

APR 3

## Minnesota Viking, CJ Ham, Visits Boys & Girls Club

Emily Ness



CJ Ham posing with a child from the Boys & Girls Club after signing an autograph.

Standing at the front of the Boys & Girls Club on Wednesday, Mar. 29, CJ Ham reflected on the time that he spent here as a child.

Boys and girls as young as 5 and as old as 18 sat in the audience looking excited. CJ had been invited to speak today on behalf of National Boys & Girls Club week.

"We are so incredibly proud of him," Tim Kittleson, Branch Director of the Lincoln Park Boys & Girls Club said as he introduced CJ.

Born and raised in Duluth, Minn., Ham came from humble beginnings. With parents who worked full time, the Boys & Girls Club provided Ham with a place to come after school to do homework, hangout with friends and play sports.

"I would definitely say the Boys & Girls club was a big part of my athletic ability," Ham said.

The Boys & Girls Club was a big part of Ham's education too. During his speech, he told kids that the Boys & Girls Club kept him out of trouble, as well as motivated him to graduate from Denfeld High School in 2011.

After high school, Ham attended Augustana University in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. There, he was given an opportunity to tryout for the Minnesota Vikings.

"Zimmer saw something in him and gave him a shot," Kittleson said.

The 5-foot-11-inch, 235-pound running back was signed to the 90-man roster after he participated in a rookie minicamp.

"I was really blessed that I was able to play for Minnesota. It's close for my family and my wife's family," Ham said.

Ham is one of seven Minnesota players on the Vikings camp roster.

"Growing up being a Vikings fan and watching all the athletes, it's a dream come true being able to be in that same spot," he said.

In addition to being a rookie in the NFL, Ham is a rookie in another area as well: fatherhood. He and his wife, Stephanie, welcomed their first child, Skylar, in July, 2016.

"She is a beautiful baby girl," Ham said.

Following his speech at the Boys & Girls Club, Ham answered questions and signed autographs.



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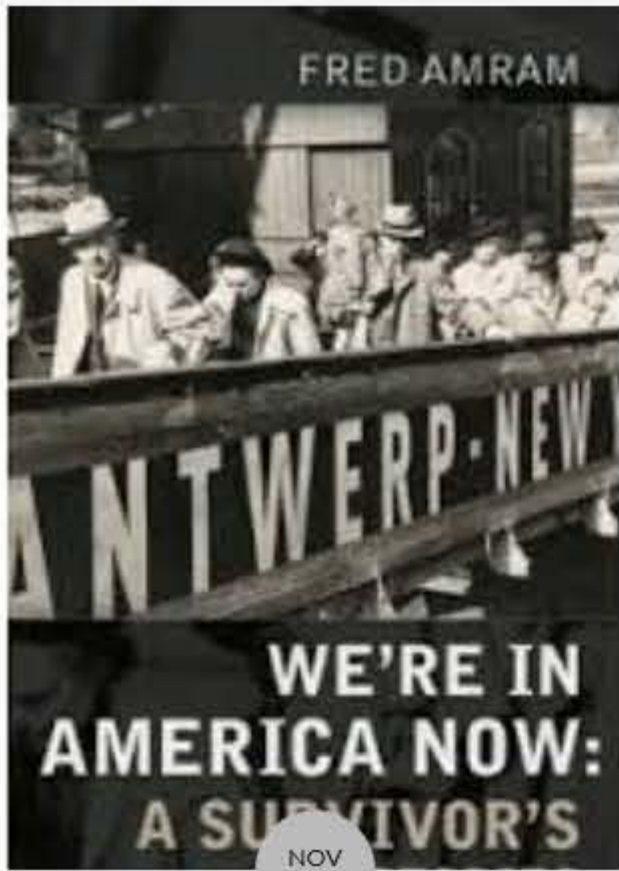
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