

The Crossover That Won The Game

by Joe Ponder

A sample of the opening pages

The Crossover that Won the Game: Book 1: 2nd Edition

The Beginning

Book One

"All righty children, as you all know I am Coach Crossover and I coach the fifth and sixth graders. I coach at Confidence Elementary for so many great reasons," the coach said with pride in his voice and a sparkle in his eyes.

"Sir, why is this school called Confidence Elementary? And did your parents name you Crossover or did you give yourself that name?" Little Shay asked.

Coach smiled at these questions. He remembered how naive, brutally honest, and pure little children were. His mind took a trip down memory lane when he was playing freshman basketball at St. Caramel College. There were ten seconds left in the fourth quarter. It was the final game of the season and he himself was handling the ball. Yes, he had the opportunity to be the star of the school. He turned his back to his defender while handling the ball with his right hand. This was his opportunity. Certainly it could be his big moment. Many people were there to support him, but it was his dad he wanted to impress most of all.

Crossover spun quickly to the right and switched the ball to his left hand.

"Back up," he said to his opponent as his defender put his left forearm on the right side of Crossover's upper body.

While using his right hand to push his defender's forearm off his oblique, he heard his dad yelling from the bleachers, "Son, son...hey, son, do the famous CS we worked on."

Crossover created space between him and his defender as he quickly stepped back and slightly to his left, switching the ball to his strong hand, his right hand.

He smiled. He knew his dad abbreviated the word so no one would understand. Instantly, his defender lunged with his right leg and reached to steal the ball using his right hand. Crossover stared his defender straight in the eye, stepped outward to his right side, crouched slightly, and crossed the ball from his right hand to his le--

"Hey, Coach, are you going to answer me?" Shay asked, bringing Coach Crossover out of his daydream about his moment of fame.

Gee whiz, how he wished the kid would have waited before he interrupted his daydream.

"Yes, Crossover is really my last name. Well, just so you know, before any of my students depart from Confidence Elementary, they will all have a beautiful crossover that will destroy any defender. The school is called Confidence Elementary because we aim to help all of our children to have confidence in themselves. Not only while they are here, but long after they depart."

"Thanks, Coach Crossover," Little Shay said with excitement in his voice. He wants a nice crossover like the great Iverson.

"Now let's go, we have a lot of work to do," Coach Crossover said.

Over the next two months, Shay thought often about wanting to improve in basketball. Even before basketball came Shay's schoolwork. Shay kept his grades up. Shay's mom would not allow him to practice before all of his homework was complete. However, as soon as all of his homework was finished, Shay was back to pounding the pavement. Shay tried and tried and tried some more, but he had difficulty learning how to do a crossover. Shay was overly critical of himself and he frequently wished someone was there to encourage him.

Two Months Later

Coach Crossover kept a sharp eye on Shay during practices. He was short but quick as lightning and had a quick release on his jump shot. But for some reason, he just couldn't perfect the crossover move. Every time he attempted the crossover, someone seemed to strip the ball away from him. Shay would lower his eyes and hang his head downward, but Coach Crossover never let Shay be too hard on himself.

"Never give up, Shay. If you work hard enough, you will learn how to do a crossover very well," Coach Crossover would always say.

Game 1

Shay looked up into the bleachers and became nervous by the stream of incomers and observers.

"Confidence, confidence," Shay told himself.

"Shay, you're starting," the coach said.

"Ok-k-k-kay th-th-thanks, Coach Crossover," Shay said with a slight stutter, showing that he was nervous and truly afraid.

"Go out there and give it your best, Shay," Coach Crossover said.

"All right, team, put your hands in here, Confidence on 3. 1...2...3!"

"Confidence," the team yelled in unison.

The first three quarters went by so quickly. At least it felt that way to Shay. He played hard but couldn't shake the words his brothers, Jeremiah and James, had spoken about him for so many

years. Things like "You're nothing but a loser! You're best at quitting! You will always be a failure!"

The team struggled overall, but the score was still close. He kind of thought Coach Crossover believed in him, but he wasn't convinced.

Fourth Quarter of Game 1

"We're down 2. Rick, you will inbound. Shay, you have to take the three-pointer," Coach Crossover instructed during a timeout.

Looking around the flailing hands of the player guarding the inbound pass, Rick passed the ball to Shay at the three-point line. There were twenty-two seconds left on the clock. Confidence low, but no time to waste, Shay knew he had no choice but to try.

Ball in hand at the three-point line! The opponent trades stares between Shay's eyes and his waist! Shay faked as if he was going to move to the right! The opponent didn't flinch. The opponent was slowly inching closer. Shay did a pump fake with the ball, as if to trick his opponent into thinking he was going to shoot the ball. The opponent still didn't flinch. Instead, he moved forward, attempting to get body-to-body with Shay so he could steal the ball or cause him to shoot a shot that was almost impossible to make.

Now only twelve seconds remained.

What am I going to do now? Shay thought to himself.

"Whatever I am going to do, I must do it soon," Shay reasoned within himself.

Shay turned his back to his opponent. With the ball in his right hand, he dribbled. His opponent had his right elbow on Shay's back. Shay looked up in the bleachers at the older brother who always put him down.

I will show him, Shay thought to himself.

Shay quickly, and rather beautifully, spun to the right and smiled.

"He cannot guard me," Shay told himself, using positive self-talk.

Just as he went to switch the ball to his left hand, the opponent stripped the ball with his right hand, then moved quickly around Shay's body, grabbing the ball with his left hand.

"No!" the coach yelled as the opponent took the ball down the court, watching the buzzer as time ticked away.

6...5...4...3...2.

The opponent squared his feet, bringing both evenly under his shoulders.

1, the opponent released the ball.

0, the players from Confidence Elementary watched and waited, hoping he would miss. The players from the other team watched with great expectation. Wait no more!

The suspense for all players ended when the ball swished through net, making a snapping sound that crushed the hearts and spirits of the players from Confidence Elementary.

Little Shay listened to the uproar of screams and cheers coming from the opponents' bench and fans. As he buried his head in his hands, he sat on the bench and cried. The strong hand on his right shoulder did not faze him.

"Shay, it's okay. You played a great game. I think you got a little arrogant, but in life, there are always lessons to learn. Never get overconfident, but likewise, never stop believing in yourself. Now, wipe those tears from your eyes and cheeks and walk with me to the locker room. This is only the first game, we have a long road ahead of us," Coach Crossover said with a huge smile.

Shay held the words of Coach Crossover close to heart. Secretly, he wished that it was his dad encouraging him. Nonetheless, he carried Coach Crossover's words with him everywhere he went over the next month. Shay's confidence increased a little with each game and practice. When Shay felt like giving up, he remembered the words of Coach Crossover. For the first time in his life, Shay was learning to believe in himself. He remembered Coach Crossover saying, "Simply keep bettering yourself in every area of life because you never know when your big moment will come!"

Shay continued working hard in school and equally as hard on the court. He had no idea that his big moment would be approaching so soon, but he was sure of one thing: he had to believe in himself and never give up. Confidence Elementary won the games that mattered most and would be playing in the championship. Shay received a rush of adrenaline when he realized that he and Rick would meet again.

The Championship Game

The first three quarters and what little had been played of the fourth were hard for Confidence Elementary. Shay and the other players refused to give up, though. Shay had an opportunity to face the player that once embarrassed him. Rick looked just as fierce as he did before, but things were different now. Shay had a newfound confidence and sense of determination. He had waited for this moment. Coach Crossover noticed his team struggling late in the game and knew he had to do something...

Fourth Quarter of the Championship Game

"Timeout," Coach Crossover yelled, after the rebound that followed Chip's poor shot. "You're doing a great job, Chip, but don't rush, pal. I want you to drive to the hoop."

"No, Coach, I can't."

"Why not?" Coach asked.

"I twisted my ankle because I stepped on my opponent's foot while trying to drive past him. That is why I shot the bad shot. Sorry, Coach," Chip apologized.

Coach Crossover hadn't noticed Chip limping off the court because he was talking to the other players and conversing with the referee, sharing his frustration about there not being a foul called on the last play, as it appeared the opponent pushed Chip.

"There are no bad shots. You tried and that is what matters most. You made the decision that you thought was best in that moment. Chip, what counts right now is that you did what you thought was the best thing to do. Again, there are no bad shots. Some shots are not just good as others, but that is normal. Take a seat, Chip, and I will get you some ice and an Ace bandage for your ankle."

The Coach patted Chip on the back and smiled. "You did well, Chip. Don't you worry, we still have time to win this game," Coach Crossover said.

"Shay, it's all on you. You are the one. Everything happens for a reason. Chip is a great player, but he is hurt now. That makes you the chosen one for this moment. Stay confident, believe in yourself, because guess what?" Coach Crossover asked.

"What?" Shay replied.

"I believe in you," Coach Crossover uttered the words that meant so much to Shay.

Shay smiled, as all he wanted was someone to believe in him.

"I'm ready, Coach," Shay spoke with excitement and a reignited confidence.

The ball was passed to Shay. With his tongue sticking out like a young Michael Jordan, Shay dribbled the ball from left to right and right to left at varying speed.

There were eighteen seconds left in the fourth quarter.

"Off me," Shay said as his opponent grabbed his jersey and hand-checked him. Shay never flinched. He never looked at the ref to alert him that his opponent was playing defense illegally.

"You remember how I stripped you in the first game? I'll do it again," Shay's opponent said.

Shay looked his opponent directly in the eyes, scanned his body up, down, and side to side. He laughed. "I lacked confidence then. Not today, buddy," he said with that MJ confidence. Shay smiled as he told his opponent, "You won't be stripping me this time."

"Watch me," the opponent said.

Ball being dribbled from left to right, right to left, Shay watched the time clock. Shay turned his back to his opponent. 12...11...10...Shay spun...now facing his opponent again with a grin that communicated "I am confident and I do not fear you at all."

"Ready?" Shay questioned his opponent.

"I was born ready. Are you ready?" his opponent questioned.

9...ball switched from right to left.

8...Shay faked as if he was going to drive past his opponent. His opponent flinched.

7...

"Where you going?" Shay laughed as he asked the question.

6...ball dribbled twice quickly between both of Shay's legs.

5...ball switched from left to right hand.

His opponent made the biggest mistake of his career; he reached.

"CS now, CS now!" Coach Crossover yelled.

4...Shay flinched. His opponent reached.

3...Shay flinched again. His opponent reached. Now crossing the ball over to his left hand, his opponent reached and fell.

With two seconds remaining on the clock, Shay took off to the basket.

1...Shay laid the ball in the basket using the famous finger roll. As the clock went down to zero, the basketball went through the rim and net, causing the uproar of cheers from fans and teammates. Shay, the once-ridiculed kid who lacked confidence, made the winning shot.

"Yes!" the crowd yelled. "Good move, man! We loved that crossover," the crowd continued to praise.

Shay laughed and wore a smile no one would ever forget, as his teammates and Coach hugged him.

"Hey, Coach?"

"Yes, Shay?"

"Because of my teammates' and your belief, your confidence in me and my crossover, we won."

"No, Shay," Coach Crossover said. "Because of the perfection of your crossover, your ability to listen and learn..." Coach Crossover paused. This silence seemed to last forever, but Shay waited patiently. "Because of your confidence in you...we won!"

"Remember that no matter your obstacle or opponent, your success or failure is ultimately in your hands," Coach Crossover ended his conversation of encouragement.

The End

"Hey, hey...Shay," the coach from Wilson Middle School called out as he was very briskly walking over to Shay. Shay quickly turned around to find out who was calling him.

"Oh hey there, Mr. Scott, you wanted to talk to me?" Shay asked with great enthusiasm.

"I loved the crossover that won the game, and great job sinking that layup in the final seconds!"

Shay smiled. "Thanks, Mr. Scott."

"No, thank you for putting on such an awesome performance! You must play for my school next year, okay?"

Shay turned his head and looked at Coach Crossover, then back at Coach Scott, looked at Coach Crossover once more, and again at Coach Scott.

Staring right in Coach Scott's eyes, Shay replied, "Well..."

The Crossover that Won the Game: Book 1: 2nd Edition

Seventh Grade

Book 2

Swish! That was the sound the ball made as it fell through the net.

"Yes!" the crowd roared as Little Shay sunk the three-pointer with two seconds left in the fourth quarter.

"Boy, when did you start shooting threes?" a teammate asked.

Shay shrugged his shoulders, letting his hands fall to his sides like the great Michael Jordan and said, "Hey, I was feeling it, so I took the three."

"Shay, Shay, he's our man. If he can't make it, no one can!" the cheerleaders chanted.

Shay only smiled. "These cheerleaders sure know how to boost a person's morale."

"Shay, have you ever thought that perhaps you don't know how good you are? Maybe you don't have enough confide--"

"Hey guys, let's wrap it up. We're headed for pizza and wings," Coach said. "And let's give a round of applause to Shay for hitting the winning three-pointer."

"Wait! Wait," someone shouted as the team stopped. "I'm Grace Better, and I'm with Channel 3 News. We'd like to have a word with your player Shay. Would that be all right, Coach Scott?"

Coach Scott smiled. "Now that's up to Shay. But I'm not used to seeing the media at a junior high school," he said.

"Yes, Shay, yes," his family yelled from the bleachers above.

Shay smiled and heard a compliment that almost made him cry. Never before had that person given him a compliment. It was his brother Jeremiah.

"Great shot, Shay. They can't stop you," Jeremiah yelled words of encouragement from the bleachers.

Well, Shay thought. All the years you've put me down...

"Hello there. Can you tell us where you learned to shoot a three-pointer?"

End of sample

Read the rest - the complete eBook is available at bibliobookstore.com