

Basketball – more than just a sport

Writing an essay about something you love, like or enjoy, should not be very hard I thought to myself. But it proved to be so. It's not the fact that there aren't plenty of people (my mom, my dad, my sister, my girlfriend, my friends – you all know who you are) who I love, there are actually too many. Who should I choose? So I decided to write about something and not someone. I did some soul searching and asked myself "What thing/item/activity has truly meant a lot to you?" It would have been nice if only one thing popped into my mind, as if god had chosen my topic for me, but unfortunately that's far from the truth. I thought for several days and had all sorts of crazy ideas ranging from my passion for the grotesque comic series South Park, to my general hatred towards people who litter on the streets, but none of them felt quite right. I didn't want to write an essay just because I had to. I wanted to write about something that had truly made a difference to me. By reformulating my research question a bit, it all became very clear. I asked myself "What is the one thing that has followed you through your life?" This time only one thing popped up in my mind: Basketball. Therefore I would like to dedicate this essay to that special something, basketball, which has followed me through my life and always been there when I needed it.

You might be thinking: "Gosh. Another guy writing about his passion for sports, how unoriginal can it be?" But this is not going to be about how much I love playing basketball – even though I really do – it is going to be about all the things I have learned as a result of basketball. I think I started playing basketball because of my height. I am a fairly tall guy of 1.94 meters, making me about 13 centimeters taller than the average male Dane. I grew quite rapidly when I was young and people always had funny comments like "Is it hot up there?" or "When you're that tall you should be playing basketball" So one day I thought "Hey! Maybe I should!" A good friend of mine was playing in the local club SISU – actually the most winning club in Danish basketball history – and I joined him for a try-out practice Tuesday after school. I remember my first practice as if it was yesterday. I had a beautiful clean block – in this sense clean refers to the fact that I only hit the ball and not my opponents hands – on the best player on the team and I was ecstatic. A few days later I joined the club and I was now officially playing basketball. I was 11 years old.

I was playing twice a week, usually Tuesday and Thursday, and played games in the weekend. I absolutely loved it. Often I would go to the gym on Wednesday and practice for myself. And that's the beauty of basketball. You can easily practice by yourself for several hours. You can practice your ball handling, you can practice your penalty shot, you can practice your 3-point shot. Often I would bring my portable speakers and listen to some good music while jumping around the gym for hours. At that time basketball worked as a real stress reliever for me. I never understood how my teammates could skip practice when they had exams. That's exactly when I needed basketball the most. It gave me an opportunity to completely empty my mind, and just think about playing. Today I use basketball in the exact same way. When I'm really busy or am experiencing some personal issues I grab my ball and my speakers and go to the court and shoot. There is absolutely nothing on my mind – I just shoot. Basketball is my comfort when I'm sad or stressed.

Basketball is a team game. Without your team you are nothing, and to win games the team needs to work together. This is very much like in any company or business setting where

individuals need to work together as a team to reach the best results. Basketball has given me a unique insight into group dynamics and showed me that it does not matter if *you* deliver your best, if it is on the expense of your teammates. Only by maximizing the team's performance – and not necessarily your own – will you win. Today I employ this in every aspect of my life. If I do something, make something, write something, I always do it to win!

Basketball is more than just a sport. It's a friend (I thought about lifestyle, but I felt that was too much of a cliché). Basketball has been like my second friend through my life. Basketball consisted of people who didn't know me from school, which in a way was really nice. We were a bunch of people united for the sole purpose of playing basketball. Now these people are some of my best friends, who I travelled around the world with, or live with today. Getting the opportunity to study in U.S.A. – the land of basketball – enables me to combine my studies with my biggest passion. What more can you ask for?

Basketball has taught me so many lessons and qualities, which I can draw upon today and without it, I would not be where I am today. Thinking about my life so far I can divide it into different stages, like high school, gymnasium and now university, but basketball has been with me through all these stages. I can always rely on basketball because it has no timeframe. It never has to end. Basketball will always be with me.