REDEMPTION

By Conner McKearin

“It’s 65 to 62 with 8 seconds on the clock. Daniels has the ball, he has played a great game. They need to score here. Daniels passes it to Edwards, but it's ripped out of his hands.The Huskies foul with only 3 seconds to go. Jones puts it up and it’s good! The second one is good! The Huskies are going to let the time run. The Trojans win 67-62!

“Dad, we’re awful!” I yelled entering the car.

“It’s alright, at this age it’s about developing,” my dad explained.

“Well, how good do you think we’ll be when we go to varsity?” My dad did not respond. “Exactly.”

“Hey, take a seat, I need to talk to you.Your mom and I have been talking and If you want to switch schools after this school year you can.” my dad promised.

“Really, dad thanks so much I might have a chance to get at least one state title like Gavin and Izzy!” I gave my dad a hug and went to bed.

***1 YEAR LATER***

I was walking to school, it was my first day at Tree Hill and I was really worried.

“Hey drew!’’ yelled a kid named chris.

I knew Chris from aau ball. He wasn't the best player but he worked his tail off and that’s why he would play. He came over to me while I was walking into the school.

“I’m so excited for ball to start we're going to be nasty. Danville aint threepeating on our watch.” Chris said. “ I hope, this will be our best chance to win,” I responded.

We started walking to class, these three guys walked up to us and said “ you're not going to walk in here and take our spots you midget.”

“Why don't you shut your fat lips, you'll make the team if you're actually good, and you're not good so don't expect to.” Chris and I walked away the three boys stared us down while we walked into our geometry class.

Tryouts happened later that month. They weren’t that hard. I did pretty good, so did Chris. There were four seniors, so it’s going to be pretty hard to make it.We started off with layup lines then we went into shooting drills then for the rest of the time we scrimmaged. Chris and I made the team.I picked the number 14 and Chris picked number 3. I don’t know if those three jerks made the team because I never caught their names. A few practices in we found out who was starting. Chris and I weren't starting because they already had three senior guards, who were pretty good. I found out the three kids that were talking smack didn't make the team.

We went eleven and zero up until the biggest game of our regular season. We were playing Danville. The best team in the league and the back to back champs. We were trying to run the transition game against them so we could make them tired.We traded leads the whole game. We were really determined to beat them and our crowd was really into it.Going into the 4th quarter. The score is 78-74 there lead with 24 seconds on the clock. They inbounded the ball but a senior named Jack stole it and laid it in on the other end. They inbounded the ball and we fouled.They had one of there worst free throw shooters on the line.The ball went up hit off the side of the rim and went falling down to our big guy named Joe. He grabbed it and passed it to me. I did a dribble move and then drived into the lane. I got swarmed by defenders and couldn't get a shot up. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Chris out at the three point line. I didn’t know if I should kick it out or not because Chris wasn’t that good of a shooter. I decided to pass it out because I knew I would’ve gotten blocked. Chris put the shot up. I could see the confidence in his face and I knew it was going in . “Swish!” Danville called a timeout, they had 11 seconds too work with. They inbounded the ball and I was playing really tough defense. My guy was dribbled around and drove in but Chris ran in and stole the ball he went coast to coast and slam dunked it to seal the deal.

“You played like a boss,” I said to Chris as we walked out of the gym.

“Thanks you see my jam, I was like Dom-.”

“Bang!” I heard a gunshot and looked around. It didn't hit me. I looked at chris, he was on the floor blood gushing from his stomach.

“Chris!” I yelled, getting down on my knees to stop the bleeding. “He shot me man,” Chris barely mustered out. I took my phone out and called 911. I was so overwhelmed when they asked me questions I barely could answer. They rushed Chris to the hospital. They couldn't let any visitors in. After thirty minutes a sobbing my best friend my teammate my brother died because some jealous idiots. I got to see him one last time and muttered the words “I’ll win one for you.”

Our team struggled with the loss of Chris but we still made the playoffs.My team played really hard in the first two rounds, so we made the semis and play. I played great the whole game. It was a four point game with thirty seconds to go.I drove into the lane and felt my knee give out on the play and we lost the ball and ended up losing the game. My knee was in a lot of pain, I felt like I just had been shot.”What happened are you alright.”my teammates asked me.

“Bring him to the hospital” my coach told my dad. WE went to the hospital and after an hour of waiting we found out that I tore my ACL and that I was out for the rest of the season. I was really upset that I couldn’t play the game that I love.I started sobbing.My dad told me I needed to go to physical therapy and I really didn’t wan’t to but I knew I needed to.

I had to start training to get my knee to the best place. It was really tough work but the more I thought about winning a title for chris the more I kept pushing. I had to do physical therapy for the whole summer.

When basketball tryouts happened my knee was in good shape. Everyone who made the team last year made it this year and we had some new kids. We lost 4 seniors so we had a young team with only one junior.I decided to switch my number to number three to honor Chris. We went 14-6 in the regular season,losing twice to Danville, the now three time champs.

We had to play Scotia in the first round of the playoffs and we blew them out, then we played Amsterdam and beat them by ten. Our next game was against a tough Hartford team. It was a tough game but we edged it out by 4. We met Danville in the final it was a chance to get redemption, a chance to shock the world, and a chance to win my first title. I was scared. We started the game and they came out in a 2-1-2 zone. I did not handle it well, I couldn’t get good shots and when I did get good shots I missed. We went down by 15 at the end of the half. At halftime our coach told us to run with the ball and we did which made it close. We went back and forth and with eleven seconds left the score was 81 to 79, Danville's ball. Danville passed it in too there point guard and of course we fouled him. I stared at the rim, praying that he would miss one. The first shot went up “swish.” The second shot hit off the back rim hung on the rim a little then finally dropped off. We ran a play to get me a three we ran it perfectly but there big guy came out and jumped at me, I jumped into him and chucked the shot up as the buzzer sounded. I heard the sound of the whistle and saw my shot go in. The crowd went crazy and I was at the line to get everything i've ever wanted, everything that I worked for , and to win it for Chris. I put the ball up and it looked like slow motion but after what felt like forever I heard “swish”. I got swarmed by my team and every one of our fans stormed the court, even my dad who was pretty old.I pounded my heart then pointed to the sky. I did it for Chris.