

Overcoming Obstacles

– Steven Claunch



As you can see, I was born without fingers on my right hand. And also, my right leg was several inches shorter than my left one. They broke the bones in the leg, then they screwed metal spikes into the bone. It has not only spikes, but wires that go all the way through the leg to stabilize it.

I have to walk on it. I have to stretch it out so that my muscles don't just get all atrophied. People always ask me, "Does it hurt?" Yes, it does, but I focus on what I can do, not on what I cannot do.

I want to talk with you guys about overcoming obstacles. Everybody has obstacles, a disability, a hurdle. We face a choice: Let the obstacle overcome you or overcome the obstacle.

Maybe some of you have heard of Jim Abbott. He was a Major League baseball player. He won a gold medal in the Olympics. He played for the Yankees, the Angels. But he threw a no-hitter, and he only had one arm.

When he was a kid, he came home mad one time and told his dad, "The kids won't let me play baseball because I only have one hand." His dad replied, "No, the kids won't let you play baseball because you stink at baseball. You can't change the fact that you only have one hand, but you can change the fact that you stink."

So, his dad began to practice with him, and he got good. He overcame obstacles. Teams would try to exploit his weak side. They would try to bunt to the side that he had a missing arm. But they never succeeded because he practiced and practiced fielding bunts to that side.

There's no dishonor in having a disability, and I won't let anyone diss my ability, but I don't want anyone's pity either.

I will not use the obstacles I face as an excuse for having a pity party. I will practice harder, play harder, and push myself harder to keep getting better.

Last season I started on my varsity high school basketball team as a freshman, and I won Rookie of the Year. I was one of the top scorers on the team. One of the things that I find funny is that people judge me by appearance. They say, "Oh, look at this one-handed whitey with the limp. I don't want him on my team!" But what they don't know is that I don't just have a disability, I have an ability.

One of my favorite moments from this last season was we played a team that we had never played before. And when the game started, you could tell that they were dissing my disability. I mean, they double-teamed our tallest player. They just were playing really soft on me, and they just, you could tell they thought, "What can this guy with one hand do?"

So, they left me open for a three. I made that one. They left me open for another one. I made that one. Then, they started to get frustrated, so they actually fouled me. I made both free throws. And they called time out. And as we were in the huddle, I could hear the other coach yelling at his players about me. They went from not covering me at all to double-teaming me.

It's all about overcoming obstacles. It's true, I have a disability, but so do you. I also have an ability, so do you. Everyone has obstacles to overcome. Some are visible like mine. Some are less visible. Maybe your obstacle is that you come from a poor neighborhood. Maybe people say you'll never amount to anything. Prove them wrong.

Maybe your obstacle is that you have a learning disability, and people think that you're dumb. Prove them wrong. Maybe people judge you because of the color of your skin or your family background. Prove them wrong.

I know a lot of people who take one look at me and judge me. They say, "Oh, that kid can't be any good at basketball. One leg, one hand." If someone thinks you can't overcome the obstacles, prove them wrong.

Visible Disabilities

Obstacles

Invisible Disabilities



Overcoming Obstacles



Listen to the story and speech of Steven Claunch. Answer the questions.

* **What 2 body parts does Steven have a problem with?**

- a) back
- b) leg
- c) foot
- d) hand

* **What sport did Steven excel at despite his disability?**

- a) hockey
- b) baseball
- c) basketball
- d) swimming!

* **Finish these sentences that Steven says.**

I focus on what I can do, not on what I _____

There is no _____ in having a disability.

I don't just have a disability, I have an _____

Everybody has an obstacle to _____. Prove them wrong.

* **In his speech, Steven urged the audience to "prove others wrong" by overcoming obstacles. What are some methods of accomplishing that?**

* **What is a visible or invisible obstacle you must overcome? How will you do it?**

Name

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