



Chuck Barber
St. Charles Country Club

I Suck at Basketball

Because I am 6'6" tall I am frequently asked if I played basketball at any point in my life. The answer to the question is best characterized by a quote from Reverend Lovejoy of *The Simpson's*: "Long answer 'yes' with a 'but'; short answer 'no' with a maybe".

I sort of played basketball in grade school and at the high school level, albeit briefly. I mostly rode the pine and played in garbage time at the end of some games when the outcome was certain.

I practiced hard. I was 'coachable'. I wanted to be a better basketball player, I left everything out on the court every time I played. I never improved. This was somewhat disconcerting for me as my father (6'9" tall) was a three sport athlete at Denison University in Granville, Ohio. He was a standout at that level for three years. I wanted to be like him and I was not doing a good job of it.

It occurred to me that the game of basketball would not make me like my father, whether I was any good at it or not. What I wanted to be was a good person, the standard that my mother and father set for me. The jury is still out on how good a person I am, but I know that I'm trying every day to be as good as I can. I fail periodically. We all do. " We learn wisdom from failure much more than from success. We often discover what will do, by finding out what will not do; and probably he who never made a mistake never made a discovery." Samuel Smiles – Scottish Author

I made a conscious decision to try new things, to do routine things in new ways, and to adapt to an ever changing environment. A big part of this strategy involves putting the people I work on staff in new positions. I try to break them from their routines, believe that this new strategy is not a wasted exercise. I've found that patience helps; the changes we implement don't always work right away. The wisdom we gain from each failure provides a new path to something more successful. We've found, playing to the strengths of the people on staff will increase the probability of a successful outcome.

My father told me that maybe basketball wasn't for me. I was 15 years old at the time and I was not about to quit. I finished the season of my sophomore year and focused on golf and volleyball. I was never going to be a scholarship athlete but I was able to piece together a few good years on both teams. I learned that by refocusing my energy in those places where I was a stronger competitor made the effort of practicing, training and competing more rewarding. The same can be said of our staff. Playing to their strengths, their abilities and focusing their energy at work in areas where they can excel has made a world of difference in how we approach each day.

We still have our misses and near misses with new things that we've tried. Each miss brings us closer to the hit and by working together on solutions makes the outcome much more enjoyable. Some day when I'm older I'll share some of these misfires as I have had some SPECTACULARLY bad ideas. Until then you'll have to keep reading *On Course*. 

