

When I'm on the basketball court, I play my heart out. I was set on making the school team. When tryouts started, I played as if I was on trial and someone on high was watching my every move. On the final day of tryouts, I went home feeling confident that I'd nailed it. After what seemed like an eternity, the coaches finally posted the names of those who made the varsity team. I remember walking up to the gym and looking up at the hoops and seeing the sheet of paper plastered to the wall. I was nervous. My eyes went slowly down the list of names of those who made the team, but alas, I did not see my name. I rubbed my eyes and went down the list again thinking I might have missed it the first time. "What happened?"

After moping around for a couple of days, I came to realization that I'd failed. As hard as it was to admit, I knew deep in my heart, I could have worked harder. I had gone to the Rec Center every day to practice but the lush green grass often tempted me to lie down and relax. Then it hit me. I was always seeking comfort and ease over pushing myself. I realized that I needed to push myself to the point of being uncomfortable so I vowed that I would go the extra mile for the next season. I began by seeking out people that were better than me, and in playing them, my game improved. On the court, I was like a lion on the prowl. I learned little tricks like how to cup the ball in my hands so that my dribbling would improve and how to shoot faster so that defenders wouldn't block my shot. Like a detective, I watched how other players dominated the field of play, making mental notes to apply it to my game. As I continued to play against stronger players, my strength also improved. I started running through the hills and valleys of San Francisco, and every time I felt the lactic acid breaking down my legs, I did not throw in the towel. Instead, I pushed myself to climb yet another hill. At the end of an impossible workout, hands on my knees, I could feel the shining sweat running down my face and legs and I knew, "I'll be back."

Sophomore year offered me a clean slate to try again. I can still remember the goosebumps I felt when the new coach lined up all the players and asked for our names. It was Judgement Week, where I put everything I learned on the court. The final list came out and as I scanned the list, I could feel the pressure mounting inside of me. I made the team! I was ecstatic but the work didn't end there. After being on the bench for the majority of the season, I was thrust into the starting lineup mid-season. The intensity that I displayed must've been contagious as everybody's effort rose. After the final buzzer of the season was blown, our hard work led us to the Promised Land.

In retrospect, failing the first time to make the team was the best thing that happened to me. I really learned what it meant to be uncomfortable and stay the course. I applied this lesson learned to my academics and all other realms in my life.