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Never to Busy to Help

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We are often influenced or inspired by the actions of others. Sports, particularly professional athletes have an exaggerated influence on the young people in our country. What aspiring basketball player doesn't want to be "just like Mike"? We don't even need to refer to him as Michael Jordan. One NBA team has had a particularly negative impact on young hero worshipers. The Portland Trailblazers lead the league in technical fouls, bad attitude and court appearances. I am not referring to the basketball court!!!! A new coach Maurice Cheeks was brought in to help the Trailblazer clean up their act. "Mo' Cheeks had an outstanding reputation as a leader, competitor and citizen.

In the first round of this years NBA playoffs, the Trailblazers had lost the first two games of the series in Dallas to the Mavericks. The coach was focused on pre-game preparation knowing his team needed to win this game or his team's season could quickly end. As the pre-game activities proceeded, his head was filled with "X's and O's and the strategy of the game. As he stood with his team, a 13-year old young lady approached the microphone to sing the national anthem. As she started to sing, his thoughts came back to reality and the thousands of young Americans in harms way in the Persian Gulf. Suddenly, the young lady forgot the words. A look of panic crossed her face. She was on National TV in front of millions of viewers and her mind had gone blank.

Mo Cheeks walked from his team on to the court to the panic stricken youth. He put his arm around her and helped her with the words. Soon their duet turned into a choir of 20,000+ as the players and fans in the Rose Garden joined the singing. A moment of embarrassment was instantly converted into an example of carrying and great national pride. I know those players and fans will never forget that moment. I know both of my children noticed. I hope yours did too. Maybe they will want to be "just like Mo".

Harry Gribnitz

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PS: In order to help support youth sports and related activities, we have started a new program. Each season, we will provide some financial assistance (\$100-250) to an organization that helps young people learn sportsmanship and values. The team can be affiliated with a school or private organization. It does not necessarily need to be a sports team, academic or social organizations will also be considered. If you are involved with a youth team or activity that qualifies, please contact me with the details.