



1 FOR ALL

SEAN
MCCOLLUM

1 For All

A Basketball Story About the Meaning of Team

Sean McCollum

Illustrated by Samuel Valentino

 Brattle
Publishing Group™

© 2020 by Sean McCollum

All rights reserved. Published by Brattle Trade, a Division of Brattle Publishing Group, LLC.®

www.brattlepublishing.com

Cover design by Bumblecat Design and Illustration

Illustrations by Samuel Valentino

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permissions, write to:

customerservice@brattlepublishing.com

ISBN 13: 978-0-9905872-3-1 (Paperback)

ISBN 13: 978-0-9972902-4-0 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020933254

Printed in the United States of America

First edition, June 2020

Ver. 20200601

To Mom and Dad,
Who never missed a game, a concert, or a show.
SMc

CHAPTER ONE

Traverse Musketeers at Watertown Ducks

J.J. Pickett caught the basketball with ten seconds left in the first quarter. He squared off against the opposing Ducks' player—a forward with wild eyes and a bush of wild hair. The Ducks were playing man-to-man defense. The guy guarding J.J. had been challenging the Musketeer guard to dribble to his left all game. I'll take that, J.J. thought.

He faked a jab step to his right, then dribbled hard to the left. He had a clear lane to the basket. Now if only Belchbreath doesn't . . . J.J. thought.

But there was Belcher, clomping his way across the lane in the Musketeers red road uniform. The Ducks center—in blue-on-white—came with him and jumped out to cut off J.J.'s sure layup. No! J.J. wanted to scream. He tossed up an eight-foot prayer, arcing it high over the long arm of the Ducks red-headed big man. The ball skimmed off the rim, and the Ducks got the rebound. The horn sounded, ending the first quarter. Score: Traverse Musketeers 13, Watertown Ducks 10.

Watertown Ducks		
0:00		
HOME	PERIOD	GUEST
10	1	13

“I was open, Pickett,” Belcher griped as they walked to the bench. J.J. knew he was right. It would have been an easy two points if he had passed the ball. But J.J. wasn’t in the mood to apologize, especially to Mike Belcher.

“So was I, Belchbreath,” J.J. snapped back, using the nickname he knew Mike hated. “Until you blocked the lane. You’re supposed to clear out!”

Jobey, the starting point guard for the eighth-grade Traverse Musketeers, overheard J.J.’s rant. He was also J.J.’s best friend. “Make that pass,” he said, bumping J.J. hard in the shoulder. Usually Jobey was a goofball, but not during a game.

“Yeah, yeah,” J.J. grouched. “Scoreboard says we’re ahead. I know how to play the game.”

“Play smart, J.J. Make that pass.”

J.J. glared at a pair of Musketeer benchwarmers—Mitts and Limpy—until they cleared space on the bench for him. He grabbed a towel and wiped his face as Coach Brody started his pep talk. J.J. zoned out as Coach droned on about hustling and playing hard. There was nothing the man could say that he hadn’t said every practice and every game for the last month-and-a-half.

Coach Brody had been basketball coach at Traverse Middle School for a few years short of forever. He had even coached J.J.’s dad back when they wore animal skins for uniforms—according to his dad, anyway. J.J. always smiled at the image. His dad said Brody was a decent guy and a good coach. To J.J., though, he seemed tired or bored, like he always had something else on his mind.

J.J. had high hopes for the season. The Musketeers—with him as captain and top-scorer—were solid. But the team had already lost the first four games of the season, although each game had been close. Now it was the Watertown Ducks, their biggest rival, and a chance to get the season back on track.

J.J.'s eyes wandered up into the stands. The Ducks gym only had bleachers on one side, opposite the benches where the players sat. They were filled with blue-clad Ducks fans. There was a girl with a bass drum who pounded it once for every point the Ducks scored.

He looked to where his dad would have sat—in the top row at half court. As a former player, his dad liked to perch where he could see all the action. So far, though, he had missed all five of J.J.'s games. "I'm sorry, son," he had said again that morning. "I'm working hard to make the nut this month." That's what his dad called the money they needed to live on. His dad was a contractor, specializing in replacing and installing windows, and work had been slow and getting slower.

"Come on, man," Jobey said, waking up J.J. from his thoughts. J.J. jumped up and adjusted his trunks. He touched the white number "1" on his chest and then the C—his captain's C—for good luck.

It didn't work. His luck and the luck of the Musketeers ran out on J.J.'s next shot.