



*A bold movement of hope*

## **Inspiration Turns Lives around – The Story of Two Insightful Players**

### **Editor’s Note from Dr. Stephen Walker, Editor-in-Chief of Podium Sports Journal:**

*Inspiration comes in many forms and touches greatness in many ways. [Insightful Player](#) focuses on mentoring kids on the edge – and these players’ know just that – what life is like on the edge. They provide a beacon of light to those who are hungry to make their lives count...and the principles pretty much speak to us all. I remember when the Academy Awards came out and “The Blind Side” was nominated for best picture. Actress Sandra Bullock won for best performance of a leading lady. It is a remarkable story of the life of Michael Oher, offensive lineman for the Baltimore Ravens, and his adopted family – who offered him shelter, school and a warm loving home. More than anything they gave him a way out of the projects. There are other success stories we might not have heard about if not for Coach Chrissy Carew’s [Insightful Player program](#).*

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By Chrissy Carew MCC

I was crushed when I didn’t make the cheerleading team. I was a freshman in high school. What made it particularly hard was that my father was a dedicated football and baseball coach, my four brothers were superstar athletes and my big sister was a cheerleader. Up until that point, I made every team I tried out for, including the eighth grade basketball team when I was in seventh grade. I was a tomboy on a mission to excel in every sport I played. This was a big blow to my life that ended up paying off bigtime. My experience of not making cheerleading pales in comparison to what the Insightful Players went through. Here are stories of two of my Insightful Players:

Rashied Davis of the Chicago Bears had to hit the floor to dodge bullets in his South Central L.A. home. His father was murdered by gang members at a McDonald’s when he was eight; he grew up around drugs, violence and poverty. One of nine children raised by his mom and aunt, Rashied believes his background shaped him into the man he is.





NFL veteran Blaise Winter's start in life was very challenging. As a young boy, he underwent painful surgeries to correct a cleft lip and palate, as well as surgeries to remove tumors from his ears that resulted in deafness in one ear. He spent many hours in speech therapy and was often teased by other children. He was considered slow and without talent by teachers and coaches. He was even put in classes for the mentally disabled.

Even his home life was difficult and heartbreaking. His father was abusive, both physically and emotionally. Thoughts of suicide crossed Blaise's mind more than once.

He battled anger management issues, but he never gave up and never sought an easy way out.

How on earth did Rashied and Blaise survive such horrific beginnings? How were they able to soldier forward and create a life that dreams are made of?

In Rashied's case, he used his negative environment as a motivator to create a great life. He came out of his childhood amazingly resilient. His resilience helped him develop a deep-rooted passion for finding the good in every situation regardless how bad it was. Instead of developing a chip on his shoulder, he nurtured his commitment to get better.

He said, "My life is my responsibility. It's no one else's. Not my mom's, not my father's if he was alive, no one else's. If kids grow up like I did or they grow up with a silver spoon, it's the same for all of us. I have learned over the years the difference between a man and a boy is that a man learns how to play a bad hand well. No matter what cards I have been dealt, I have figured out how to play a bad hand well. Every kid can learn to do this, regardless of their environment."

He credits his inner strength to his faith in God.

Rashied wants kids to know that their lives mean much more than they think, much more than they could possibly imagine. He knows how hard it is to make the right decisions and to do it by yourself. He wants to encourage kids to lean on God because He is always there and when you lean on God, you are never alone. Leaning on God was what set Rashied on the right track.

He talks about how important it is for kids to push forward and take full responsibility for creating the kind of life they want.

Amazingly, Blaise triumphed over the rocky start of his life to be named MVP of Syracuse University and to have a successful 11-year career in the NFL playing for the Colts, Packers and Chargers.



Blaise had two saving graces in his life: his mother and his great-grandmother. They helped him get through difficult times as a kid. Both showed him unconditional love, devotion and encouragement.

Knowing he's not the only kid to have a horrible home life, Blaise wants other kids like him to hold these two big tips close, remember them, and take them to heart:

#### Stop Blaming Yourself:

“If you are young and can't get out of your home, find an interest.”

Blaise found football. It became his lifeline for developing self-esteem and empowerment. He wasn't motivated to run from his father; he was motivated to add value to his life and find something to help him expand his perspective of what's possible. Getting involved with football gave Blaise his first experience of independence and ultimately a sense of freedom.

“When you find that interest that motivates you, develop it and really get involved. Look under every rock until you find an activity you really enjoy. Let your emotions flow through your passion. There are many activities out there waiting just for you. You could become a runner or reader, play the flute, dance, sing, act, or do sports of any kind. Disengage yourself from the constant reminder you are living in a very difficult situation.”

#### Stay Away From Friends Who Are Living in Misery:

“Misery loves company. One of the worst things you can do is to hang out with bad influences or troublemakers. On the football field, no one talks about misery. We learn to focus, grow our skills, and build our self-esteem. Don't let troublemakers who think they have all the answers lure you in. Before you know it, you will be involved with the wrong crowd and participating in risky behavior, in a gang, or part of a hate group.”

Like Blaise did, focus on building a positive momentum with a healthy, fun activity rather than allowing your behavior to land you in prison. Get around noteworthy human beings who are on a mission. Surround yourself with honorable people who allow their passion to flow through something that they truly love and believe in.

“Find consistently good friends, friends who care about you and themselves in a healthy way. Reach out to noteworthy people of all ages, from every profession, and to those in ministry who care about kids.”

Blaise feels he was placed on this earth to inspire and challenge people to ferociously grab hold of the champion within and courageously be all they can be ... and then some. He believes the dreams we have in our hearts have been placed there by God, and it is our responsibility to go after them with all our might.



My heartbreak of not making cheerleading cannot hold a candle to what Rashied and Blaise went through. However, it taught me much more than realized back then. I wanted to be a cheerleader so badly that the very next day, I committed to practice every single day for the next year. I did make cheerleading my sophomore year, and to this day, I draw strength from that experience. This setback showed me firsthand that perseverance can make all the difference in the world. It gave me an appetite to build character, a deep-rooted respect for resilience and a commitment to remain positive regardless of any situation.

Though Rashied, Blaise and I each endured different challenges and met them in different ways, there are common threads to our experiences. Each of us found a way to turn a bad experience into a positive lesson. What themes unite the responses that the two NFL players and I had? By figuring out certain techniques for turning things around when things are tough, such as:

1. Find a mentor and create a community of people that unconditionally support you.
2. Be like a dog with a bone: extract every morsel of wisdom from the lesson to be learned in any negative situation
3. Ask yourself the important questions. How will this make me better? What wisdom can I take from this? Who can help me? What did I learn from other experiences and how can that help me now? How might this help me later?
4. Reach out to God, the Universe or your higher power and ask for guidance.



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