

Beyond the Court

The Story of Sam Ashaolu

I am standing here by no accident...

I was well known for my great skills on the basketball court. I have received many awards and was the player to watch.

I received a scholarship to Duquesne University for this talent. I had a dream.

This dream was soon to be realized as I was reported to be the next Canadian success story on the basketball court. The media was watching me play because I was one of the top Canadian players. But that fateful night in Pittsburgh, on September 17, 2006--it changed my life. I was with fellow team mates returning from a school dance. An argument ensued and surprisingly shots rang out. Four of us were hit with the stray bullets. I suffered the most serious injuries.



“One bullet lodged in my neck, the other in the back of my head”

I laid in a coma for three weeks; the doctors had little conclusive information as to what the outcome would be. I underwent several operations and the prognosis was still bleak. The quality of life that I would have was in question. The doctors could only assume that I would require continual 24 hour care at best. They could not determine if I would ever walk or speak properly ever again.

I defied the odds. For two months of intense physiotherapy I worked at regaining my motor skills and memory function. Six days a week I transformed my life by the rigorous and grueling schedule that was the main stay of my life.

Every day I had to deal with this new reality; dealing with my damaged body, facing physical and mental limitations and then,

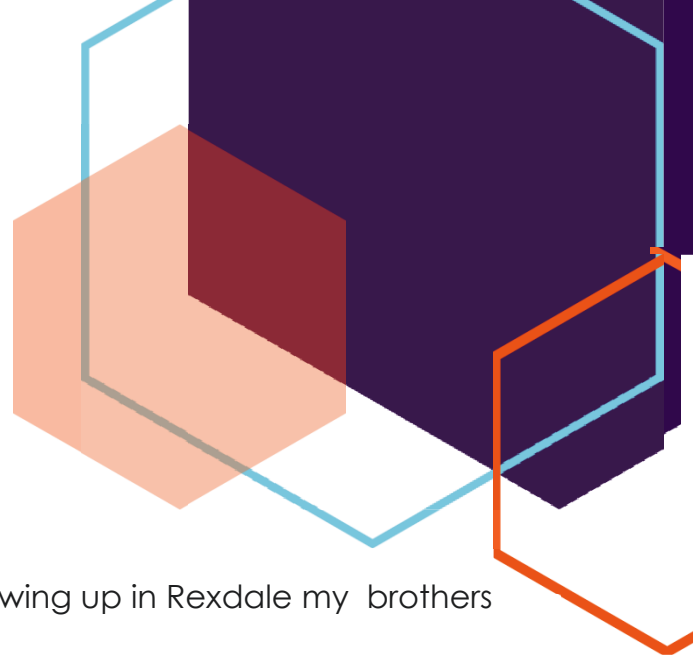
the loss of becoming a professional basketball player.

All this and, I DID NOT GIVE UP.



In photos: The Duquesne University basketball...

[Visit](#)



Now I want to share my story:

I grew up in Rexdale with my mom and 3 brothers. Growing up in Rexdale my brothers and I worked hard to avoid drugs and gangs.

I worked hard and earned my Bachelors in Communications and in Social Work. I enjoy working with at risk youth. For the past few years, I have had several speaking and coaching engagements and would like to continue getting my message across to people who are thinking of giving up on their dreams and speak about what it took for me to get a scholarship to a Division 1 University and all the obstacles I had to go through despite being one of the Top high school basketball players. I also run after-school programs and workshops that focuses on Life-skills, Employment, Education and Financial Literacy. I recall the fateful night at Duquesne University and what it took to come to terms of what had just happened to me, my intense rehabilitation, and how hard I worked to have a normal life. My story resonated with everybody out there chasing their dreams, with kids and adults because it inspires them to go after their dreams and to make better choices in an ever-changing world.

When speaking to kids I hope to instill the importance of:

- 1. Pursuing an education...sports do eventually expire and an alternate path is required.**
- 2. Work to achieve your dreams.**
- 3. Never giving up on your dreams is the key to success.**
- 4. Making better choices to avoid situations that could lead to catastrophic events.**

Awards/Achievements

2000- TOP ranked player for the AAU tournament held in Connecticut. All the top players were present as well as key coaches here to watch.

2000- INVITATION to the CANADIAN All Star Game. The top twenty high school players in Toronto are selected to play

2001-RANKED one of TOP 20 best players in Toronto by the Toronto Sun

2001- ALL STAR AWARD-HUMBER CLASSIC-only top high school teams in Toronto are included

2001-ALL STAR AWARD-VAUGHN HOLIDAY CLASSIC-VAUGHN ROAD ACADEMY

2001-Florida AAU- SELECTED FOR ALL STAR TEAM-TOP AAU TEAMS INVITED TO TOURNAMENT. MANY DIVISION UNIVERSITY COACHES PRESENT OBSERVING KEY TALENT

2003-BULL CITY CLASSIC-top high school tournaments in Raleigh NC by Mount Zion prep school.

Top scorer averaging 23 points per game

2003-MVP Coastal Christian Christmas Classic, top tournaments in Virginia Beach

2005-PART OF THE CANADIAN Men's NATIONAL BASKETBALL TEAM

2009-graduated Duquesne University -BA Communications

2015- GRASS ROOTS retired my jersey honoring me as one of the top players to come out of Grassroots. It is known as one of the top AAU teams in Canada. Only the top players in Canada are selected to this team.

In high school I had interest from many Division 1 Universities. Such as:

Syracuse University, Clemson University, Iowa University, East Carolina University, UTEP University, George Washington University, St. Bonaventure University, and Virginia Tech University.



In photos: The Duquesne University basketball...

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Media

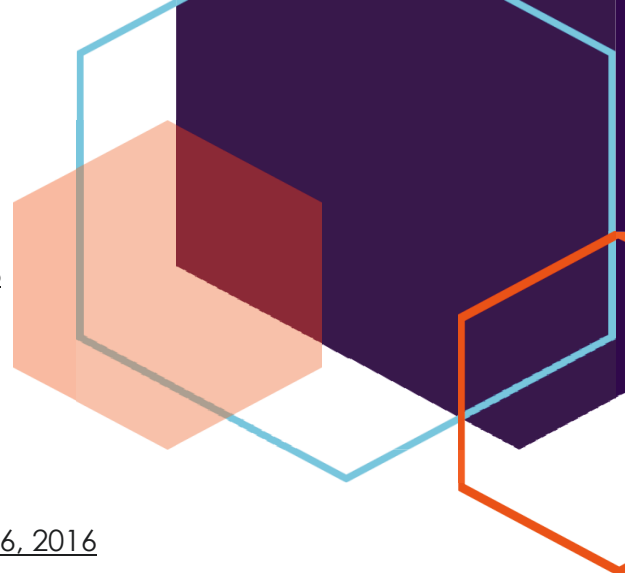
[Five Duquesne basketball players shot; one critical - Sept. 18, 2006](#)

[Wounded athlete worked to avoid gang life Oct 12, 2006](#)

[Duquesne shooting victim appears at practice - Oct 31, 2006](#)

[One dream denied, one fulfilled - Dec 17, 2009](#)

[A decade after shooting, Sam Ashaolu still loves the game - Feb 16, 2016](#)



Sam was invited to speak in a workshop on the topic of resiliency. Sam showed a great level of humility when sharing his story of injury and success. He inspired all the participants on the platform and was able to address all their questions with the basic truth that resilience and effort is the key to success
Jeffrey Saah, Light Body Wellbeing

Previous Speaking Engagements

Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute

Nelson A. Boylen Institute

York Memorial Institute

Jarvis Collegiate institute

West park secondary school

LakeShore Collegiate Institute

West View Centennial Secondary School

Pittsburgh Central Highschool

Boys and Girls Club

Oakwood Collegiate Institute

Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh

Regent park community center

Hamilton Boys and girls

Grass Roots AAU

Harbor Front Community Centre

Lawrence Heights community center

Humber College Men's Basketball

C.W Jeffery's collegiate institute

Crestwood preparatory college

Humphrey Group Home

Sir Wilford Laurier school

Fallstaff Community Centre

Westdale Secondary school

Carrick High School

Frontenac Secondary School

Vaughn Secondary School

Our Place Peel

Central Public School

Roy Mcmurtry Youth Centre

Brisdale Public School

Jefferson Public School

I would like to thank Sam for coming and sharing his story with the kids at Falstaff Community Centre. His story was very moving and captivating. He spoke about making it out of the low-income neighbourhood to getting a full Division 1 scholarship. I could see the kids listening to every word he said. I recommend Sam's Story to all students or young adults that need to hear a story about being persistent and not giving up. Sam's story was very relatable to the youths at my Community Centre. - Patrick Shaw, Community Recreation Programmer

Thank you for your interest in my story.

If you are interested in booking me to speak please contact me

Email: Beyondthecourt31@gmail.com tel: 647-874-1143

(10 PERCENT OF PROCEEDS WILL GO TO AT-RISK YOUTHS)

TESTIMONIAL

"The youths expressed to me how inspiring your story were to them. They were so moved by your story and how you never gave up on your dream. The following day I came into work and everyone's still talking about your speech. Keep up the great work and don't let anyone silence you, I want to thank you for coming to share your story to inspire all of us." **Our Place Peel. Suzzette Joseph**

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Patrick Shaw, Community Recreation Programmer

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Jeffrey Saah, Light Body Wellbeing

"The message of Hard Work and Never Giving Up was very good for my students. Sam's Story showed my students that you will face adversity in life, you just can't give up."

Ms. Burges Peel Alternative South

