



Deland High School Girls Basketball

Nominated By: Shai Sanders (Student)

August, 2010, all odds were against us. We, the DeLand Lady Bulldogs, were looked down upon, gossiped about, and were said to be worthless, a waste of a girls' basketball team. With our backs up against the wall, we had no choice but to come out fighting. We were determined to prove everybody wrong.

Outside of the court, we all come from different backgrounds, different religions. We don't always mix well, and we don't always get along. Once we step on the court, and we put on those DeLand jerseys, we are no longer girls. We are basketball players, we are sisters, we are family. No matter what people said to bring us down, no matter who attempted to split us, we built a bond that no outsider could break.

A champion isn't just someone who wins. A champion is someone who has heart, who works harder than others; someone who builds character, who makes sound decisions and learn from mistakes; someone who rises above all odds, who continues to fight even when the battle looks lost. In September, we were working. Two months before the season was scheduled to start, we were already on the track, in blazing heat, running, jumping, sprinting, working! When the season projections came out, we got NO respect. Nobody from our team made the "players to watch" list. We weren't even in the top 5 teams in the county. Nobody believed in us, so we were determined to acquire what we felt we deserved: RESPECT!

The first game of the season, was a bitter loss against our arch rival Spruce Creek. Starting off the season 0-1, made the News-Journal think they weren't gonna prosper. After that game, we sparked a ten-game winning streak. We ended on a season record of 25-4, including a revenge game against Spruce Creek, blowing them out by 27 points, and beating the Districts favorites 3 times, claiming the district title. As we would say, "Hustle and heart set us apart." We didn't have a flawless season, but we never let a loss determine the future of our season. When we were down, we knew how to pick ourselves and our teammates up, and that's the heart of a champion.

Being a champion isn't just about what happens on the court. It's also about the character you portray in your classroom and your community. A champion with no moral character is no champion at all. As student athletes, student comes first and we excel. Education is the most

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important thing, and we make sure we have our priorities in check. In the community, we're well known and always involved. We recently were a part of the dog parade downtown. We try our best to present ourselves as young ladies who have goals and want to be and make something of ourselves. The environment isn't always the best to live in, but we have a supporting community who want to see us succeed.

In the playoffs, we were underestimated. Being the underdogs was enough motivation for us. Everyday, we came out of the locker room with a purpose. Every sneaker that stepped on the floor, every body that checked in at the tables, and every mind that entered the game had one thing in common: we all wanted to win. We wanted to rise above the labels placed upon us. We wanted to stand atop those obstacles that stood in the way of our championship. We wanted everybody to see that we worked hard every day from September to February and we deserved to be there as much as any other team. That mindset is what got a District Championship trophy in the display case in the gym's lobby. In addition, we soared in the first two rounds of regionals, and in the third round came the defending state champions. We didn't quite it to Lakeland, but we never stopped fighting. We never gave up!

Day one, everybody doubted us. Nobody believed in us. There were times where we didn't believe in ourselves. The one thing that held us together throughout this Cinderella Story season, is we believed in each other, and worked together to achieve one goal: to win! This season united enemies, and changed the lives of my teammates, my coach, and myself. I will never forget this irreplaceable combination of young women who changed each others' lives for the better, true champions. Forever Bulldogs. Forever Sisters.

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