When I Realized, I Was Better Than I Thought

“Are you up yet, Aaron?” my friend texts me on my phone.

Today was the first day of “True North Basketball Camp” and I was super ecstatic. This was going to start up my action-packed summer. I pack my basketball stuff, I change into proper clothing, and I ran over to my friend’s house. Every step I took towards his house made me more and more excited. It got me thinking of the possibilities I get to display my art of basketball to my peers. The feeling of the warm rays of the sun on my skin and the beautiful aroma of the neighborhood further motivated me. I pick up my friend and we are off to the gym to our middle school where this camp was held. This was going to be a fun week for sure. Or will it?

My feelings of confidence, motivation, and self pride went flying out the window faster than an airplane-jet. Everyone here looks like they are way better than me. I was scared. I wanted to leave. I regretted my decision to partake in this physical activity I was feeling great about literally a minute ago! However, somehow my friend with his persuading tactics convinced me to stay. These basketball players can probably rip me in half like a great white shark to a seal. They were as intimidating as a group of rambunctious Seniors walking down the hallways passing you by. You can see by their sweat, their clothes, and their basketball shoes that these are the people you don’t want to mess with. Comparing me to them was an insult. My friend fit in just well with them with his skill, which further killed me inside. My confidence at this point was a negative number.

We start off with some of the boring basics. Dribbling the ball, passing the ball, and shooting the ball. That was just brief because we got right into the torturing part which was the complicated drills and the head-cramming steps that made my head explode. The basketball was not listening to me. I was missing open shots, losing the ball, and worst of all, making myself look like a fool. The ball had a mind of its own when it came to me. Everyone else makes it look so easy. They make it look like second nature. To make matters worse, the coaches decide to separate people based off their skill, and of course they put me on the bottom tier, Junior Varsity. Like being a freshman in a highly academic school full of brainiacs.

I can hear the chatter: “Oh that tier has sucky people”, “Oh they look like a piece of cake”, and, “They are easy money”. These first couple four days were not what I was expecting at all. Hopefully it will get better, right?

Today was the second last day of the camp. We went through the same dreary drills, played strategic scrimmages, and even some gnarly games. However, today the coaches decide to start up a one on one tournament. My heart was beating as fast as a race car as I was thinking of the negatives.

“How far will I make it? I’m most likely going to be the first one out. What will everyone think of me? I’m not even that good!” I said to myself.

Of course, with my luck, my first opponent was 6 feet and 4 inches tall. That’s so fair! These one on ones go to three. Surprisingly, I beat him three to zero without a sweat. I thought for sure he would beat me to a pulp. Even more surprisingly, I kept winning. Beating sweaty body, after sweaty body got me closer to the champion round. I haven’t heard such enthusiasm from everyone towards me ever. They were cheering my name as I had the ball, they were clapping at every point I scored, but inside I still lacked the confidence to believe in myself.

The champion round consisted of me and my friend. This was going to be an easy win for him. We versed each other all the time before and he always beat me. Going into this final game, I was prepared to lose.

“Let’s go Aaron!”, I hear various voices scream “You can do it!”.

The coaches asked my friend to pick a side of a quarter.

“Heads”, he said with pride.

The coach flipped the coin and it lands on tails. It was my ball to start. I was hesitant and sloppy. My first possession I turned the ball over, and just like that I’m on defence. I play the greatest defence I’ve played all week, but he still manages to score over the top of me. One to zero. Meanwhile, everyone is screaming and cheering us on. It’s his possession. He tries to drive and score a lay-up on me. He was so close I can smell his deodorant. He missed. I quickly look to score with a jumper. Swish. One to one. I do some quick dribbling moves on him before I pull-up and drain another shot in his face. Two to one. This possession I can win. I run as fast as I could for a possible lay-up. When I look to release the ball, it was suddenly swatted out of my hands. My friend managed to steal it. He took that lay-up from me and converted. Two to Two. This was an important possession because I am not allowed to let him score. He did some sort of illegal move that the coaches spotted, however. With that I got the ball back. I took a second to think of a plan. With all my hope and might I drive passed him. I faked a shot and he fell for it. He was 50 feet in the air as I score. I am victorious and everyone lost their minds! The amount of screaming and yelling can pop an eardrum. Looking at my friend’s face was priceless because his jaw dropped with disbelief.

This moment was unreal. I completely proved myself wrong. This was the moment that I realized that my skill was better than most. That I should not think so poorly of myself. I shouldn’t have doubted myself in the first place. Deep down inside I knew that I was good. This feeling felt was nice. The lessoned I learn from this was to never doubt yourself no matter what when it comes to doing something you love. After this moment, I got to enjoy the rest of the camp more because of my boost in confidence.