**AWARDS SPEECH**

**FOR**

**LISA MANKINS**

Hello everyone and thank you all for being here to celebrate our team and to acknowledge our accomplishments for this past season. (**If there is anyone special you would like to acknowledge, do that here**) I would like to take a moment to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the helping hand and all of the support and encouragement we received this year. Everyone involved with this group and this season made a contribution and together we all learned and grew as athletes, coordinators, and participants.

Michael Jordan said, “Talent wins games but teamwork and intelligence wins championships.” After this season, I **KNOW** we can all understand what Michael was saying.... for our **OWN** personal experience.... Look **HOW FAR** we’ve come!!! We got to the playoffs!!! We **ALMOST** won!!! And while that would have been an amazing accomplishment and an incredible upset... and victory, I want you to all know that what we **HAVE** achieved is **EVEN BETTER**. We showed ourselves and everyone else that we have **POTENTIAL**..... that **ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE**.... in fact, I once heard someone point out something very interesting.... when faced with great challenges in life, this person realized that it’s so important to accept and understand.... and even **EMBRACE**... the word “**IMPOSSIBLE**” because what it really says is, “I’m **POSSIBLE**!!!” That’s a new way of thinking of things, isn’t it!?!?!? It’s also really important to keep reaching for newer, greater goals. Someone once said, “Unless you do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.” This is the perfect time in your lives to practice learning, reaching, and growing...and it all takes really hard work, but as another quote goes... “No one ever drowned in sweat!” .... just remember to drink plenty of water (**do you prefer to say Gatorade” instead?... whichever you think is funnier or will resonate for the kids**) along the way! (**Wait for the laugh**)

As we learn to understand that **ANYTHING** is possible, we also begin to understand that what we each bring to every situation says as much about us as it does about the entire picture. Playing in sports... and participating in anything in life, is way for us to learn about ourselves and each other... and by this I’m referring to **EVERYONE** involved. When you’re a kid and you’re just learning a game or a sport, you may not be very good. You may be afraid to run too fast, you may think you’re going to fall or fail, You may not think you have the strength to throw far or shoot from a distance, but as you get older, and as you practice, you see you get better, or you discover special talents or skills.... or dislikes... you learn to understand where you excel and where you need some help and encouragement, and just because you may not be “excellent” at a skill, that doesn’t mean you should avoid getting better at it.... in fact, that’s the **exact** thing you should want to practice and try to master. About these thoughts and doubts you might have... I want you to know that this is all part of growing up.... and even **ADULTS**.... if they’re **SMART**, keep growing. I have a confession to make... teaching you and coaching this team **TEACHES ME**... watching you practice, finding ways to comment and work with you to **UNDERSTAND** what you’re doing and how to guide you to adjust your sights, focus, and strategize, actually teaches **ME**. We learn from each other. **NO ONE** in this room... in this school... in this community.... knows **EVERYTHING** and it takes a **TEAM** to inspire each other, support one another, learn from from each other, and find how each one of us, as pieces of a puzzle fit together to have an exciting, rewarding experience. ... And while we all want to win, if you take a look at what we’ve achieved and how we advance every single day, you will see that old saying is true.... “**IT’S NOT WHETHER YOU WIN OR LOSE, IT’S HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME.**”

As you find yourselves in games with people on your team that you might think are better than you, stronger than you, more together than you, be thankful... encourage their success because it will have a positive influence on your performance. And if you think you might be a “hopeless case” which is not possible because **EVERYONE HAS POTENTIAL**, remember this... here is a short list of things you can do if you **THINK** you’re not good.... which isn’t true... each one of these things technically require **ZERO** skills.... but you can teach others if you do some of them:

* Be on time
* Make an effort
* Play with respect and integrity
* Have a good attitude
* Be prepared
* Do MORE than is expected of you
* And of course of course.... listen to your coach!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

As you get older, I’m sure you begin to understand more and more what the word “**strategy**” means, how important it is to understand it, and how it’s used. The truth is that successful teamwork takes place as much in our minds as it does on the playing field, or, in this case, the basketball court. You’re learning how valuable it Is to have a plan... to not just go out there and throw the ball and play “Willy Nilly.” You see how we work with each team member’s strengths.... and make no mistake... **EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU** has strong parts and unique ability just like even the strongest athletes among you have things you still have to learn, but part of a successful strategy is recognizing those points, playing to strengths, and building up what is yet to be developed. ... And keep one thing in mind... the guys on the other team are **no different than you**. They have their problems and weak spots too.

This team started playing together \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ months ago. Do you remember the beginning? How everything seemed a bit new and strange and how it took a little time to get used to playing with each other.... even for those of you that had already been friends and knew what to expect? I know you’ve also learned that every season brings a new start. You come to the team with your abilities.... both the ones you had for a long time, and the new ones you’re beginning to polish, and that’s great! We also have a range of ages here... From the younger members to the senior, more experienced older players, each one of you brings a piece of the puzzle, that when put together, forms a whole, complete picture. For the younger members, you have learned your job is to pay attention... watch... ask questions... support your leaders. And **MOST** of all, remember that **NEXT** year, there will be kids joining that are younger than you... they’ll be anxious, they’ll feel strange, they may not know what to do at first. It’s your job to welcome and to guide them so that they feel included and ready to play. For you seniors.... I guess **TECHNICALLY** you’re the “big men on campus....” but **GUESS** **WHAT**? Don’t get too comfortable! Next year, for those of you going on to college and more team sports, **YOU** will be the young, inexperienced kid, so be gracious and patient to the teammates you have now and be respectful to the new teammates you meet in the future.

Of course there’s another really important part of what makes a team work, and that is the participation and cooperation of the parents and relatives of each team member. When a player has the support and enthusiasm of the grownup in their lives, and when that grown up shows the player what it means for the player to succeed through encouragement, practice, positive reinforcement, and hard work, that’s the best gift. It’s wonderful to see adults taken back to the time when they participated in sports, but it’s even better for the kids to have their opportunity to play and win. Let’s use a sports term for a minute... I mean, if not here, **WHERE**?? (**Wait for the laugh**) Encourage your kids to literally “run with the ball” on their own. Let them do their best, and if they miss, they **still** learn. What we do on this team is so much more than basketball.... it’s a place to learn how to get along... to learn skills, patience, tolerance, diplomacy, unity, compromise, and sharing in experience.

Phil Jackson said, “The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of the member is the team.” Coach John Wooden said, “Talent is God given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self- given. Be careful.” And I, Coach Lisa Mankins, say, “**GOOD JOB!**!” Work hard, focus, practice, and care about your teammates.... you are a **UNIT**. You are only as strong as your most experienced player. Everyone... build up each other and I promise you, you will **ALL** be **WINNERS**!!! Thank you all!!