wrong. Let's show them why you are not going to be in a group institution. And so I kind of had this checklist in my head, you know, after my parents sat me down. And the checklist was: graduate from high school, get a full-ride scholarship somewhere and then graduate from college.

"And so, like, nothing else mattered to me in high school but those things. That's why, like, I didn't worry about, you know, having a girlfriend in high school. Granted, did I have crushes in high school? Absolutely. But I was so focused on just proving the world wrong."

As a freshman at Okemos High School near East Lansing, Anthony was 6-foot-6. And he loved basketball. Anthony's parents had both worked for the Ohio University athletic department, so when Anthony was a toddler he'd go to practices and shoot on a lowered hoop.



(Courtesy Anthony Ianni)

And, at games, he learned to watch the clock count down toward zero.

"As it got to three seconds left on the clock, I would put my hands over my ears to block out any noise," he says. "And then when the horn went off, I would kind of slowly just take my hands off my ears. And, if it was too much for me, I put my hands back on my ears. And so every game I went to, I kept doing that, and eventually got to the point where my hands were just so far away from my ears. I was just like, 'All right. Whatever. I'm used to this now.'"

Anthony says he went to every Michigan State home game.

Ticking Off the Checklist

By the end of his senior year of high school, Anthony had earned a scholarship to play at Div. II Grand Valley State University. Anthony was ticking off that checklist he'd made for himself.

After two seasons at Grand Valley State, in 2009, Anthony decided to transfer to his hometown school and the team he'd grown up rooting for: Michigan State.

Anthony didn't know of anyone else with autism who had played Division I basketball.

And this wasn't just any Division I team. Michigan State was expected to be one of the best in the country.

Anthony kept his autism diagnosis mostly a secret. The Michigan State coaches and a teammate knew, but he didn't tell the rest of the players.

"I didn't know how they were going to treat me," he says. "Because, in the past, I told people about my diagnosis and what it was. And, you know, a lot of those people who I thought were my friends at the time, they started treating me differently. They started treating me differently, like I wasn't a normal person. Or I didn't know how to act. They treated me like a little kid after that. And so that's why I didn't tell anybody."

But keeping his autism diagnosis a secret in the Michigan State locker room was going to be difficult, especially considering the personality of the man who was quickly becoming the centerpiece of the Spartans team.

Meeting the 'King of Trash Talk'



Draymond Green quickly became a leader on the Michigan State team. (Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images)

Draymond Green has never been afraid to speak up.

"He was the locker room leader, right from his freshman year," says Michigan State Associate Head Strength and Conditioning Coach and Director of Sports Science Mike Vorkapich — or, more simply, "Coach Vork."

"I don't even know if people know my first name on this campus," Coach Vork says.

Anyways, back to Draymond Green.

"When I say 'right from his freshman year,' not right when he got to campus, but as the season progressed," Coach Vork explains. "You know, we lost, and he kind of piped off in the locker room in a good, positive way — just saying, 'Hey, we're right there. We're going to get back to this point. ... We're going to get back to the Final Four next year.'"

"And you don't hear freshman say that. It was like he took the reins. And that became his team then."

"You've got to have thick skin when you're Draymond's teammate." *Mike Vorkapich*

Anthony Ianni arrived at Michigan State that next season. In some ways, he and Draymond Green were quite similar. They were both from Michigan. They both grew up Michigan State fans. For a couple months they even played on the same AAU team.

"He kind of had that same mentality as I did, that chip-on-the-shoulder mentality of, 'Oh, you told me this. OK. I'm going to go prove you wrong,'" Anthony says.

But, in other ways, Anthony and Draymond couldn't be more different.

Anthony was walking on to the Michigan State team. Draymond had committed to Kentucky before picking the Spartans.

And, while Anthony struggled to understand sarcasm and jokes, Draymond was the opposite.

"Draymond is the king of trash talk," says Austin Thornton, who was on those Michigan State teams with Anthony and Draymond.

Austin and his teammates weren't safe from Draymond's trash talk.

"When he goes into these trash-talking moments, he just goes from zero to not even 100, but zero to, like, 10,000," Austin says.

"He was a jokester," Coach Vork says. "You've got to have thick skin when you're Draymond's teammate."

Because Anthony's dad worked in the Michigan State athletic department, Coach Vork had known Anthony — and about Anthony's diagnosis — since he was a kid.

So Coach Vork asked Anthony to stay after his first workout with the team.

"I said, 'Any time you're not certain of something,' I go, 'just look at me, say something to me. I'll explain it to you. I got no problem with that,'" Coach Vork says.

Anthony took advantage of the offer.

"Oh, yeah," Coach Vork says. "He would come up to me and just ask questions, 'Hey, I think guys are saying this.' And then I'm like, 'Oh, they're just joking.' 'They're just messing with you.' He's like, 'OK.' He'd just sort of brush it off, like, 'No big deal,' you know?"



Anthony with Austin Thornton. (Courtesy Anthony Ianni)

Austin Thornton also knew about Anthony's diagnosis, so Austin would try to help out when teammates started teasing Anthony.

"And I can't tell you how many times he'd be, like, hitting me under the table, like, 'Hey, they're just joking, right?' " Austin recalls. "I'd be like, 'Yeah, yeah. it's a joke. You can laugh. Don't get too upset.'"

And Austin would try to help Anthony jab back.

"If they're going to poke fun at you for this, like, hey, maybe make fun of this guy for that, or maybe make fun of that guy for this," Austin remembers telling Anthony. "Like, it's OK to do that."

But this sometimes went badly.

If, for example, a teammate joked that Anthony's high school basketball program was "horrible," Anthony says his response might not make sense.

"Like, I would say, 'Oh, well you guys are just — you're average,' " Anthony says. "And so they would just give me that weird look like, 'You do know that average is, you know, better than worse, right?' "

Because of all this, Anthony says it could be hard for him during his first two years at Michigan State.

But there were no major incidents. And Anthony was still able to keep his diagnosis a secret.

'Why Didn't You Tell Me About Your Autism?'

Then came a summer workout before the 2011-12 season.

As Anthony remembers it, Draymond Green joked that the team had to do an extra set of leg presses. Coach Vork remembers it as Draymond and the rest of the team telling Anthony he had to re-do the VO2 max, a brutal aerobic test.

Whatever it was, Anthony couldn't tell it was a joke. He thought he had to keep going.

"And so the joke was going on and on and on," Anthony remembers. "People kept piling on about it or saying this, saying that. It drove me nuts. And it almost was like when I was bullied and teased in sixth grade.

"And so it got to the point where I just basically threw a fit at him. And I almost wanted to knock his teeth out, because I was so upset. And so I walked up to him. I started arguing with him, telling him to quit it, you know, stop. And then he just flat flat out said out loud to everybody, 'Well, if you can't take a joke, then you shouldn't be on this team. You should just go home.' "

Coach Vork didn't witness this exchange, but he saw afterward that Anthony was upset. Coach Vork pulled Draymond aside.

"I said, 'Hey, man. You gotta understand one thing: you guys are messing with Anthony. ... [Anthony] doesn't get it a lot of times,'" Coach Vork says. "And [Draymond] looks at me, you know, kind of confused. I go, 'He's autistic.' "

Draymond Green declined our interview request, but he talked about this moment for an NBA TV show.

"And that was the day Vork told me about Anthony's autism," [Draymond told "Beyond The Paint."](#) "He said, 'He doesn't understand that joke. It's like you're picking on him, 'cause he doesn't see the gray area. It's black and white for him.' "

The next day Anthony was still upset.

Draymond approached him.

"When he walked up to me, I said, 'Oh, God, what's this conversation gon be about?'" Anthony recalls. "Like, you know, 'Do I really want to talk to him?'"

"And he was just like, you know, 'Why didn't you — you know, Vork told me all this. Why didn't you tell me about your autism? Why didn't you tell me about all this?' I said, 'Well, like with everybody else in my life, Draymond, I didn't know how you were going to react, you know? I thought you were going to treat me differently, like everybody else that I knew in my life.'"

"And he looked at me just for, like, a good 10 seconds, not saying anything. And he said to me, 'Well, first of all, kudos to you. Because look what you've overcome in your life and look where you're at now.' He said, 'Second of all, if you would have told me this from day one, *none* of this would've happened.'"

"And so, you know, he's told people, and I've told people, that that day, that incident, it changed our relationship forever. We became not only better teammates after that, but we became better friends after that."

A Blessing in Disguise

Anthony says that, after that incident, Draymond would check in about whether or not he understood something. And Draymond also wanted to learn more about autism.

"He was always asking me different questions about, 'Hey, how did you learn this, despite having autism?' Or 'What did you do in these times?'" Anthony says. "And then, once he started asking questions, a lot of my other teammates started asking questions. And so they were starting to learn more and more about me."

After that, Anthony didn't have to look to Coach Vork or Austin to figure out if something was a joke. He could ask the rest of his team.

Now Anthony calls that incident with Draymond "a blessing in disguise."



Anthony Ianni with Draymond Green - December 2019. (Courtesy Anthony Ianni)

"Having somebody with that type of stardom, if you will, to understand what one of their teammates is going through and how they can adapt to that person — that really showed me not only what kind of a leader that Draymond was and still is, but what kind of a person he is as well," Anthony says.

In their final season at Michigan State, Anthony Ianni scored a total of three points and collected seven rebounds. Draymond Green was the Big Ten player of the year.

After the Big Ten tournament, Draymond had this to say about Anthony [when he spoke to Hondo Carpenter from Spartan Nation](#):

"Anthony Ianni is the most underrated person on our team. When I am down, when I am not playing well, he always comes up and tells me how proud he is of me, how much he believes in me. He will always have a special place in my heart."

Draymond Green is now a three-time NBA All-Star with the Golden State Warriors.

Anthony Ianni completed that checklist: he graduated high school, he got a scholarship, he graduated from college. Now he's married with two kids.

And a few years ago he found a new goal: become a role model for kids with autism — and become a great leader, just like his former teammate Draymond Green.

Anthony has already been accomplishing that goal, too: he now travels the country sharing his story of living with autism, and he has his own anti-bullying initiative called "[The Relentless Tour](#)."



Anthony Ianni speaks at the Autism Speaks: Game Changers Gala 2017 in New York City. (Rob Kim/Getty Images for Autism Speaks)

Source: <https://www.wbur.org/onlyagame/2020/02/21/anthony-ianni-draymond-green-michigan-state-autism?fbclid=IwAR3GhkTB7atl-0xiPyRhHbKIkDglb-phtRxh7IArQJf8lwsYcm3byOZ32dg>

Today Anthony Ianni is a busy man, not only on the road with speaking engagements for the Relentless Tour, keeping up on the home front with a growing family, getting his son Knox well on his way to loving basketball and the Michigan State Spartans, and coaching a girls' basketball team, all while contemplating what steps to next take in his own life, as shown in the photos below.



The Growing Ianni Family



Starting the Kid Young to Love Spartan Basketball & Michigan State



Ianni Coaches Livonia Churchill Lady Chargers



Sparty Meets Knox Ianni at All Star Autism Hoops Camp with Kids on the Go

Anthony Ianni

August 20 at 1:07 PM · 🌐

I said last year that the 2017-2018 year was going to be a busy year for me.....AND IT WAS!! I spoke to 84,500 students in more than 200 schools, events and summer camps around the Country and in Michigan. BUT The 2018-2019 year is already looking like an even busier one for me. And with my new book currently in the works, who knows where I'll end up traveling to next?!?! My Motivational speeches and messages on Bullying, Autism, and transitioning in life aren't just for students, it's for everyone. I will tailor my presentation to fit the needs of your next in-service day, workshop, professional development day or conference. Anyone interested in having me speak to your schools, conferences, University, Sports Teams, or business please click on the link below www.relentlessstour.com For K-12 Schools in the State of Michigan, if your school is 40% or more free & reduce lunch my services are for free! Looking forward to another year of being RELENTLESS in my profession! #TheGameChanger #Relentless

Anthony Ianni Post to Facebook (August 20, 2018)



Anthony Ianni Contemplating Next Steps



Coach Izzo & Anthony George (February 2017 Reunion)



Magic Johnson & Anthony Ianni (February 9, 2019 at Breslin Center)



For those who don't have nba tv, here's the link to the story in it's entirety!
Enjoy <https://www.nba.com/video/2019/02/10/20190210-beyond-paint-anthony-ianni>

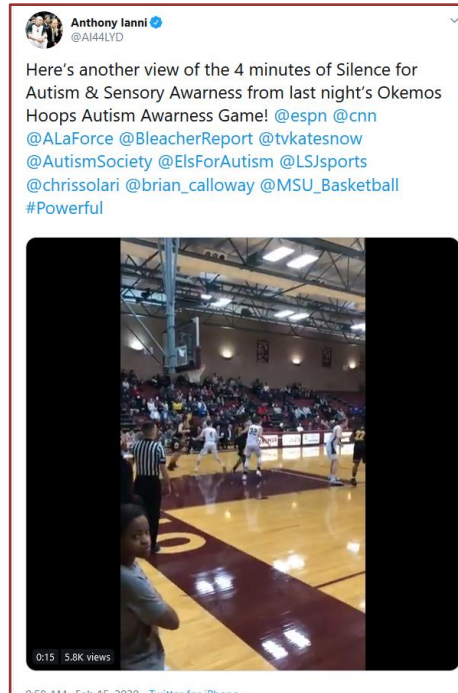
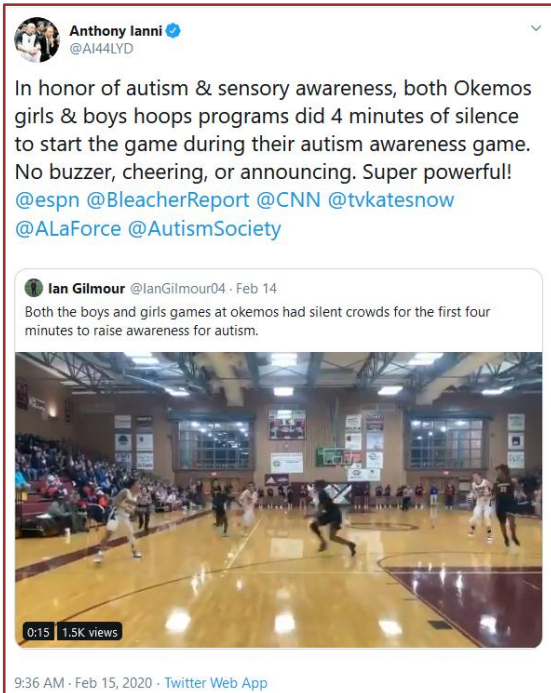
ESPN's Anthony Ianni Segment on *Beyond the Paint* (February 10, 2019)




3/14/19 Ianni Tweet on Eve of Okemos Boys Varsity Team Returning to the Breslin Center for 3/15/19 MHSAA Class A Semifinal Game

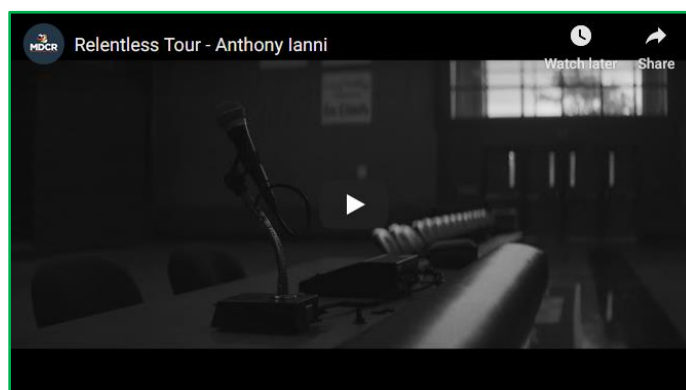
In mid-February 2020, Ianni's campaign for autism awareness took a new step forward at Okemos High School.





 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN AUTISM, INTELLECTUAL, AND OTHER NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES





National Speaker With Autism Involved In An Initiative To Eradicate Bullying



This guest Q&A is with Anthony Ianni, a public speaker and autism self-advocate. He's one of the first people with autism to ever play Division I Basketball. As a fellow anti-bullying activist who [speaks](#) on the topic of bullying prevention, I wanted to spotlight his journey for October which is National Bullying Prevention Month. The *Relentless Tour* with Anthony Ianni is a first of its kind grass roots initiative designed to help eradicate bullying across the state of Michigan. You can learn more about his Relentless Tour that started in October of 2013 [here](#).

Who came up with the idea behind the Relentless Tour?

The idea was proposed by a PR team that I worked with during my time with Autism Alliance of Michigan 9 years ago. The original idea was to visit all 659 Middle Schools in the state of Michigan, but once we officially launched it I got bombarded with emails and phone calls from high schools, elementary schools and private/charter schools who wanted the Tour to come to their schools. So we decided to do all schools instead of just the middle schools and I can honestly say it was a super smart decision that was made.

How did the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) end up getting involved?

MDCR did a lot of the Press Releases for the tour and they also did some outreach for the tour early on, but they eventually hired me as a full time employee for the Department in March of 2015 to bring and run the Relentless Tour as part of their mission for Anti-Bullying.

Did it take a while for the Relentless Tour to come to fruition?

It really didn't take long for it to come to fruition mainly because I had started my speaking career a year before the tour was even talked about. So a lot of people in Michigan knew that I was out there presenting on Anti-Bullying and Autism. But to get the tour started we needed support from others at Autism Alliance and to also get sponsors for the tour as well. We ended up getting some sponsors for the tour for the 2013-2014 school year, but after that year we realized that we didn't need the sponsors for the following year because we were in such high demand in the state and making its way across the country. There were some who doubted the tour and that it wouldn't have much success, but like my life story, this tour has become one of the most successful initiatives in the State and is making even more noise around the country.

How many schools, camps and students have seen you speak as part of the tour for free?

I don't know exactly how many presentations that I have done for free, but we've always done summer camp presentations for free and during the school year if I present at a school in Michigan that 40% or more free/reduced lunch then the presentation is also free. We started doing this just before the start of the 2016-2017 school year and it's been a big hit because every school needs to hear a message that the Tour provides.

Editor's note: I had the esteemed privilege of doing a Q&A with Anthony to discuss his journey growing up with autism several years ago which you can read [here](#). He's a great guy who truly cares about our community. – Kerry Magro



Click on Above Image for 9:26 Video on Anthony Ianni

In mid-March 2020, in the midst of The Relentless Tour, the United States was under siege by the Coronavirus outbreak which led to the closing of schools and government offices implementing “social distancing” and work-at-home policies. But for Ianni there was a silver lining as he was able to spend more time with his two young sons (click on below videos for some awesome hoop action).



At the same time, Ianni took The Relentless Tour to the Internet, sharing two positive messages, the first about getting through the Coronavirus challenge and the second creating the #AutismAwarenessChallenge (click on the two videos below).



Coach Tom Izzo Accepts Anthony Ianni's Challenge