

PRACTICE

Building Character Through Soccer



Enthusiasm:

Definition: a strong feeling of active interest and enjoyment

Synonyms: passion, fervor, positive attitude

Enthusiasm Story

Jason McElwain was born on October 1, 1987 and was diagnosed with autism by his second birthday. As he grew older, he struggled with learning and developing social skills. His parents placed him in special education classes to develop those lacking skills. However, his greatest enjoyment was playing basketball that his older brother introduced to him. He became a highly functioning autistic and his friends affectionately nicknamed him “J-Mac.”

The Greece Athena High School basketball coach, Jim Johnson, appointed him as team manager, because he did not make the basketball team. However, he was always available, enthusiastic and J-Mac only missed one game in three years as the team manager.

Because of J-Mac’s dedicated service, Coach Johnson decided to add J-Mac to the final regular season roster so he could be given a jersey and sit on the team bench for the last home game of the year. With the team in a comfortable lead, coach put J-Mac in with 4:19 left in the game. J-Mac missed his first two shot attempts and then got “hotter than a pistol” shooting six three-pointers and one two-point shot. His twenty points in just over three minutes made him the high point scorer of the game. As the final buzzer sounded, the audience stormed the court in a wild celebration. See [Youtube below](#).

The story made the national media and projected this young man’s enthusiasm and accomplishment internationally. On March 14, 2006, President Bush stopped by a nearby airport to see J-Mac. President Bush said, “Our country was captivated by an amazing story on the basketball court, which, in turn, touched the hearts of citizens all around the country.”

J-Mac won the 2006 ESPY award for the Best Moments in Sports, beating out Kobe Bryant’s 81 point game. J-Mac, currently holds several jobs and in his free time travels across the US to raise funds for autism research. He has become an accomplished marathon runner, completing the 2014 Boston Marathon in 2:57.05. His passionate story has inspired a book, “The Game of My Life,” and there have been over twenty five inquiries from film companies for a movie on his life story.

Video Link: Jason McElwain’s game

<http://youtu.be/l2lU1h9sG7U>

