

“What Basketball Means To Me”

Basketball is a universal sport played all over the world no matter your age, race, or background. What makes basketball so universal is the delight it brings to not only the people who participate in it, but the people who watch it as they cheer on the team they hope will win. I first discovered this truth about basketball in the third grade. When I was younger, basketball was more about the fun and building new relationships. As I grew older basketball became more personal.

Basketball has always been fun to me. It still is and always will be. As a senior in high school the past two years of my basketball journey have given me a deeper meaning than just fun. They have given a meaning of not only wanting to prove your opponent on the court wrong, but the people off the court who told you that you couldn't do it and even that little ounce of doubt in your mind that thinks you can't do it. The experiences that have brought me to this realization first started after my sophomore year in high school when I had to transfer because my family moved. I didn't want to leave my old school because we had just won conference championship our sophomore season and we only lost a couple games. I knew things were looking up for varsity the next year seeing that our junior varsity was pretty good as well.

I tried out for the team with my new school and I made it. The coach seemed pretty excited about me being a new addition to the team and so did the players. However, when the season started, I was barely getting any time. Then it went from getting a little time to no time. I talked to the coach and he felt as though I just couldn't run with the other girls. I couldn't understand, because even my teammates felt as though I should be playing. Soon, my confidence began to get lower. My father came to every game even though I didn't play, because he knew I needed the support.

Then, the spring came and it was time for AAU basketball. I decided that I would move on from the previous disappointment of the school season and build my confidence back in AAU. I attended try-outs for a well known program in our area and so many girls were there.

The coach had to make a lot of cuts, but I made the team. This was just the shot of confidence I needed.

The particular program I was playing for had two teams for my age group. The team I was on was doing very well, but in the middle of the summer the coach wanted one team for my age group and cut about twelve girls, including me. He sent an e-mail saying he wanted to cut down his teams and he felt as though the players he cut were not capable of playing college basketball.

I was very distraught. It seemed like every time things were looking up everything would just fall back down. Of course I cried, but then something arose in me and I just wanted to prove all these people wrong. The rest of the summer, I took no days off and I was either in the gym working on my jump shot or outside doing ball handling. I began to understand that God lets everything happen for a reason and I was determined to go into my senior year a whole new, improved player and person. I wrote goals for myself every day and my motto was "God, Hard work, and Dedication." I knew that those three things would be the only way I would be successful.

About two weeks before the start of school my mother lost her job and we ended having to go back to my old school. I was pretty excited but wasn't sure if they would accept me but they did. I knew it was my time and I was ready show all the hard work I had been putting in. Our team was looking pretty strong and we proved it. We were an unranked team who went undefeated in conference and had the two biggest upsets. When we beat the number three team Romeoville, I had a record breaking 7 three-pointers and a total of 27 points. Then we beat the number two team Hillcrest and I had 18 points and hit the last two free throws to seal the win.

After the season was over our coach, Tim Zasada, was named Times Coach of the Year. I was awarded All-Conference and I made the Illinois Girls Basketball All-Area team. I knew I wanted to prove all those people wrong but I didn't think this much victory would become of it. That coach who said I wasn't capable of playing college basketball was wrong and I'm going to play basketball on a scholarship at TIU. I knew God wouldn't let me down. I don't know how it's going to happen, but I know I want young people all over to hear my testimony so they will

know my motto. God, hard work, and dedication will get you past any obstacles you're facing and help you overcome the odds. That is what basketball really means to me.