

My Success Story
By Adam Dawson

Success happens everyday, in little ways, and in ways unseen. My first year of teaching brought success, much within me, and much that no one, not even me, was aware of. This is the account of a day where success that many cannot see revealed itself during a basketball game.

I was assistant basketball coach for the girl Raymond High Rangers, which meant I was head girls' junior varsity coach. The JV squad went into this day with 6 losses and no wins. We lost games 54-9 and only got into double digits twice. A handful of girls on the team received formal coaching before this season, many only had big ideas of playing well. Traveling violations were a common occurrence and double dribbling was an innate skill.

This day Prentiss High School traveled to our gym for our seventh game of the season. Scheduled after our JV game were two more games, one including Prentiss' and our varsity boys' team. On Prentiss' team was Al Jefferson, who since then was drafted by the Boston Celtics and now grosses millions. NBA scouts attended the game, the radio station, who never comes to a Rangers' game, came, and the bleachers were full. There was an excitement in the air.

When my JV girl's team started the game they behaved how they always behaved: constant fouling, gaps in the defense, inadequate passing. The opponents were not much different.

During the game we tried, as normal, to focus on our strengths and work on our failings. We tried to change our defense and keep trying the plays we repeat without end in practice. There was nothing completely abnormal about this game, except our opponents were at our skill level.

With 10 seconds left in the game we were down 5 – 9. We would need to double our score in 10 seconds in order to win, so it seemed we had lost yet another game. Our JV leader made an outside shot, bringing us within 2 points. The opposing team did not call a time out to discuss a strategy, so with about 6 seconds left in the game Prentiss just threw the ball in without realizing how important the play was. One of our uncoordinated players was in the vicinity of where the ball was tossed. She lunged to her right, catching the ball mid-air, and with the two steps she took to gain her balance she chucked the ball from behind her head toward the hoop. The ball went in the basket. The buzzer went off. The game was tied.

The player who made the basket ran around the court in a fury and eventually went into the restroom and did not come out until overtime started. I went to the official's table and we decided there would be a two minute overtime. My girls huddled around as I instructed them on what defense we should use. They were too excited to listen. Finally,

overtime started and the girls played without following a single instruction I had given them.

With two seconds left in overtime Prentiss fouled us while we were shooting. We got two free throw shots, however we missed them both. Naturally, we should go into a second overtime, however the opposing team's coach said that it was "too much drama" and she took her team to the locker room. The game ended in a 9 – 9 tie.

The success exhibited in this game is not easily seen and was not just because we did not lose. The information you do not know about, such as how the girls practiced every day since August, how many of them could not play offense or defense at all without a violation being called when they started, how their families do not have cars but they make it anyway, or how they have never committed themselves to anything else before, makes them successful. The team that started the year and the team that made it up to this game were completely different teams, despite the fact they could only score 9 points in a game. This team was successful for the simple fact that they did not give up despite not knowing how to play and being defeated almost every time. That is success.