

What Being Tall Means to Me

By Dylan McGonigal

Who'd you get your height from? Do you play basketball? Can you reach that for me? Can you touch the ceiling? All of these are questions that I get asked often. But it's not often that I get asked what being tall means to me.

I live in a small community in the middle of Pennsylvania. No one really knows where my high school is located. We don't usually have stand out athletic teams. And more times than not, when we play larger schools, you can hear community members say about our students, "We just don't grow them big around her." So when I walk around my community, being a tall individual, I stand out. When looking across the hallway in school, I can see over almost everyone, as I am definitely in the top 3% of students in height. To me, being tall isn't about seeing over everyone. To me, being tall is about being looked up to.

I've always loved sports. I grew up playing anything and everything sports related. In elementary, I tried football and soccer, but as I got older, baseball and basketball became the games I loved. So as I continued to grow, becoming taller than my older brother, and eventually my father (who, yes, I get my height from.) it was a given that basketball would be my sport. What I didn't realize was that I would become a player that younger athletes looked up to.

I earned a varsity letter during my freshman year. I was a varsity starter by the end of my sophomore year, when I helped our team earn the school's first ever district championship. My junior year, we were on track to head to the championships again when I lost half of the season due a major injury and surgery. Now, as my senior year is coming to a close, I am more aware of what this tall spotlight means to my community. I have my underclassmen teammates asking me for advice. They look to me to see how I will overcome obstacles, or how I will react when things aren't going our way. There are even junior high players that make me feel like a super star when they call my name after practice. I know that being in this spotlight has to be taken seriously.

Yes, my height makes me stand out. I however don't want my height to be the only reason people know me. I have made it a point to be polite and respectful to anyone that I meet. This is what my parents have instilled in me and this is what I want to be known for. I am that player that helps others up off the floor during a game, because I know what it's like to be down and need a hand getting up. You can usually find me on the court cracking jokes with players from other teams while waiting for the game to start, or having a conversation with one of the referees while we wait for the clock to run down. While I am tall and people have to look up to me to see me, I want younger players to look up to me as a person that they admire and want to be like. I make it a point to be thought of as the basketball player that can also be a role model for younger students.

While being tall can be a novelty, I definitely have tried to use my height as a way to stand out. I hope that people around me see me as a kind and respectful person, not just the tall guy on the basketball court.