

Jason's Amazing Game

Jason McElwain, a senior with autism at Greece Athena High School in Rochester, New York, was the basketball team manager for three seasons, diligently fetching water, chasing rebounds in warm-ups, and mopping up sweat.

In February 2006, for the last game of the season, Greece Athena was playing Spencerport High School for a division title. Jason's coach, Jim Johnson, decided to reward the young man by allowing him to suit up. Then, with the team ahead by 20 points and only four minutes to go, the coach put Jason in the game.

Jason missed his first two shots, but his third was a three-point swish. As the ball went



through the net, the gymnasium erupted with applause. Jason went on to make six three-pointers and a two-point shot – a Greece Athena High School record – to finish with 20 points in a little more than four minutes.

With each basket, the crowd became more enthusiastic. By the time Jason hit the last shot, everyone was jumping up and down. When the game ended, the fans in the bleachers emptied onto the court as the crowd

gathered around Jason, and his teammates hoisted him onto their shoulders.

After the game, Jason's mother said, "This is the first moment Jason has ever succeeded and could be proud of himself. I look at autism as a Berlin Wall, and he cracked it."

Andy McCormack, Jason's speech/language pathologist teacher, who described Jason's shooting as "hotter than a pistol," took a copy of the game video to a local television station for the news that night, and within days, the tape reached a national audience. President George W. Bush and Peyton Manning, then quarterback for the Indianapolis Colts, arranged visits with Jason. And he won an ESPY Award for the Best Moment in Sports in 2006, beating out Kobe Bryant's 81-point game for the Los Angeles Lakers and the George Mason Patriots' run to the Final Four.

But Jason's success touched many more lives than his own, as those who celebrated with him experienced the selfless joy of delighting in others.

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It is a remarkable story. And it is a reminder that all around us are people who are finding success of one kind or another in their lives – even small wins that few people might notice. But they are important for them in the struggles that life can bring.

Recognition of those victories of our customers is something that occurs daily in the lives of our associates who deliver their care – and find selfless joy of delighting in others.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter