

hoop

the american dream™

robin layton



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**By Robin Layton**  
**Foreword by Jerry West**

Published by



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“ I grew up with a basketball in my hand. I have enjoyed playing the game and I’ve especially loved teaching the game. It has been such a large part of my life, from the time I could pick up a ball until right now. Growing up...and after all the cows were milked and our other chores were done...my brothers and I would go up in our hay loft and play for hours. Any time I can watch a game, I do, men or women, it doesn’t matter to me.

I am very proud of all the young women that have come through our program and now have gone on to have successful coaching careers themselves. We share a passion for the game, and I enjoy watching them now.

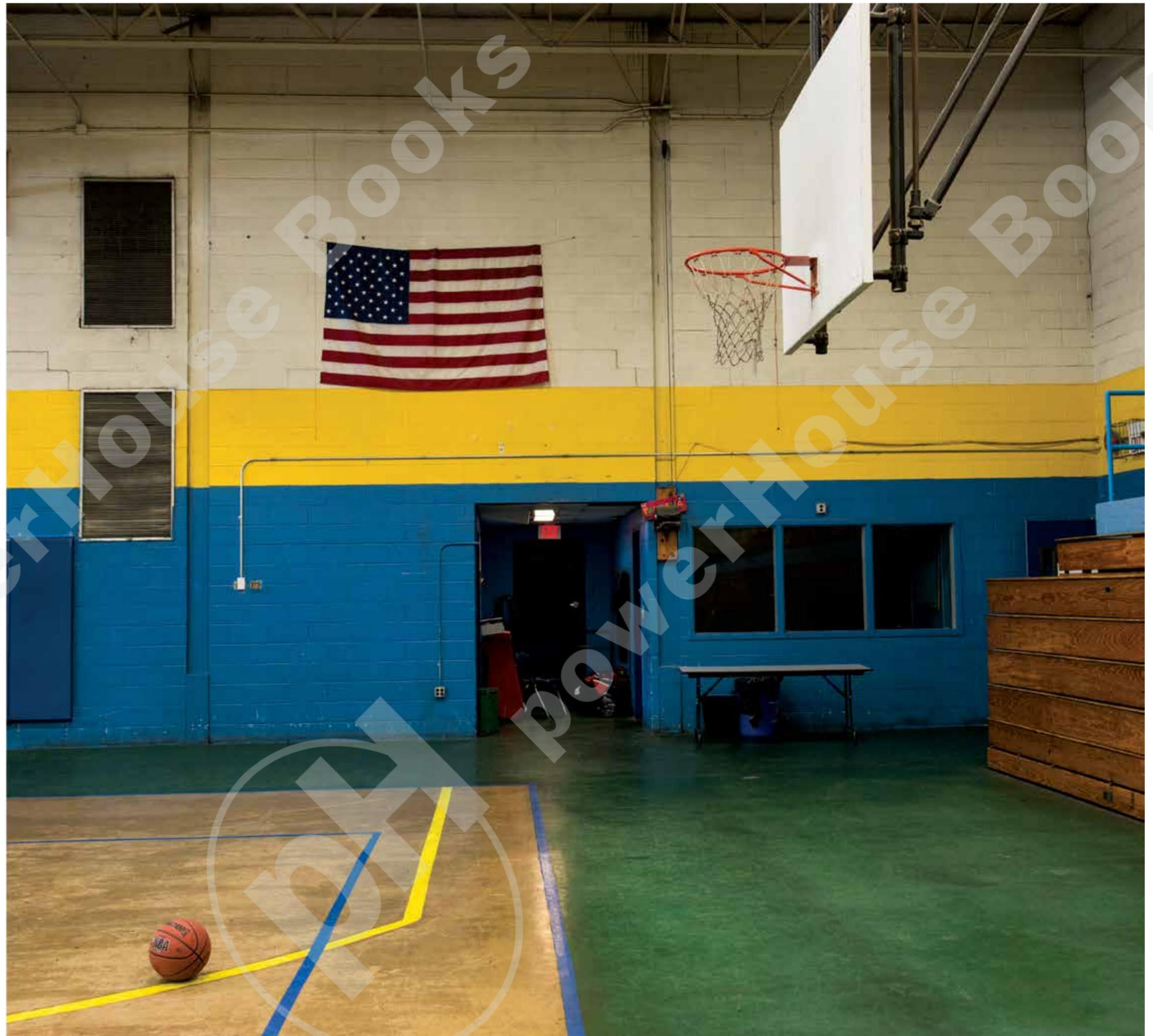
Make the most out of every opportunity you receive. Don’t let anyone outwork you.

Do your best on and off the court!”

— Pat Summitt

“ The Boys and Girls Club saved my life. Growing up in the projects in Newark, New Jersey, there are a lot of negative temptations: drugs, gangs, a lot of bad things. My mother and father worked very hard to support the family, so they would say, ‘Fulfill your dreams, if you want to make it into this NBA thing...go in there and play with other kids, but do not leave this building until we pick you up.’ That was my daily routine. In there, I learned how to become a people person, learned how to become a team player. I learned how to become a nice guy, become a protector. I learned how to become a leader and it’s all because of the Boys and Girls Club.”

— *Shaquille O’Neal*



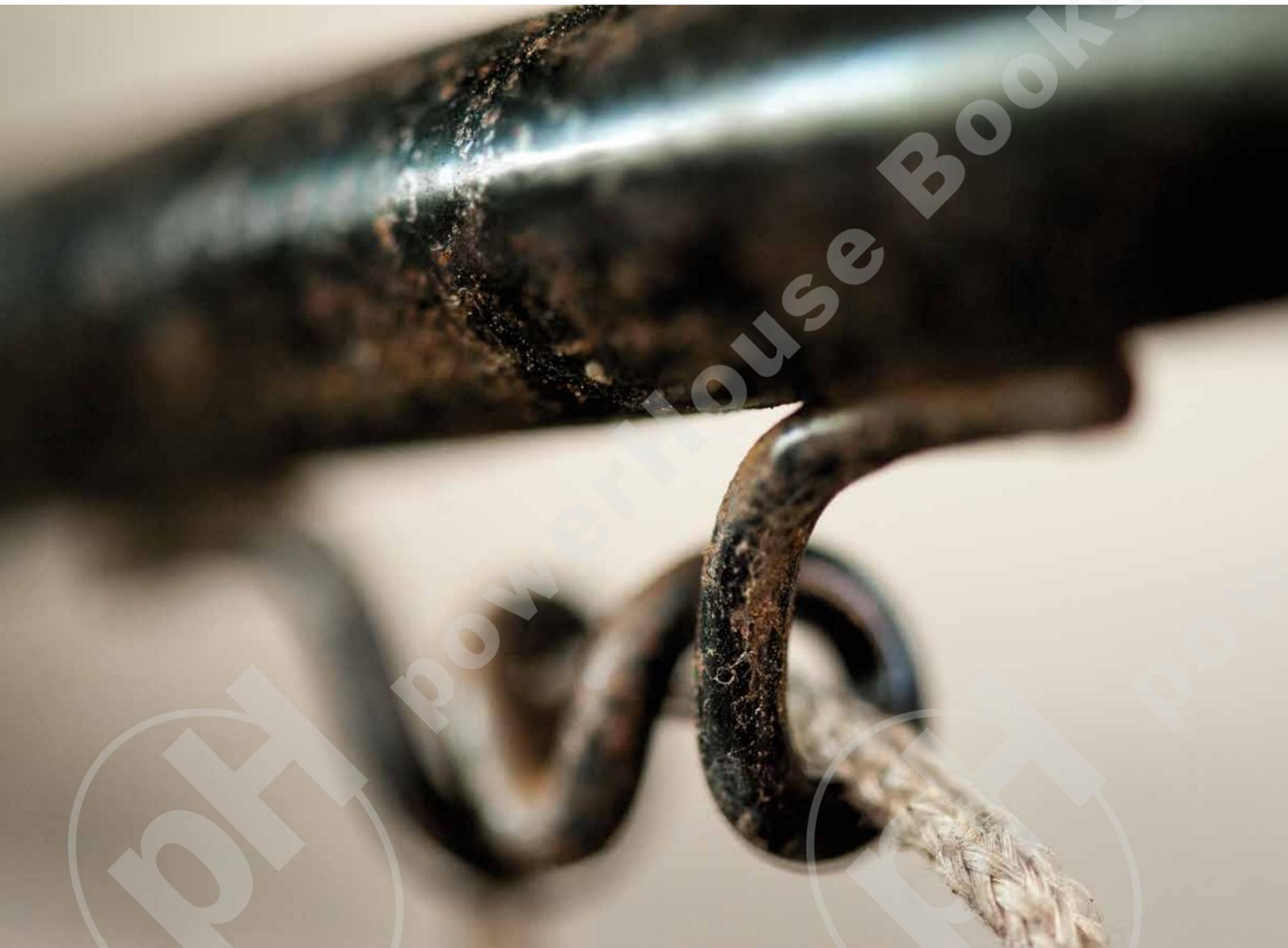
RIGHT Childhood hoop of Shaquille O’Neal  
Boys and Girls Club of Newark  
Newark, New Jersey











“ I didn’t really know about the game of basketball when I first picked it up. It was just love at first sight.

When I was eight years old, I used to play at the [Seat Pleasant] rec center. Coach Craig, ‘Chucky’ as we called him, told me one day that he thought I could be pretty good if I practiced and worked hard. He would tell me, ‘You’re the best player on the floor.’ He gave me confidence when I didn’t have confidence in myself. I loved going out there and learning and having fun with my friends.

He is the reason I began my journey to the NBA. We would watch the NBA draft together. He would say to me, ‘I can’t wait until we go and they call your name.’ Since I was so young, I never believed him. But he always told me I would be there one day. He believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself.

When I was a junior in high school, I received devastating news. Chucky was shot in the back while breaking up a street fight. He was at the wrong place at the wrong time. I was devastated. I couldn’t believe he wasn’t going to be around anymore. I didn’t think anything could ever happen to him, because I thought he was Superman.

I wanted to do something nice for him, but I didn’t know what to do. My godfather suggested to me to wear the number 35, because that’s how old Chucky was when he died.

I’d give anything to have him sitting courtside at one of my games today, that would be a dream. Because he dreamed it all.”

— Kevin Durant

**“Basketball has been the center of my life since I was a little kid. It always will be. Growing up in Akron, it was always the place where I could just be me. When I was on the court, nothing else in the world mattered. I always believed that one day I would play in the NBA and follow in the footsteps of the basketball greats I grew up watching. That was my inspiration and it drives me to this day. If you want it to be, basketball is so much more than a game. It is a mentor, a teacher, and a brotherhood.”**

*— LeBron James*







“ I couldn’t have been more than six or seven years old. The first hoop I had in my backyard was when we moved from a two-family house to a single-family home. It wasn’t a regular basketball hoop. It was actually a peach basket, with no bottom, that my dad had nailed to a tree. A fairly skinny tree at that. The tree served as a backboard.

Within a year though, he got me a really nice hoop from an old garden center where my grandfather worked. It was the talk of the neighborhood when he put it up because it had a half-moon-shaped backboard with a thick rim and a nice thick net.

It was considered platinum level for a backyard hoop. The hoop had been discarded by a recreation center somewhere in Cleveland. My grandfather got it and my dad anchored it to the garage, and it was the neighborhood gathering spot from the age of nine until high school.

Anytime I got into trouble or did something that didn’t please my mom and dad, they didn’t have to spank me. All they had to do is say ‘basketball is off limits for a while’ and I would straighten up and fly right immediately. That’s how much of a hold basketball had on me.

I owe everything in my life to the game, quite honestly; the fact that I was able to use basketball as a way to get a college education, to use it as a way to earn a living as a player for a short time in the early 80s. Over the last 25 years, being a broadcaster has taught me even more about the game. The coaches that I’ve had, teammates that I’ve played with, the experiences I’ve had in the game have really been transferable in so many ways. It’s a huge part of the fabric of who I am.

If you have some ability in something and you do it well, and you’re recognized and esteemed for it, it fuels confidence in other areas and that can be transferable.”

— Clark Kellogg





“ In the wintertime, when there was snow on the outside court and we couldn't play, we'd find a way to sneak into the gym and play just by the street lights or by the moonlight. To see the courts at Roselle Park Middle School today—with the same baskets and backboards that were there that were there 50 years ago—is hard to believe.

There were folding doors that separated the auditorium from the basketball court that actually took up part of the court and you had to be careful not to run into the doors.

Basketball is the ultimate team game. There are five people on the court. All five people need to learn how to work together if you want to achieve success. It provides a great learning platform for life in general.”

— Rick Barry

ABOVE Childhood hoop of Rick Barry  
Roselle Park Middle School, Roselle Park, New Jersey



RIGHT Laramie, Wyoming  
NEXT SPREAD  
Watkins, Colorado

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