



"I HAD a bag of popcorn in my hand," Brookshire said. "It became a tradition that I always eat popcorn during the games." Photo by Rachel Anderson.



"I STOOD on the court as [the boys basketball team] warmed up," Brookshire said. Photo provided by Davis Brookshire.



"I WOULD always [converse] with the players as they were taken off of the court, congratulating them on the shots they made." Photo by Rachel Anderson.



Davis Brookshire (9) fills unconventional spot on boys basketball team

Design by Jackie Coates. Photo by Haley Burke.

PEOPLE

D. BROOKSHIRE

THE lights shone down on his finely-dressed form. He stood in front of his teammates in a locker room that smelt of sweat and nerves. The players sat around him, waiting. He opened his mouth and his voice rang out, calm and collected. In his hands he held a sheet of paper with words scattered about. Word by word, sentence by sentence, his speech formed, and with it, the team's morale rose.

It all started seven years ago when he received his first basketball goal.

The sun dropped out of the sky and the driveway darkened when his father arrived home from work. He brought with him a basketball goal, given to him by a friend at work. Starting then, Davis Brookshire (9) and his father began to play together. He hoped to play basketball throughout school.

He tried out for the fifth grade basketball team, competing for one of the 10 spots on the team. After learning that he did not make the 2012 team, fifth grade basketball coach Chad

Carver asked him to manage the team from the sidelines. Brookshire readily answered yes.

"I wasn't very good at basketball as a child, as I was very small. I was a much better manager than I was a player," Brookshire said. "I wanted to be involved [with] the team in some way, and being the manager was the way I was going to do it."

Even though he ended up in a different position than he expected, he still became a key to the team's success. He took his position seriously, and for his first two seasons, he remained the only middle school basketball team manager in Savannah.

"For the longest time, I was the only basketball manager in Savannah," Brookshire said. "There was one for Blessed Sacrament when I was in seventh grade, but he was not dressed nearly as well as me. He didn't even have a jacket or give speeches!"

For four years, he stayed with the team, and for four years he arrived to the games clad in

the same style. His dress code became a symbol and a staple for him as the team manager.

"I dressed in a suit, purple and/or gold tie, and later a fedora. You don't see managers in a t-shirt and shorts," Brookshire said. "I represented the basketball team and the school, so I couldn't look like trash."

He arrived at games looking different than the players, but just as essential. His presence became a motivation to the players. He attended practice when time permitted, and he came to every game with speech in hand.

"My first speech me and my mom wrote [together], and that was before we realized [the team would begin their winning streak] and we said 'even if we lose you've got to be classy about it,'" Brookshire said. "The second game of the 2012-2013 season was the game [I gave my first] speech. [Having a speech] was probably what set me apart from every [other manager]."

He wrote his speeches by compiling



inspirational quotes into something meaningful to boost the team's morale.

"[His speeches were] inspirational and most definitely helpful," Dane Speerstra (9) said. "He would always [have] a speech ready for us before we went out on the court and it motivated us."

Speaking words of encouragement to the players not only lifted their spirits but also gave Brookshire a way to participate in each game. While at games, he stood next to the coach, wearing his suit and tie. He not only represented the school but also stood out from the rest of the people on the court.

"He always gave us speeches before the game to pump us up and they worked," Thomas Carver (9) said. "At first the team was a little surprised by the way he dressed but then as the season passed, it began to become a big part of our team."

Brookshire traded purple and gold uniforms for purple and gold ties. Speeches and fedoras

helped to lead the team to play hard. The spirit of each member, including the fedora-wearing manager, encouraged the team to win. For three years, Brookshire helped the team overcome difficulties and come out on top.

"[The most stand out game was] the championship game the second year [of managing the team], because it was the closest [game]," Brookshire said. "[The game] was extremely stressful, [so] I stood up and yelled."

By the time they got to their third championship game, Brookshire expected nothing less than a win. He gave his speech to the team, and they went out on the court and played until the buzzer rang and won their third championship in three years. From managing, Brookshire learned what happened on the court can be applied outside of the gym.

"If you were to be a manager somewhere you would realize the power of morale, your working conditions will seem a lot better if you boost the morale somehow," Brookshire said.

"You work a lot better when you're happy."

He learned that giving his teammates and friends confidence to win allowed them to actually go out onto the court and win. He never played on the court, but he became one of the reasons the boys won. Through writing his speeches, he became part of the team, but through wearing a suit and tie, he became more than just a player.

At the age of 13, he led his team to win the championship for their third year in a row. His friends, coaches, and parents were all there to witness his inspirational speeches, his neatly straightened tie, his angled fedora, and his energy that had not left since his father gave him the basketball goal on the afternoon that started it all. *Story by Mckaela Kramer.*

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