



My

PERSONAL TRYOUT



BY TYLER CLARK

I thought I was trying out for basketball, but I made a much more important team.

It was the first day at my new school. My mother and I were in the office filling out papers when we heard an announcement over the speakers that basketball tryouts would be held that day after school. Since I had played on the team at my old school, I thought I'd go to the tryouts and see what happened. I knew things would be a little different moving from a school where almost everyone was a member of the Church to a school where I might be the only one. But that day I learned things would be really different.

Before school my father had given me a priesthood blessing, which helped me feel a little less worried. Then when we had family prayer, my four-year-old brother prayed that I wouldn't be scared and that I would be happy at my new school. His prayer really had an effect on me, especially because I'm more of a quiet personality and don't like drawing attention to myself. At this new school, where my religious beliefs were so unique, I knew I would get a lot of unwanted attention. I was scared and worried, and I already felt like I didn't fit in.

Basketball tryouts started with drills and shooting baskets and ended with a lot of running. I had tried my best and felt that I had a pretty good chance of making the team. Then it happened.

The coach called everyone over to give some final instructions. As we stood there tired and breathing heavily, the coach asked a question in a loud voice. "Are there any Mormon boys here who can't practice on Sundays?"

Time seemed to freeze. Did I hear him right? Instantly

my mind flashed back to the recent night when I was struggling with living in this new place. I had decided to read *For the Strength of Youth* and underline what I thought was important in each section. I knew this would help me keep the Lord's standards and help me feel closer to God. I knew the Lord would be there to help me in my time of need. I could see in my mind the section under "Sabbath Day Observance" where it says, "The Lord has given the Sabbath day for your benefit and has commanded you to keep it holy. . . . Sunday is not a holiday or a day for recreation or athletic events" (32–33).

Without hesitation I raised my hand. The coach looked at me. All the other boys looked at me. When I looked around I saw that I was the only "Mormon boy" there. What I'd been afraid of was happening. But I didn't feel embarrassed or scared. I actually felt happy inside.

Talking to my dad on the way home, I remembered my little brother's prayer; it had been answered. I was happy here. I was happy that I had passed the test and that I'd had the courage to stand up for the truth.

That day had been a tryout. I thought it was only for the basketball team, but it was also a tryout to see if I would stand on the Lord's side. I was so glad that I had raised my hand to show I wanted to be on His side. When the basketball roster was posted, I was surprised to see my name on it. I made the basketball team and got some good playing time during the season—even though I didn't go to the practices on Sunday. The coach and the other boys were friendly to me, and the student body would cheer my name when I was on the court. After the season ended, I found out from the missionaries that my coach was taking the missionary lessons. I am grateful for the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet. It really did give me strength that day when I had to stand for the truth alone. **NE**