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Starting Basketball

By Miriam Guerrero

This story is based on my own experience. It's about how I used determination to overcome injustice. Even though it wasn't my voice it was my actions that made a difference. Basketball really showed me how to use this skill and to never give up.

One of my favorite sports is basketball. I started when I was in fourth grade because the fifth grade team needed players for their basketball team. I only started playing basketball because my friend, Clara, talked me into it.

“ You should sign up for basketball, it's a really fun sport.” said Clara

“ I don't know.” I answered with a shrug.

Clara talked about basketball all day long. She was explaining every single detail to me . It actually sounded very interesting and caught my attention.

Finally I made a decision and said, “OK, I guess it won't hurt to try it.” So I signed up.

I was very confused when I went to my first practice. I learned a lot just from watching. During the drills I never got to try them. I just gotta watch how to do them. I wasn't really fair because I learn better if I do things. I was very nervous for my first game, but what I didn't know was that I wasn't going to get

to play. I was very disappointed I really wanted to play. I worked really hard during our practices. In our second game I got to play for 30 seconds at the end of the game. WOW! So exciting right? It was like that the whole season. I didn't like sitting on the bench but the words were stuck in my head, "You should sign up for basketball, it's a really fun sport." Thank you Clara, I was going to sign up for basketball again.

In fifth grade I actually remembered all the rules of basketball. We still had our couch from last year. I thought that maybe I didn't try my best and I had to do more to get to play this year. Even Though I put a lot of effort into all my practices in our first few games I didn't get to play. In our fourth or fifth game I got to play for a whole minute in the last quarter. During the whole season I only got to play for one or two minutes in the last quarter. I was about done.

Next year, in sixth grade, sign ups were going around the class and I skipped them. I wasn't going to play basketball that year. At the end of the day I saw Clara running towards me with some papers in her hands. I didn't have to think for a really long time to know why she had that in her hands.

Clara stretched her hand with the signups and asked, "Were you in class when signups came around?"

"Yes." I said

"You're not signing up for basketball?" Clara was a little confused.

"No." I said quietly

"Why."

"I'm done with basketball, I never get to play for more

than one or two minutes even though I never miss a practice, I have to drive all the way to Redway and Blue Lake to just sit there and watch, I get home really late to take a shower and do homework, and next day I wake up early in the morning to prepare my basketball stuff for a practice or a game but never get to participate.” We looked at each other, then I asked her, “Would you sign up for basketball if you were me?”

“I know that you feel disappointed, but I see that each year you are getting better at it, I would sign up for basketball if I were you.” I didn’t know quite what to say.

“Do you really think I’m getting better at basketball?” I said with a surprise

“Everybody thinks you are.” I didn’t say anything else, but I took the signup forms.

When I went to our first practice of the season I noticed that we had the same coach from the last two years. For the first time ever I got to be in a press drill. He let me play in all positions to see which one was the best for me. He finally said I was going to be a down low person. I wasn’t too excited about that because I knew that the girls that play that position are usually really tall. I was really small compared to all the girls that play there. That whole season I got to play at least for one or two quarters. I was getting better so when signups went around in seventh grade I signed up.

We had new coaches that year. I was nervous and happy at the same time because I could prove to them that I could be a starter or I wouldn’t get to play because they wanted to see more. I didn’t know what was going to happen, but I had to try

my best to get what I wanted. We started to do some drills and then did a scrimmage.

“Practice is over please wait to the side for a minute.” said the coach. I was wondering why.

“ Good job everyone, I got all of your positions written down. Please listen for your name and remember it so you know who to watch if you're going in for someone.” said the coach.

I was listening to my name. I was wondering if I would be playing something different. Then I heard, “Miriam, down low.” I was okay with that. I already knew how to play that position. I would easily know what I was going to do.

We were the home team in our first game of the season. We were stretching in the cafeteria. A few minutes later our coach walked in.

“ Can I have everybody's attention please.” We all looked forward and listened, “Everybody did great during practice, but if I call out your name you are going to start today, we will see if we need to make some changes later.” I listen carefully even though I never was a starter. I heard four names that weren't mine, I thought I was going to sit.

Suddenly, I hear the first name, “Miriam.” My first reaction was to look at Clara. I think that her first reaction was to look at me too because we were staring at each other with a great surprise in our faces. I felt so nervous and happy at the same time. We were going against a team that had huge girls and I had to guard them.

“Okay, time to warm up.” said coach

While we were warming up I scanned the other players and they were all so tall. The only small person was their point guard. I wasn't going to guard her. Warmup time was over and we had to go to our benches. We listened to our coaches' tips and he also told us the number of the girl we were going to guard. I got Number 24. She was really tall, but I had to do my job. When the game started, our team won the jump ball and scored. I had to go back. The girl followed me to my spot and guarded me. She was pushing me and hitting me with her elbow, but still I got the rebound and gave it to Clara, our point guard. During the first half I won most of the rebounds. Now I understood why our coach wanted me there. We went to the cafeteria for our halftime break.

When we went out to play again I was going to guard number 24 again. This time she looked pretty angry, but I was going to do what I did during the first half of the game. The ball went out and it was the other team's ball now. I quickly went to guard number 24 .

She looked down with the dirtiest look I have ever seen, "I know you can't guard me, you are too small and weak to ground me."

I wasn't upset because I knew that she was the one getting mad. So I jumped up and intercepted the pass and dribbled the ball to the other side and scored. We won that game. I am very proud of myself. I had never played for a whole game before it was awesome.

The next day Clara came up to us, "We have a tournament this weekend!" she exclaimed.

“Really?” We all said.

“Ya, it's the Fortuna tournament.” Clara answered with excitement.

“ We always get second place.” I said with a little disappointment.

“ Let's just work hard and stay positive.”

We were getting ready for our first game in the cafeteria. Everybody was nervous, even Clara. Then we did our regular warmups on the court. I knew it was going to be a tough game because we played that team before and the scores were tight. We went to our bench for instructions. During the first few minutes of the game both teams hadn't scored that many points, but during the second quarter the other team started scoring more points than our team.

The first half was tough. We were down by twenty points. Usually when you are down by fifteen to twenty points it's hard to catch up. We were disappointed, but we still had a whole second half to tie or win. We worked hard and at the end of the game we won by four points. It was tough but we did it. We had to play another game later that night. That game was tough, but we also won that game. We were going to the championship game!

It was Saturday night and we were getting ready for the championship game. We took a peek to see who we were going to play. Redwood Prep was one of the hardest teams we've played. We stretched and warmed up. It was game time. When the first half was over I was really tired. I was guarding a really tall girl as usual, but that girl was really good at rebounding.

We were down by two points. I was tired, but I wasn't going to give up. I got most of the rebounds and scored many points. Redwood Prep scored right after we did. It was like that until the end of the third quarter. When the fourth quarter started both teams couldn't score until the last few minutes of the game. It was our ball and one of my teammates, Sienna, went up for a layup and got fouled. She got the two points and made her free throw. We went back on defense, then Clara stole the ball and got fouled. She missed one of them and made the other one. There was 30 seconds on the clock so the only thing we had to do was to play defense and hold the ball if we steal it. I heard the buzzer and I knew that it was all over.

The game was over. We won by six points, everybody was happy and cheering. We couldn't believe it, we won first place! We went to the award ceremony and sat there together. We were called up to get our trophy and medal. We took a picture and sat down for the all-tourney.

We were listening to the person calling out the all-tourney names, "From Ferndale number 11, Miriam Guerrero." I thought maybe it was someone else but it wasn't. It was me. I got up and my team and the people from Ferndale were cheering for me. Then they called the MVP. He continued, "Also from Ferndale numbers 2 and 5 Clara and Reagan." They came and stood next to me. We said good job to each other, then we went to the side and took a picture. I couldn't believe I got the all-tourney.

That was my first all-tourney. Clara was right, basketball is a really fun sport. I signed up for basketball this year as an 8th

grader. I got all-tourney twice this year. I learned that all actions can make a difference. Basketball taught me how to use determination to overcome injustice. I try to use that on something new or something I want to accomplish.