

A Pick-Up Game Hiccup

by Hadjii Hand



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basketball hoop

It was a typical Saturday afternoon in my small town of Brunswick, Georgia—just the right kind of day to meet friends and play a pick-up game of basketball. Since we didn't have courts at the neighborhood parks like they do in big cities, I usually rode my bike around town, looking for a place to get a good game of two-on-two going in somebody's driveway or backyard. All we needed was a friend with a hoop.

Dexter, T. J., and I were ready to play, so we went looking for a fourth by heading over to the homes of friends who had their own hoops. First, we hit Chip's house, but he wasn't home. Next, we went to Terry's place, but he answered the door in church clothes because it was his family's Picture Day. We moved on to visit our man Donnie, but he told us he was grounded. Great. What were we supposed to do now?

That's when T.J. suggested, "Hey, Will, let's see if Keyshawn's home."

"Keyshawn has a basketball goal?" I asked. See, I had never pegged Keyshawn for the basketball type because he came from a football family. His dad played football in Canada when he was younger. He had an older brother playing football in college and another brother who was a big deal on our high school team. Keyshawn was even a star for our age on the Boys Club football team. So, I knew he loved football, but I had never even seen him playing basketball-not even in P.E.

But, T.J. said, Keyshawn had a hoop on a real goal in his driveway. "And in fact," T.J. added, "I heard he just got a new goal for his birthday-one of those cool ones where you can adjust the height so everybody can dunk!"

"Perfect!" I thought as we headed over to his place. When we got there, however, we saw that Keyshawn's old goal-backboard, rim, and all-was still there. Worse, it was lying dead on the ground.

It turned out that the old goal was connected to an iron pole planted in a block of cement that even Keyshawn's musclebound family could not pull out of the ground... despite the fact that they had dug a hole around it and were working together as a team.

Keyshawn quickly asked us for help. In all, nine of us were there: Keyshawn, his dad and a friend, three older football players, and the three of us. We were raring to get this thing out of the ground. So, when Keyshawn's dad yelled, "One. Two. Three!" we pulled with all of our might and... pretty much nothing happened. We might have moved the goal an inch or two at most before it fell right back in the hole again.

Keyshawn's father, trying to keep our hopes up, called out, "Okay, okay, okay. That was good. We're getting closer. Let's try again. One. Two. Three!" Everyone pulled again... and still nothing. But we refused to give up, so Keyshawn's dad started assigning positions. "Dexter, you move over here. T. J, you grab it from there. Keyshawn, you hit it high and I'll take it low. *One. Two. Three.*" All of us *straaiiiiiined* and... still nothing. The goal was just too heavy.

That's when I noticed a two-by-four board lying against the wall under the carport. *Hey, I thought, that could be our lever!* I remembered learning about levers in elementary school. Our fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Jameson, had explained that a lever works kind of like a seesaw. You put a heavy object on one end of the lever, resting it on something in the middle (called the fulcrum) that supports it. Then, by pushing down on the other end, you can lift heavy objects much more easily.

I went up to Keyshawn's dad and said, "I have an idea. If we put the goalpost on one end of the two-by-four-and use the edge of the hole as the middle part-we should be able to lift the goal out of the hole by pushing down on it."

"Good thinking, Will," Keyshawn's father said. The whole crew agreed to try it, since all that pulling wasn't doing anything, after all. We placed the board in its proper position and Keyshawn's dad once again counted off, "*One. Two. Three.*" All of us pushed on the other end. And... *boom!* Not only did it work, but none of us could believe how easy it was.

In a little while, we set up the new basketball goal, and we finally got to play our two-on-two. As we were playing, Keyshawn called out to me, "Yo, Will. That was a pretty cool little trick you pulled out."

"Yeah, didn't it prove that sometimes brains can beat muscles?" I called back. "Of course, it's best when you've got both-like me!"

Keyshawn smacked me lightly on the arm, but he was joking. And in the end, I walked away feeling like a hero-all thanks to a little science lesson.

1. What kind of pick-up game do the friends in the story want to play?

- A. basketball
- B. football
- C. hockey
- D. soccer

2. Whose point of view is this story told from?

- A. T.J.
- B. Ms. Jameson
- C. Will
- D. Keyshawn

3. Read the following sentences from the text.

"It turned out that the old goal was connected to an iron pole planted in a block of cement that even Keyshawn's musclebound family could not pull out of the ground... despite the fact that they had dug a hole around it and were working together as a team...

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What can you conclude based on this information?

- A. Will thinks that they can lift the basketball goal more easily if they use a lever to push it up out of the ground.
- B. Will would rather be studying for science class than trying to move a heavy basketball goal out of the ground.
- C. Will thinks that they will never get the basketball goal out of the ground and that they should give up.
- D. Will and his friends decide to play basketball without a goal because they can't get it out of the hole.

4. How could you describe Will's approach to problem-solving?

- A. He thinks of a solution immediately but gets mad if it doesn't work.
- B. He thinks creatively and applies information from other parts of his life.
- C. He needs time and space to brainstorm before he's comfortable suggesting a fix.
- D. He finds it difficult to think about other information he has when he's trying to solve a problem.

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. In Brunswick, Georgia, Will and his friends don't have a public city basketball court to play pick-up games on, so they bike around trying to find a friend's court.
- B. A lever is a way of lifting something heavy by using a plank, kind of like a seesaw, that rests on a fulcrum, which makes it easier to lift up the heavy object.
- C. Will doesn't think that Keyshawn plays basketball because he knows that his family is a big football family, and he's never seen Keyshawn playing basketball at school.
- D. Will and his friends work together and apply their knowledge from school to pull a basketball goal out of the ground so that they can play a game of pick-up basketball.