

Keep Playing: Jase's Big Try

Section 1

Jase stared at the gym doors. Tryouts were in two weeks. Last year, he missed the final cut. This year... would it be any different?

He watched from the bleachers as the top players practiced- they made shot after shot. His stomach felt tight.

Coach Carter was stacking cones nearby. He used to play pro-level ball, until a knee injury ended it all. Some kids said he could have been very successful.

"You want to learn how to really play?" he asked, wiping his hands. "Meet me tomorrow. 6 a.m. Behind the gym."

Jase blinked. Was he serious?

What should Jase do?

- [Accept the offer. → Go to Section 5](#)

- [Train on your own. → Go to Section 10](#)

- [Forget basketball. Try something new → Go to Section 15](#)

Section 5

Coach Carter was no joke. He had Jase running hills, dribbling blindfolded, and studying game film from the '90s. "This isn't just about muscle," he said. "It's about grit."

Coach also talked a lot about teamwork.

“Basketball isn't one-on-one. It's five people moving like one mind,” he said.

Jase learned to spot open passes faster, to listen for the sound of teammates' feet behind him, to call plays loud and clear—even when he was out of breath.

“Good players score,” Carter said. “Great players make others better.”

Jase ached. Every day was a test.

One morning, after slipping and missing five free throws in a row, Jase shouted, “I'm DONE!”

“You're done?” Coach said.

What should Jase do now?

[- Push through and keep training. → Go to Section 20](#)

[- Quit and walk away. → Go to Section 25](#)

Section 10

Jase didn't show up behind the gym the next morning. Instead, he opened a basketball YouTube channel and copied every drill he could find.

For a while, it worked. He improved fast and tracked progress. Never missed a session!

But something felt... off. He practiced alone, no coach or team. He missed people.

One day, Lina, who ran the school's video club and had a wealth of knowledge about sports science from watching her older brother train, noticed Jase limping at lunch.

"You're going too hard," she said, sitting beside him with her smoothie. "You should try combining your hard work with a better plan."

Lina wasn't a player, but she was very intelligent. She knew how to break down plays, spot mistakes in training videos, and build routines that actually worked.

Jase hesitated.

What should Jase do?

[- Ask Lina for help and create a better plan. → Go to Section 30](#)

[- Ignore her and double down. → Go to Section 35](#)

[- Ignore her and train solo. → Go to Section 40](#)

Section 15- "The pivot"

Jase tossed the ball aside. "Maybe this isn't for me."

He helped his friend, Lina, edit some game footage instead. She taught him how to cut clips, add music, and tell a story through sports.

"Want to make a highlight video for tryouts?" she asked.

It wasn't playing... but it felt right.

They began recording other kids, putting together team videos, and making funny clips. Jase still loved basketball—but now, he saw it through a new lens.

Section 20-“The quiet MVP”

Jase walked into tryouts, nervous but focused. He didn't make the most spectacular plays—but he hustled, made smart passes and kept cool under pressure. Coach Carter pushed him—sometimes hard, sometimes quiet—to move with others, to pass drills with no talking. “You're not playing to shine,” Coach said. “You're playing to connect.”

At tryouts, he didn't make the flashiest plays. But he passed with purpose, he helped a nervous player get into position. Even when the ball wasn't his, he continued to shout encouragement.

Coach Carter stood in the corner, arms crossed, nodding once.

The team list was posted. Jase joined the team, not as a starter—but as the glue the team didn't know it needed.

Section 25-“The comeback later”

Jase threw down his towel. “This is too much. I'm not cut out for this.”

Coach Carter didn't argue or try to stop him. Just nodded and said, “That's your choice. But remember—resting isn't the same as giving up.”

Jase walked away from the court. That night, he felt a strange mix of relief... and regret. He stared at the ceiling and kept asking himself if it was the right

choice, if Coach would talk to him again, if he would ever be good enough, if...

The next day, he didn't train. Neither did he the day after. Instead, he started writing down what he'd learned—about footwork, focus, and failure. He even caught himself watching game clips with new eyes.

And slowly, the itch returned. Not the pressure to be perfect—but the wish to try again, differently.

Maybe next year, he'd be ready.

Section 30—"The quiet MVP"

With Lina's help, Jase found a rhythm. She filmed his drills, helped him slow down and watch the replays. She also created custom routines that worked with his body, and even suggested improvements. Jase trained smarter and grew confident.

Lina pointed out when he moved too quickly on defense or missed chances to support teammates. She even helped him study pro players—not for their highlights, but for how they communicated and worked together.

Tryout day came. Jase walked in with steady steps. He didn't dominate—but he helped others shine. He passed, encouraged, filled in the gaps. And when someone slipped, he offered a hand before the coach even noticed.

Coach Carter watched from the sideline but didn't say much.

Later, the team list went up. Jase had made it.

Section 35: “The burnout”

Jase ignored Lina’s warning and trained harder than ever with no days off nor breaks. His muscles ached and his feet throbbed, but he kept telling himself to push through.

One evening, after a long solo session in the fading light, Jase sprinted down the court, trying to perfect his final shot. Suddenly, a sharp pain shot through his ankle. He stumbled and fell hard. The pain was worse than anything he’d felt before.

The night before tryouts, Jase sat at home with ice wrapped tight around his swollen ankle. He tried to convince himself he could still play. But when tryouts came, every step hurt while he limped through drills.

He didn’t make the team.

At home, he stared at the ceiling. Jase felt a heavy mix of regret, disappointment, and a strange relief. Maybe next year, he thought, he’d train smarter, not just harder.

Section 40: “The lone star”

Jase stuck to his plan. He trained solo, focused on his own progress, and pushed himself harder than ever. He had speed, moves, and a killer shot. He played hard during tryouts. His moves were sharp and his shots—on point. He stood out.

He made the team.

At first, he was proud that his effort had paid off. His name was on the list.

But once the season began, things didn't feel right. In practice, Jase often kept the ball too long. He arrived early and stayed late, but he hardly ever spoke to the others. He scored points during games but missed opportunities to connect, such as the shared celebration, the high five, or the extra pass. Jase stood slightly out of the circle when the team huddled. His teammates didn't dislike him—they just didn't know him.

He was on the team. But it didn't feel like he belonged. He missed what really mattered: teamwork, trust and joy.