

The Final Shot

A moment of heightened suspense

Start

You find yourself inside a gym packed with noisy fans watching a high school basketball play-off game. Three seconds are left and Heyworth Hornet star Jamie Scheets has an open shot from the corner. If he makes it, the home team wins. If he misses, the visiting Pekin Dragons win and eliminate the Hornets from the state tournament. You are sitting in the middle of a section of screaming Hornet fans with a great view of the action.

Questions

After reading the prompt above, answer the following questions on another sheet of paper. Use your answers to help you think about your subject.

1. As Jamie gets ready to shoot, what is he doing?
2. What are the Dragon players doing?
3. How are the visiting coach and his players on the bench reacting?
4. What are seven different sounds in the gym that you can identify?
5. What are the Hornet cheerleaders doing?
6. Chester, the local policeman, is standing at the door. How is he behaving?
7. A little old lady is sitting at the end of the aisle. What is she shouting?
8. How do you feel right now?
9. What is the Hornets' coach doing with his hands?
10. What happens when and after he shoots?





Getting Started

Concisely capture this exciting sports scene.



Starting Your Story

Your head should be filled with the sights, sounds, and smells of the gym. Now write a ninety-word mini-story for three of the following developments. Try to use all of your details.

1. Jamie misses the shot and a riot ensues.
2. You notice a man in front of you stealing the wallet of the man sitting next to him.
3. A stranger suddenly bursts into the gym.
4. You remember something terribly important, and you must leave immediately.
5. Tell the story from the point of view of someone who knows how tough things have been in Heyworth lately.
6. Your cell phone rings, and you must take the call.
7. Someone passes you a note.

OR: Come up with your own idea for a mini-story.



Write Away!

1. Select your favorite and develop it into a longer story.
2. Study your new draft and consider the following: Is this going to be strictly a sports story, or is it going to be a story that takes place in a sports setting? If it's the former, what have you done to make us care about the outcome? If it's the latter, what is the connection between the game and the story itself?
3. Write the final draft.



Read and Write

Consider reading “The Pit and the Pendulum” by Edgar Allan Poe. Pay particular attention to Poe’s use of sensory detail in establishing tension as he builds to the ultimate climactic moment.



On the Screen

Enjoy watching *Hoosiers* (rated PG), the fictionalized account of a small rural Indiana town whose local high school team makes it to the state championship. Watch for the detail in the scene in which the team manager/substitute must sink a free throw with the game on the line.

Electricity

by Carlos Angelos (age 17)

THURSDAYS WERE HOLY TO MY family. It was a routine now: Pack the Gatorades in the fridge for slightly over an hour, not too much or they'd be boulders. Wash Jaime's Nikes with the Penguin bottle polish and stuff them sideways into the duffel bag, being careful not to wrinkle the Heyworth Hornet All-Americans jersey. Last but most important, Jaime always wore his green and gold Notre Dame boxers, so it was up to me to pull them out of the dryer and hand him them steamed. Thursdays were home games at Heyworth High. It's been like this for about six months now, and the phone calls from basketball powerhouses like Michigan State to St. John's are becoming more frequent. I never figured how or why my little brother became the star that he is. He's a high honor student, has a likable character, and is blessed with good looks. But basketball?

Six months ago, Jaime first set foot in Heyworth High School. I, being the older brother and senior, had the responsibility to show him around. He always had his way with academics and sports in middle school. But I figured he would have a wake-up call at a high school that ranked high in both academics and sports. But early on, he showed his talent in the classroom and on the court as a member of the freshman team. Against our crosstown rivals, the Pekin Dragons, Jaime managed to fracture his kneecap on a rebound in the first quarter.

He continued to play and performed amazingly, even with the injury, and led his team into overtime. But the Dragons overpowered the smaller Hornets and took away the win. Since then, Jaime was brought up to the Varsity Team and it didn't take long for him to start as the point guard.

This Thursday was just like any other Thursday. Pack Gatorades, shine Nikes, and steam-press Notre Dame boxers was becoming a ritual to me. This game marked the first play-off of the season for the Hornets, and what

better way to begin the post-season than against the Pekin Dragons. Chester, the security guard, greeted us at the door with a grin and waved us into the arena. We sat down at our usual location, which was in the middle of the B section. We arrived twenty minutes early as planned, enough time for Jaime to speak to some of the local press and suit up for warm-ups. It didn't take long for the Pekin Dragons to appear from the locker rooms dressed in metallic green, sporting headbands, wristbands, all sorts of elastic gimmicks that made their players seem bulkier than our players in our white and red jerseys.

The ref blew his whistle, threw up the jump ball, and the game began. We held the lead for the first minutes of the game but the constant pounding of the massive-bodied Dragons seemed too much for the Hornets. At the end of the half, The Dragons held a secure lead. The Hornet fans wondered where Jaime's leadership had gone.

For the first time in the entire season, Jaime was benched for the start of the second half. The Coach for the Hornets was Mr. Screen, a young lad in his twenties dressed in a shirt and tie and carrying some extra baggage around his waist. His neck would turn red at first but then blue if you repeatedly missed lay-ups or free throws. Jaime, in anger, took a seat on the bench while the second half began. The Hornets had some catching up to do, but Mr. Screen's new strategy only made things worse and the gap between the two teams grew. My parents became more outraged with every minute.

Toward the last few minutes of the third quarter, Mr. Screen realized his team needed some sort of direction to finish the game with some decency. He called Jaime to the side and whispered something to his ear. Jaime reentered the game, and it seemed as though the entire pace of the game shifted. The crowd chanted louder and longer and the metallic jerseys of the

visitors seemed to fade with every turnover and every Hornet possession. Every lay-up, drive, and jumper was assisted by Jaime. The crowd was fanatical for the unforeseen gain in points and the Dragons began to lose their confidence.

With the score finally tied at 63, The Pekin guard held on to the ball and with a few seconds remaining, took a wild shot. It went in, giving them a lead by two.

All was silent. The cheerleaders stopped flapping their pom poms in the air. The entire crowd, the sky, and atmosphere held their breath. Chester squeezed his arms together, making his pupils brighten and enlarge. Jaime dribbled the ball downcourt with eight seconds remaining with a two-point deficit. I looked over at my

parents and they seemed to have complete faith in Jaime's actions.

I felt my chest tighten and for a few seconds I was drowned out by my own heartbeat. The Dragon players scrambled to Jaime and forced him to pass to his guard Alex. Alex fired the ball back to Jaime, who took the final shot, a three pointer. It hit the rim, rolled around, and went in. We won by a point! I collapsed in my own arms and stayed that way until the lady next to me tugged at my sweater and nodded to the floor, where the fans were all over.

The two teams, in awe, shook hands. Jaime went on to Notre Dame, where he starred on the court. I became a professor and never went to another game. I had better things to do.

Notes to the Author

- **Point of View:** This is obviously very important. You have given the narrator a somewhat “nerdy,” distant voice. We know what he likes to do on game day. We know how he reacts to his brother's heroics. This is a big brother's story.
- **Setting:** Because this is the big brother's story, we know as much about the family home as we do the gym. Still you could have provided more details about the gym. What would he have noticed? What are the sights, sounds, and smells?
- **Character:** We know the narrator. We have no way of knowing too much about Jaime—except that he is successful. Is there a way you could sneak more of his character in? Perhaps he has qualities that we can see but the narrator cannot. Maybe he doesn't appreciate his brother's help. Maybe all of this hero worship is starting to inflate his ego.
- **Plot:** You begin early by setting up the family. You build to the climax. The ending is quick, but in keeping with the characters.
- **Theme:** You were not trying to make an obvious point about human values, but you do show that people have different values.

- **Now What?** A follow-up story might be interesting. This could be part of a family saga. What does success do to Jaime? When does the narrator decide to stop going to games? What about the coach? He is unusually young for the job and doesn't seem that sharp. Is there a story there?