

'The Mythology of Basketball'

In my opinion, the best thing about basketball camp was we got to eat at the cafeteria in the junior college and they had good French fries. And, when Allen drove us home we got to listen to the rock 'n' roll station outta Chattanooga, Tennessee KZ106, and that summer they played the song, "I'm not in love" by 10CC. I loved that song.

One day when Allen picked us up, he could tell I had been crying. He asked me what was wrong, and I basically let down the floodgates, telling him how, I must not even really be a Ross at all 'cause I was so bad at basketball, I was so pitiful I couldn't even make a lay-up shot during drills with nobody blocking the goal. Allan said they must have not been teaching it right over at the girl's camp and that he could teach me how to do a lay-up. And when we got back to Mamaw's, after everybody ate supper, we went out into the yard and Allan started showing me how to do a proper lay-up. Dribble in, look, knee up, aim at the edge off the square and push it in. Day after day we'd practice, there in the front yard on that hard red Georgia clay, all the grass was worn away from generations of dribbling Rosses. Allen would go over it with me again and again, calling out the steps to me. He'd make Tyler and Allison and April line up to do drills with me and they could already do lay-ups without missing. And finally, I got it! I just did it kinda slow and steady, saying those steps of Allan's in my head, and it went in! I got to where I could make a lay-up almost every time. And in practice drills at girl's basketball camp, with nobody blocking me, I was looking sorta like a Ross. Of course, doing a good lay-up shot with the girl from Ellijay blocking me was another story.

I went back to North Carolina in the fall and I played on my junior high school team. I never started; the coach only put me in if he was desperate. I only scored two points in the entire season. It was towards the end of the season and a bunch of girls were out sick and the coach had to use me. I got the ball and turned to the basket, nobody was down there, and I could hear Allan's voice in my head. I dribbled, looked, knee up, aimed at the edge of the square and pushed it in. And that basket was worth a whole lot more than two points to me.