Woes of an Athlete

William Keutzer

To say that I went to high school merely to play basketball would be a gross injustice; there was another invaluable attraction at the institution as well, namely, girls. But at the high school I attended these attributes were synonymous, for it was impossible to play basketball and not have a girl friend. However, I did love basketball and played it to the fullest extent until my senior year. At that time I was kicked out of school.

Although Bali High has never been known to produce any students of high esteem, they were noted for their perennial basketball championships. Naturally, our principal, Mr. Hoop (Celtics '25), was extremely proud of our athletic endeavors. He helped in every way to keep us in school. His job was not an easy one, however, for there were a few of us on the squad who were not academically inclined. We weren't stupid, mind you. We knew every basketball rule perfectly, but when we came to the superfluous things, such as Algebra and English, we ran into difficulty.

Our center, Bundy Waller, had more trouble in class than anyone else. The trouble wasn't entirely his fault either; it was partly the coach's. Bundy's biggest trouble was that he was clumsy. He was six feet eight inches tall and completely lacking in coordination. The coach took drastic steps to remedy this clumsiness and made Bundy practise skipping a rope for an hour each day. Also he gave Bundy an old basketball to carry with him wherever he went. "Just to get the feel of it," the coach said. You can readily see the effect this had on poor Bundy. English class immediately followed the rope skipping. Consequently, as soon as he had settled himself comfortably in his seat, he would fall asleep. Bundy's drowsiness did not worry Mr. Allgood, our English teacher, for he was proud of the fact that in all of his years of teaching he never had had a student fall out of a seat and hurt himself while sleeping. But you can imagine the disturbance caused in class when Bundy let go of the basketball in his sleep, and the ball dribbled unconcernedly down the aisle. Bundy never worried about tests in that class. He had a system. He would write the answers (given to him beforehand) on the cuff of his shirt and copy them during the test. Cheating never bothered the conscience of Mr. Allgood, because he was partially blind without his glasses, and every test day he would take them off and forget where he left them. This eventually proved injurious to Mr. Allgood, for one test day as he was groping his way to the rear of the room to answer a question, he failed to see Bundy's basketball lying in the aisle and tripped over it,
recieving a nasty cut on the head for his trouble. Mr. Allgood left school shortly after the incident.

We had one member of the team that fared somewhat better than the rest of us. His name was Boone Relis. Boone was so intelligent that he never had to resort to the cheating tactics in tests as we did. Probably the thing Boone is most remembered for is the philosophical poem he wrote:

It is far better
To earn your letter,
Than to exceed
In learning to read.
For who needs knowledge,
And why go to college—
For who needs to know how to subtract
Just to sign a basketball contract?

These words of wisdom still hang on the bulletin board in the locker room, sage advice to aspiring young athletes.

My life went along smoothly until my senior year. Then fate frowned upon me. As well as being a basketball player in high school, I had won considerable acclaim as a pool shooter. In fact, I can say that there were few people who could outshoot me. So complete was my devotion toward the two equally great pastimes that I never suspected they would conflict. As I look back on it now, I can remember how happy I was living such a full life, playing basketball in the afternoons and pool at night. Then one day my world seemed to crumble beneath me. The coach, Mr. Boardback (Celtics '25), summoned me into his office. At first this delighted me, for I thought he wanted me to admire his collection of pictures of basketball stars, but I was wrong. How well I remember the scene that followed.

"Keutzer, sit down, I want to talk to you."
I did, and he did.
"Keutzer, I'm not at all happy with the way you've been shooting lately."
"Pool or basketball, sir?"
"Basketball, of course!" he replied, trying hard to be patient.
"What's the matter with my shooting, sir?"
"You haven't been making any baskets."
"Oh."
"Furthermore, I know what the trouble is."
"Oh?"
"Yes, I've been watching you closely, and, after giving it some serious thought, I've discovered that your pool shooting has been causing all the trouble. You see, you have been shooting pool so much these last three years that you have become musclebound in your right shoulder!"

I felt humbled in the presence of such a great mind.
Furthermore, Keutzer, I have talked it over with the principal, and we have decided the only thing for us to do is advise you to give up your pool shooting or be dismissed from the squad. It’s up to you, Keutzer. You can tell me your decision tomorrow. You may go now.”

What a blow this was to me! Well, there I stood at the crossroads of my life, being forced to give up either pool or basketball. It was common knowledge at the school that if anyone was dropped from the basketball squad it meant automatic dismissal from school as well. In all fairness, was it reasonable to ask a boy to give up his sole means of support? For the past three years I had been making all my money shooting nine-ball for fifty cents a game, and now the coach was asking me to cast it out of my life forever, or else! What a decision to have to make at such an early age!

I shall never forget how difficult it was for me to leave old Bali High. But there comes a time in every man’s life when he must make a serious decision. Possibly, my decision was influenced by my girl friend, who positively refused to marry me unless I had a sound means of supporting her, such as playing nine-ball. However, I must admit that it does give me a great deal of satisfaction to note that Bali High hasn’t won a basketball championship since I left.

I Learned From a Dime Store

Helen Tozier

A dime store may seem to be merely a place where lower-priced merchandise is sold, but for me it was the place where I first opened my eyes to see some of the world as it really exists. It was my first job, and I was on top of the world when I was hired. To become a part of the working class just after my sixteenth birthday seemed something special to me. The glamour, at least I thought it was glamour, of saying, “I’ve got a job,” appealed to me as did the pay envelope bearing my name and company number. Being able to perform a service, however menial, for my fellow man and being entrusted with money in large sums filled me with self-importance. I was the mainstay of the entire organization, or so I thought, until I reported for my first day’s work.

My initiation into the working world opened my eyes to how business, small or large, is controlled by a few, and how the rest of the workers abide by the rules set down by these few. I came to realize that I was not the “director” running the show but merely one of the “chorus” who helped put it on. I learned right at the beginning the finesse of guiding a customer’s buying ideas down certain lanes and of convincing her that she needed