

A slice of life from the Butcher When discouraged, take another look

But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.

—2 Chronicles 15:7

Thank goodness a young Michael Jordan did not quit hoops after his coach cut him from the team as a freshman in high school.

He just wasn't right for the program, he was told. In fact, Jordan was encouraged to pursue the Navy, rather than a novelty like basketball. Still, he pressed on with the sport.

Now dubbed by some as the greatest roundball player ever, Michael's efforts paid off. Jordan persevered through these times to reach the goal he desired.

College basketball coach Lefty Driesell didn't give up when his world seemed to collapse around him in 1986.

Len Bias, Driesell's star player at Maryland, had died of a cocaine overdose two days after signing with the Boston Celtics. An investigation into the Maryland program forced Driesell to leave his position at the school.

But five years later, Driesell is head coach of James Madison. He has led the Dukes to a respectable record of 55-35 in his four years there.

Lefty didn't quit when the tough got going. Sure, he had to get out of town, but he made the most of his situation and moved on.

* * *

It was a cool May evening when that red-headed kid with the freckles served me up a pitch. I don't even think I was keeping my eye on the ball. I just swung, as if I knew exactly where the pitch was.

The contact seemed so natural—aluminum met rawhide and there was no stinging in my hands. It was as if I had just hit a blob of whip cream and it exploded, without any resistance.

The ball rolled to the left-centerfield fence and I slid into second with a double—my first ever hit in Little League. And there was nobody to see it.

After the game I walked home alone.

Two-plus years later, I sat on a dugout bench at the West Virginia State Little League All-Star Tournament in Nitro. My team, Charleston Central, had won our first six games in the tournament before a loss the previous night. Now, we faced elimination in the sixth inning, down 5-1 to Cereda-Kenova.

Coach Ed Edmonds replaced Donald Burton, one of our best players, to allow Sam Drennan—another All-Star, but not as good as Donald—an at-bat in the tournament. The Burtons and Edmonds' were two pretty close families, but this move set off Donald's dad.

In frustration, Mr. Burton began yelling at Mr. Edmonds, accusing him of being everything except a good coach. Then the two began taunting each other and the dispute

nearly ended in blows.

While this was going on and everyone including me was sobbing on the bench, I had to invite the other guys to a swimming party at my house.

Boy, did that ever look tactless in such a tense situation! But we had reason to celebrate. Though we had not won the state title, the team had come a long way in the tournament.

I had come a long way as well. No longer a skinny back-up outfielder, I was an All-Star. Sure, no one was there to cheer for me as I stood on second base after my first hit off the red-headed kid. But that did not stop me from pushing forward and continuing with my dream. I hadn't given up. . . and that's what mattered.

* * *

In Roger Schuller's book *Life Changers*, he writes about how to look at situations differently. One passage talks of a little boy overheard talking to himself in his backyard. It goes something like this:

With bat in hand, the boy proclaimed, "Here is the greatest baseball player in the world!" With that, he tossed a baseball in the air, swung hard with his bat and missed.

Undaunted, he shouted out, "Here is the greatest baseball player to ever live!" Again, he tossed the ball in front of him, swung hard

and missed.

Adjusting his cap, the boy yelled even louder, "This is the best ballplayer the world has ever seen!" A third time, he lobbed the ball in the air, swung the bat around and missed.

Pausing for a second, he then exclaimed, "Wow! What a pitcher!"

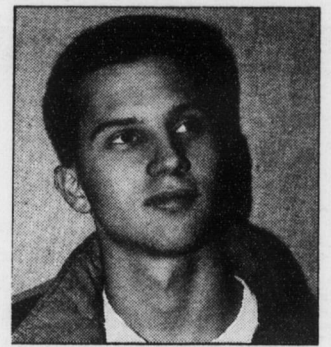
The boy hadn't kicked himself for not hitting the ball, but focused on his assets—his abilities. He saw what he was able to do, not what he wasn't able to do.

Michael Jordan thought he could play basketball. Sure, it looks silly to say that now. . . but what if he had given up? And Lefty wouldn't have helped to turn around the James Madison program if he had gone into hiding. And just because no one else really believed in my athletic ability didn't mean that I had to quit.

And you don't either.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

—Phillippians 3:13-14

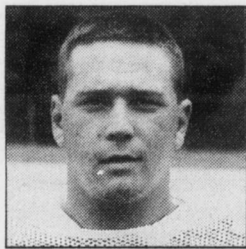


Butch Maier

Seniors

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•Barry Murry, second team All-ODAC. Started 30 consecutive games on the offensive line to close out his career. He played center as a sophomore and then switched to guard for his last two seasons. Murry caught a deflected pass for a six-yard gain last season.

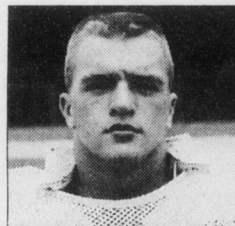


Murry

•Greg Nichols. Limited to only six games this year due to injury, Nichols totaled 15 tackles this year and deflected one pass. For his career, Nichols recorded 38 solo and 77 total tackles, 7 interceptions and 1 sack.

•Cam Pridgen. Pridgen transferred to Guilford from East Carolina. He also switched from defensive end to tackle this year and was in on 28 tackles. For his career, Pridgen recorded 58 tackles in his two seasons, had one sack, one tackle for a loss, and 1 fumble recovery.

•Andy Ragan, second team All-ODAC. A three-year starter at linebacker, Ragan was second on the team in tackles with 65. Ragan led the team in tackles as a junior with 77. He made 10 solo tackles in the victory over Emory & Henry despite the fact that he had a badly sprained ankle. For his career, Ragan was in on 196 tackles, recorded five sacks, had four fumble recoveries, and one interception.



Ragan



file photo

Senior Rodney Alexander, shown here causing a fumble, was one of four Quakers named to the first-team All-ODAC squad in 1991.

Sports Quote of the Week

"What else do I have to do? I hit for a high average, hit the home runs, drove in runs, stole bases and played well in the field. I guess I have to go 30/50 every year."

—Pittsburgh Pirate leftfielder Barry Bonds, after learning that he finished a close second to Terry Pendleton in the National League MVP voting.