



## NBAA2012 ONLINE NEWS BUREAU

### Barrington Irving Says Anything Is Possible to Students at NBAA2012 Career Day

November 1, 2012

On the morning of Nov. 1, the day when aviation pioneer Barrington Irving was to present at Career Day at NBAA2012, a pileup stopped traffic on Orlando's I-4, stranding students traveling to the event. While half of the students expected had already arrived at the Orange County Convention Center, the other half still were nearly two hours away, so Irving gave his presentation twice – evidence of Irving's dedication to these aspiring aviators and his passion for aviation.

When Irving told how he became the youngest pilot, and the first African American, to fly solo around the world, the lesson he wanted students to take away was that success depends on "how bad you want it."

#### Irving Inspires Students With Personal Story

Growing up in one of Miami's toughest neighborhoods, Irving didn't want much for his life until he was 15, when a United Airlines captain walked into his parents' store and asked Irving if he'd considered being a pilot. Irving said only, "I don't think I'm smart enough to fly an airplane." But soon, Irving came to believe he could, giving up a football scholarship to the University of Florida to take flight lessons. Not long after, he believed he could fly around the world.

Once he had that dream, he never stopped striving for it. Unable to afford an airplane, he asked manufacturers to donate the parts. It took two-and-a-half years of hitting the pavement before securing his first sponsor. "I drove all the way from Miami to Mobile, AL, eating one sandwich a day. I brought plenty of deodorant, because I didn't have enough money to stay in a motel."

At 23, he embarked on his 97-day journey, flying through sandstorms and monsoons, and running into language barriers and technical challenges. "In life, everything is not going to be perfect, out on a silver platter," Irving said. "How bad do you want to succeed? Are you willing to work hard?"

For most of the students at Career Day, the answer was "yes," because they shared Irving's passion for aviation. "I think it's pretty awesome, the adventures he's had flying around the world," said one 16-year-old from the local chapter of the Civil Air Patrol. The student said that Irving's presentation showed him that "aviation is a good way to travel the world and impact people's lives."

#### Students Encouraged to Pursue Math and Science

Irving encouraged the students to take advantage of NBAA's Convention the way he did at 22. "One of my first life-changing experiences happened here, during an NBAA Convention," said Irving. "This is a place to ask questions, ask for business cards. I came here back in 2005 and picked up four sponsors for my solo flight," he said. "I haven't missed an NBAA Convention since."

During the Q&A, a young woman from First Coast High School in Jacksonville, FL, asked Irving simply, "Are there any women in aviation?" The high school junior and her class had driven three hours to the Convention. She wanted to join the U.S. Air Force and become a civil engineer but worried about pursuing a career in math and science-related fields, currently both male-dominated fields. Irving told her there are women in aviation, but not enough, so there are plenty of opportunities.

In fact, the other lesson Irving had for the students – and one he tries to instill through his Experience Aviation program – is "Everything I've done, I've only been able to do because of math and science."

Learn more about Barrington Irving at the Experience Aviation site at [www.experienceaviation.org](http://www.experienceaviation.org) (<http://www.experienceaviation.org>).

NBAA offers resources for students online at:

- [www.nbaa.org/portals/students/](http://www.nbaa.org/portals/students/) (<http://www.nbaa.org/portals/students/>)
- [www.nbaa.org/scholarships](http://www.nbaa.org/scholarships) (<http://www.nbaa.org/scholarships>)