

Ted's Turmoil

Injury is a necessary risk inherent in training and conditioning in sport. Part of becoming a champion athlete is the attitude one takes towards psychological training during practice, play and especially during injury. Responding to the motivation of training room personnel and inspiring them, as well as one's own self is necessary. But it is also important to develop the toughness to play through pain and to know when to give into pain and get rest and receive treatment.

Thomas Johnston 1



Ted Jackson is the only senior who plays basketball for Major University, a predominantly white school. He is a lean six foot tall African American, Ted was a high school All-American from Philadelphia's inner city, where he was the star of his team, averaging over 30pts and almost seven assists per game during his high school career.

Ted's first two years in college were very frustrating. he did not play much as a freshman or sophomore, averaging under five minutes per game. However, this was not totally unexpected, as Major University had a reputation for point guards who went on to excel in the professional leagues. It had always been Ted's dream to play for Major University and then play professional basketball. His parents had both attended Major University and had met there as incoming freshmen. They were delighted when ted chose Major.

As a junior, Ted became the starting point guard. For the first ten games, he averaged 14 points and 6.5 assists per game. He was the consummate point guard, directing traffic and, in his coaches words, "coaching the team on the court." Ted's accomplishments did not go unnoticed by the media either. One article in the local paper said, "Jackson is a sure bet to make the pros. He is just another in a long line of point guards from Major University to display such great leadership qualities." Three days after this article appeared, ted suffered a season ending injury. When he drove the lane, he was undercut by his defender and landed on his side. Ted's first thought was that his basketball career was over. Although he could leave the court under his own power, Ted knew his knee and back was severely injured. The result of the fall was a herniated disk and stretched ligaments in his right knee.

After the game, Ted called his parents and told them what had happened. He told them that he was going to see the doctor the next day. He also told them that the trainer thought he had probably just bruised his back, but that he might have a serious knee injury. Ted was scared, and it must have showed because his mother started crying on the phone. His father told him that he would have to make his body stronger and that this was going to be the biggest challenge of his athletic career.

When ted went to the doctors, he was advised that he had several choices. They could operate on both his back and knee. He could have one or the other operated on, or he could go through an extensive rehabilitation program. The one thing the doctors were positive about was that Ted's season was over. This was extremely disappointing for Ted. He had never suffered an injury in his life except for a couple of minor sprained ankles, Those injuries had never stopped him from playing in a game, much less caused him to miss a season.

After his appointment with the doctors, Ted talked to the coach, who told him that he would not lose his starting position as point guard and that he was counting on Ted to lead the team on and off the court in his senior season. However, Coach also told him that his starting position depended on how intensely he rehabilitated his injuries, The coach planned to check with the training staff to see how Ted was responding to treatment. This did not worry Ted because he was determined to recover from his injuries and be in the best possible shape.

During their meeting, Ted felt the coach really cared about him, but after the meeting he realized that Coach never asked him how he was doing. He seemed more concerned that Ted was going to rehabilitate his injuries so he would be ready to play next season.

To rehabilitate his back, Ted was advised that he would have to go to therapy two hours a day, four days per week. Ted's initial reaction was that this was going to be the biggest challenge of his life. However, he knew that once the rehab was over he would be very proud of himself. He also knew that this was his only chance of becoming the starting point guard and being a professional basketball player. Ted believed that his injury might have been a blessing in disguise because he felt his overall strength would increase from his rehab program. Coach also told him that his injury might help him become a smarter basketball player because he would have the opportunity to watch games from a different perspective.

When pickup games started this fall, Ted felt that he was ready to play. Although he is still a little rusty, his knee feels stronger than ever. Ted believes that even though he missed most of the previous season, he is seeing the court better than before. The only aspect of his game that he feels is missing is his ability to drive to the basket and then either take the shot or dish off. Logically he knows that his knee can take the punishment, but he has not been able to get up the nerve to drive with the same reckless abandon that was successful for him in the first ten games of his junior season.

The failure to drive aggressively is starting to become a problem for Ted because he has noticed that this is the major strength of the player who replaced him last year. In addition, there is a first year player who can also drive to the basket quite effectively. Although Coach guaranteed him with his old starting position, Ted is beginning to doubt that he can do the job. He also wonders if he can still trust the coach. He remembers what Coach told him, but he can remember several times in the past Coach said one thing and did another. Ted comes to you. How do you help him?