

# BONUS POINTS

By Hillary Holbrook

Inside the locker room, you could hear the fans cheering. The Iowa, USA, women's high school varsity basketball championship game was about to begin. The team in black jerseys—who'd clawed their way into the finals—were ready.

Sixteen girls listened attentively to an inspiring pump-up speech from team manager Hailey B., 16.

It may seem odd for the manager to give the pep talk, but it's not unusual for Hailey. When she talks, players listen. They know she's eager for them to win.

## Basketball Standards

There's another reason Hailey is cheering for everyone. It has to do with her standards.

Hailey had already completed one season with the freshman team and was eager to earn a starting spot on the junior varsity (JV) team. But as she prepared, she ran into a problem.

The coaches held preseason games on Sundays that "were essentially the tryouts for the team," Hailey said. But she'd promised herself and her Father in Heaven that she'd keep the Sabbath holy. "So I missed 10 games," she said. "The coaches never really saw me play."

She made the team, but it became clear she'd spend most of the season on the bench. Instead of becoming discouraged, she chose to encourage her teammates.

## Winning Attitude

"Hailey never complained," said her Young Women president, Jami. "Instead she became the team's biggest cheerleader. Everyone knew she'd be there cheering, and they'd talk about what a support she was. She could have become bitter, but instead she just kept smiling."

Hailey's JV coach, Jon, agreed. He said no one has "a bigger heart or a greater love for the game" and that "selfless players like Hailey are critical to a team's success." Before one game, he said, she made signs for each player and coach using paper plates, a paper flag, and candy. "She's always taking time for others," he said.

## Training Schedule

Somehow, despite a busy schedule, Hailey squeezes in time for what's important. Her alarm buzzes at 5:15 every morning to get ready for 5:45 seminary. "It's a matter of priorities," she said. "Scripture reading and prayer help me all day. They help me look at other people at school

*She wasn't shooting from the floor,  
but Hailey was scoring big in ways  
that matter more.*



and remember that they're children of God." The same holds true for her teammates, she said; "they're daughters of the same Heavenly Father as me."

Despite bouncing between seminary, school, practices, games, and family time, Hailey keeps her

*Hailey scores big by spending time with her family and keeping stats for her team.*



priorities focused on her family and the gospel.

"Our family loves spending time together," she said. "We enjoy vacationing and camping every summer." Hailey is especially fond of trips that include fishing and horseback riding. And when it's not basketball season, she plays lacrosse, babysits, and fine-tunes her math skills. Her strength comes from the fundamentals—prayer, scripture study, Sabbath day observance, and keeping the commandments.

"Any athlete knows about training rules," she said. "If you want to do well, you practice every day. The same is true with the gospel. If you want to stay strong, stick to the basics."

### Lots of Assists

You could also say that Hailey specializes in assists.

"When I'm feeling down, she always finds a way to cheer me up,"

said her sister, Kelsey, 11. "She's the best sister I could ask for."

Hailey also assists those who are curious about the gospel. She remembers a bus ride when her teammates asked questions about the Church. She was thrilled to answer.

"I explained what a temple is and

what we do there. I explained what a missionary is. I explained that following the standards in *For Strength of Youth* leads to blessings."

One of those blessings came when the varsity coach pulled her aside.

### Inspired Effort

"He asked if, in addition to being on the JV team, I'd serve as a manager for the varsity team," Hailey said, a smile lighting her face. Her mom, Kathy, said, "We feel that was a blessing she received for keeping the Sabbath holy."

As team manager, Hailey not only attended games and practices (except on Sundays) but also kept records, like the minutes per game of each player. The position was a recognition of her desire to help the team any way she could.

By the end of the season, the team's record was 20-3. Critics hadn't expected them to perform so well, but the team had dedicated the season to two players who'd recently lost a parent

to cancer. That inspired them to give extra effort. Now they were playing for the top spot in the state. But they were also playing for each other.

In her pregame speech, Hailey told them, "We've worked hard for this the entire season, and now it's our chance to prove we can be champions." Then they stormed the court as the crowd roared.

### Winning Over Time

Hailey compared her experience with the team to what it's like when members of a family obey God's commandments. In basketball, she said, even though players have individual talents, victory depends on working together.

"It's the same in a family," she said. "Individually you have to find what you're good at and build your own testimony, but when you bring all these pieces together—reading the scriptures together, going to church together, spending time together—you're a stronger family. You push for your ultimate goal over time—to gain celestial glory and be together forever."

This basketball season, Hailey scored points on many levels by living her standards. She gained peace in her heart for doing what she knew was right, something more important than making layups or firing off a 3-point buzzer-beater. She strengthened her family and set a good example for them. Plus, she won admiration and respect from teammates and coaches.

Oh, and by the way, Hailey's team won the state title, 46-42. **NE**

*The author lives in Iowa, USA.*