Wings on His Feet

Biography

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Honza Nedoma

If you ever watched acrobatic slam-dunks in basketball, then you undoubtedly know about Michael Jordan. Jordan raced into basketball history in 1984. That's the year that the Chicago Bulls selected him to join their team. The rest, as they say, is history.

Michael Jordan is six feet six inches tall, but he could jump higher than players half a foot taller. He could wiggle and waggle in the air and toss off shots that left other players shaking their heads in amazement. How did he do it? Michael once said that sometimes he felt as if he had little wings on his feet. However, his success on the court didn't come from magic wings, it came from intense practice.

Michael grew up in a middle-class family in Wilmington, North Carolina. His parents taught all of their children to work hard and not to waste their talents. Maybe that's why Michael and his brother Larry played so hard on their grass basketball court in the backyard.

Michael tried a lot of sports before he settled on basketball. He tried football, track, and baseball. He thought he was too short and skinny to be a good basketball player, but he tried. Even though he was small for his age, he became one of the best players on his ninth-grade team. He was quick on his feet and he was driven by a will to win. One of his friends said, "If it was a game of horse and you beat him, you would have to play another game until he won. He wouldn't let you go home until he had won."

Michael suffered a huge disappointment when he didn't make the varsity basketball team his sophomore year. But that didn't stop him. Instead, he worked even harder. He became the star player on the junior varsity team. He scored up to 40 points in a game. Varsity players came to the games to check out his moves. The next year he made the varsity team.

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By the time he started playing on the varsity team, Michael had grown four inches taller. He was no longer the short and skinny player that had thought would be no good at basketball. He pushed himself to work even harder and he also pushed his teammates to work as hard as he did. Not only did he work hard at basketball, but also with his schoolwork.

After high school, Michael went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He was surprised again that he was not chosen as the starting shooting guard, but that didn't discourage him. He played hard and his first season was a great success. He even made the winning shot at the national championship game. He was so good that he left college before his last year so he could play for the National Basketball Association (NBA). He was determined to be successful.

During the thirteen years that Michael Jordan played with the Chicago Bulls, he was named the NBA Most Valuable Player five times. He earned the NBA record for the highest career scoring average. He demanded the best of himself and other teammates. With Michael as the leader, the Bulls won six national championships. In 1996, Michael Jordan was named one of the greatest North American athletes of the 20th century.

Will there ever be a player better than Michael Jordan? Michael once said that somewhere out there is another kid who won't be afraid, a kid who will work hard and build on the example of those who have gone before. Maybe that kid will grow little wings on his feet and fly off to fame, just like Michael Jordan!

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Name: _____ Date: _____ Score _____.

Wings on His Feet Questions

Directions: Mark your answers. Using the specified code colors, underline or shade the text evidences that justify the answers you selected.

1. What important values did Michael Jordan's parents teach him when he was young?

CODE RED

2. How did Michael Jordan interact with his teammates?

CODE ORANGE

(A) He didn't interact much. He focused on improving only himself.
(B) Michael bullied his teammates. He was not well liked.
(C) He tried to help his teammates improve.
(D) Michael never criticized his teammates. He was always nice.

3. In the story it mentioned Michael had a **will to win**. What does that mean?

CODE GREEN

(A) he was determined
(B) he was unsure of himself
(C) he was trustworthy
(D) he cheated

4. Read this sentence from the last paragraph of the first page:

Michael suffered a huge disappointment when he didn't make the varsity basketball team his sophomore year.

How did he react to such disappointment?

CODE PURPLE

5. What conclusion can be made from reading this article?

CODE BLUE

(A) Michael Jordan hated losing.
(B) Basketball was not Michael Jordan's favorite sport.
(C) Michael Jordan had natural talent and didn't need to practice.
(D) Michael didn't care about his teammates.

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