

Like Mike

Finding magic in basketball

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Once upon a time, a tall and skinny boy named Mike loved to play basketball. Mike was polite, courteous and the nicest person in school. He was never really good at basketball but loved to play every day. He wore a basketball jersey every day to show everyone how much he liked his favorite team, the Los Angeles Lakers. Mike was a loner and did not have any friends in school. Every day after school, he practiced at a park near his house.

A boy named Billy was the meanest person in school. He always liked to pick on people, especially Mike. He's ugly and always acted mean to everyone.

Mike wanted to join the school's basketball team. Billy was the school's basketball star. Mike finally found the courage to ask the coach, Mr. Shaq, if he could try out.

The coach said, "You're not a good shooter! When you get a little better, you can try out and join the team."

Mike felt very disappointed. Billy overheard what Coach Shaq said to Mike and laughed and bragged, "Ha, ha, you're not good enough."

Mike was so angry at himself.

Mike was practicing alone that same night while it was raining. He did not care that it was raining really hard, he just kept thinking what Billy said about him. He kept wishing he could be better at basketball to show everyone that he could play.

Suddenly, a lightning bolt struck a tree next to the basketball court. Mike was stunned, the tree was split open and smoke was coming from the middle. There was something glowing inside the tree, but Mike was afraid to look. He finally walked toward the tree and found a pair of Michael Jordan shoes inside the tree. He could not believe his eyes.

Mike tried them on and felt something magical about himself once he wore the shoes. He shot the ball from far away and the ball went in. He jumped toward the basketball and he jumped so high he was able to dunk the ball. He said to himself, "Wow, this is all I need to make the basketball team. I'll show Billy that I belong on the team, just like him."

The next morning, he went to the gym to see Coach Shaq. He told him, "Coach, you've got to see me shoot. I practiced all night long."

"You've got to be kidding, it takes weeks, maybe months for someone to get better," Coach Shaq replied.

Mike begged, "Please, Coach, let me try."

Coach Shaq said, "All right! What do I have to lose? Let me see how you shoot, kid."



Mike shot the ball from the three-point line.

"Swish." It went in.

He shot again and again, all over the court and he did not miss a shot! Coach Shaq was so impressed he decided that Mike should join the basketball team immediately. Billy was shocked that Mike could actually play basketball. He couldn't believe what he saw. Billy thought he smelled something fishy and wanted to find out Mike's secret.

During the next few days, the school basketball team traveled and competed with other schools. Mike became an instant star with his new basketball skills. He made lots of fans and became the school's "all-star player."

Each time Mike wore his MJ shoes, he became a great shooter. Billy saw Mike wearing the shoes in the locker room one day. He overheard Mike talking to himself, "These shoes are magical!" Billy found out his secret and told Coach Shaq about what he heard. Coach Shaq ignored Billy and told him to mind his own busi-

ness. Billy was so angry and envious that he stole the MJ shoes and buried them in the ground behind the school.

The next day, he dug up the shoes and decided to wear them. He shot the ball but he couldn't make any shot. Coach Shaq saw Billy in the gym and said, "The shoes only work on the right person."

Billy felt so bad that he returned the shoes to Mike's locker. He realized that he was a bad kid. Mike, on the other hand, was so worried because he couldn't find his shoes. He went to the gym and saw Coach Shaq holding his shoes and said, "I think these belong to you." Billy apologized to Mike and from then on they were the best of friends. Mike asked the coach if he knew about his magical shoes.

The coach replied, "I set you up. I knew how much you love to play basketball. These shoes once were given to me by a strange person. Now this I pass on to you." Mike gave Coach Shaq a big hug by and thanked him.

Basketball finals finally came. They had to play the school's arch enemy, the mighty Bulldogs in the finals. It was a very close and competitive game. Mike and Billy were making most points. Their team was down by 2 points with 10 seconds left. Billy got the ball and saw Mike running toward the 3-point line. Billy quickly passed him the ball and Mike shot from the 3-point line. The clock ticked to zero while the ball was in the air. The crowd was near silent as they followed the ball.

Everyone was at the edge of their seats, patiently waiting. It seemed like forever as the ball drifted toward the basket. Finally, the ball was at the basket and it hit the rim, bounced up, then hit the backboard and then the rim once, twice, three times until it dropped inside the basket.

The crowd erupted and Mike pumped his fist in the air. Billy ran toward Mike and lifted him in the air.

"We won, we won!" yelled Billy.

Mike received a trophy and a gold necklace that said, "Champions."

Coach Shaq told Mike, "Did you know that I switched your shoes? Mike was so shocked and said, "You mean, I'm a real basketball player? I did not need the magical shoes after all."

Mike and Billy became the best of friends. They helped each other in school and practiced every day after class. Their school won several more trophies. Mike was awarded as the "Best Player" and shared his trophy with his best friend, Billy.

The author was a second-grader when this essay was submitted.

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