



True Winners Inspire Others with their Passion

By Bill Gosse

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The Kansas Jayhawks completed their NCAA men's basketball season with a national championship, but not before many things fell into place to give them even a chance of winning. Their valiant efforts produced an incredible shot to send the game into overtime and an opportunity to prevail over the Memphis Tigers.

In 2006, some incredible shots turned a New York high school student into an instant celebrity.

Jason McElwain never made his high school basketball team because he was too short, not very talented and autistic. The coach noticed his passion and asked him to be the team's manager.

Because Jason was so dedicated and passionate, the coach felt it would be just reward to allow Jason to suit up for the final home game of the season. Jason's team was comfortably ahead late in the game and his coach put him in. With more than 4 minutes left, there was plenty of time for Jason to have a chance to score.

Thirteen shots and 20 points later, Jason was a star. After shooting an air-ball, Jason went on to make shot after shot. Each time he scored, the crowd erupted louder than before.

Was Jason a star because he scored 20 points? Was he a star because he accomplished so much against long odds? Was he a star before he stepped on the court?

Every one of us has a unique purpose. That's what makes all of us stars.

Jason inspired a nation of people with his passion. He was given an incredible opportunity through sports, and that's why sports can be so awesome when done the right way.

Jason's story inspired other kids with autism. Perhaps, that was his purpose.

Passion is one of the criteria for being a winner. Maybe you know someone like Jason, a special Olympian perhaps. They have a zeal for life, and we feel so good when we are around them.

Why don't we all have that passion?

Another step to being a winner is having a positive attitude.

Greg Gadson is a lieutenant colonel in the Army, and has become somewhat famous as the motivational leader of the New York Giants football team. Gadson doesn't play for the Giants, but he helped motivate them – all the way to the Super Bowl.

Greg lost his legs as the result of injuries sustained in Iraq, but he didn't choose to roll over and wallow in self-pity. He continued to be a leader, from the time he first landed in the hospital through today. The people supporting him, coupled with his adversities have made him stronger.

Embracing life with passion and a positive attitude can affect many people.

The third criterion for being a winner is being teachable.

Many people feel they can simply push their way into success. There are parents who feel they must do whatever it takes to get their kids on teams, even if it means lying, cheating or getting a coach fired. This isn't practicing self-sacrifice or humility - components of being teachable.

Pulling out jerseys, pounding on chests and gloating don't belong in sports. Winners realize people are watching. Winners act like they've been there.

Winners positively play with passion, while remaining teachable.