

Pass It On®...

Caitlin Clark and the Importance of the Supporting Cast.

The all-time NCAA scoring leader is more than a great shooter.

Caitlin Clark is the best college basketball shooter ever. She is also an inspiration to young girls everywhere who have hoop dreams. While Caitlin represents stardom, she also reveals the hard work and selfless play.

One of Caitlin's young fans is Linnie, a player on a ninth-grade basketball team in a small town far from Iowa. One evening, late in spring, Linnie walks into a gym that is more crowded than it has been all season. Her team has won all its games. But Linnie has seen her playing time go down as the team has moved up the charts to this final contest. Tighter games mean keeping the best players on the court. Still, Linnie knows she also has a role to play, to be the best player off the bench. For most of the game, Linnie cheers her teammates on, shouting encouragement. She gets her four minutes of play at the end of the third quarter, when she earns a steal and a basket. Ultimately, her team wins the championship and a lifetime of memories. Her basket was a three-pointer, and her teammates call her shot the Caitlin Clark. Linnie is ecstatic. Even though her team won by 20 points and didn't really need her basket, it feels good to be a part of it all.

Teams are built from bottom to top, not the other way around. There will always be those rare superstars, but games are won when there is a bond between all teammates and they work together as one. That's something Caitlin Clark knows, and she has high praise for her teammates. "I'm just so thankful. I wouldn't be where I am if it wasn't for them," she says.

Watching Clark's highlight reel is like replaying childhood hoop fantasies. She makes shots so deep they seem only possible in your dreams. Getting less attention in Caitlin's game is her ability to pass and make those around her better: Caitlin is also the leader in assists this year. The supporting cast is better because of her, and she is breaking records because of them.

"At the end of the day, we have a really great team. And that's what makes it so fun," she says.

The players on the bench cheering on the starters are the same ones who push themselves hard in practice to give the starters a competitive look. They dish out compliments, work hard in the weight room, study film, make the whole machine better — and get little credit for it. Sure, they'd love to be Caitlin. But more important, they love her.

When we celebrate others' successes, we share in the elevation of all. After the championship game, Linnie is on the couch getting texts from her teammates. "Great steal!" "Nice shot!" "You killed it!" Each of us may have that moment when all our dreams align, and we are the superstar. Until then, we can be happy in our own progress, our relationships, our knowledge that whatever our note in the grand symphony of life, we can play it well.

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