

## IT'S HARD TO BECOME A HERO

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Seminar: Sport and Society

[Assignment: Write about a personal experience in sports, positive or negative, which involved some aspect of social interaction.]

(1) Sometimes a team is not always a team, and sometimes credit is not given when it is due. I am no exception to this. It was Christmas vacation three years ago. Our high school basketball team went to a holiday tournament in Milwaukee to compete with some of the best teams in the state. I was only a sophomore, but I had been moved up to the varsity squad early. Being so young it was very difficult for me to fit in with all the older team members, and they did their best to make it hard for me. I needed to prove what my capabilities were, to them and to me.

(2) For over two weeks I had been preparing myself for the tournament, and I was ready. At about ten o'clock in the morning, the team boarded the bus. Since I had no friends on the team, I sat in the back of the bus by myself. The bus ride took four hours, but it seemed like a week. Finally we arrived at the school where we were to play. At this point my blood was pumping so fast, I thought my veins were going to burst. We quickly began to unpack the bus, and it was my job to carry in the trunk. It was a tradition that the younger guys on the team had to carry in all the equipment. Normally, that would have really bothered me, but at this moment there could have been two tons of bricks in the trunk and I would still have carried them.

(3) The front doors of the school led us up to the halls and around the building until we reached the locker room. It was the classiest locker room I had ever seen. Towels were lined up on the cushioned benches in front of the lockers, and it did not have the normal odor of a basketball locker room. In awe, I began to put on my uniform and shoes. The entire time I never thought of anything but the game. I kept telling myself that I was going to prove myself tonight.

(4) When it came time for the game, I was ready. My body was tense and my teeth were clenched. The team lined up and began to clap in unison. When given the "o.k." we quickly dashed into the gym. There were more than two thousand people packed into a gym that holds fewer than seventeen hundred. This just made my blood pump even faster. During warm-ups, many things went through my mind. What happens if I don't do well? Should I really be here? The entire time I was watching the clock, counting down to the eventual start of the game.

(5) The clock hit zero and I knew it was time. The

announcer introduced the starters of both teams. I was not a starter but usually got my share of playing time. I knew I was better than most of the starters, but I think the coach felt that I was not experienced enough to handle the pressure on a starter. Finally, the time came. Both teams approached the floor. The two centers entered the circle for the jump ball, and crowd began to yell at the top of their lungs. The referee then entered the circle with the ball. He threw it in the air and the game began. The starters played well, but the other team had much more talent than we did. Up and down the team ran, and we were being soundly beaten.

(6) When the first half was over, I had played a total of five minutes. I wanted to play and the coach was not giving me a chance. After a lengthy half-time speech by the coach, we went back out on the court. I wanted to tell the coach to put me in, but that would only make things worse. So I just sat on the bench and waited. I went in periodically, but not for any extended period of time. Near the end of the game, both teams began to foul each other. The coach decided to put the better free-throw shooters in the game in case a foul occurred. Since I had been shooting eighty-six percent all season, I was the first to go in. I was both upset and nervous because the coach had waited so long to put me in, and because everyone was watching me. There were ten seconds left and the other team had the ball. We were down by a point, and I knew we needed to score a basket quickly. So I decided to try to get a steal. Eyeing my man, I took off. I got closer and closer, until I reached the ball. There was an opening, and I swiped the ball from my opponent. I began to dribble down court at full speed. Glancing at the time, I realized there were only a few seconds left. Suddenly I spotted a teammate down court; quickly I passed the ball to him. Brian caught the ball and threw it at the basket. Time stood still, except for the ball rotating in the air. I watched the ball reach a peak and begin to fall. When it came to the rim, it bounced once, then twice, and eventually fell into the goal. Time ran out and we won the game.

(7) The entire team came out yelling with joy, and the crowd went wild. The funny thing was that all the excitement was for Brian's one easy shot, not a single word of congratulations for the little sophomore who made the steal. Deep down inside, I knew I was the one who made the difference, and even though I did not get the credit, I was a hero in my own heart and soul.