

# 24 Days

*"A Requiem to Family,  
Faith, Community,  
Education and Sport"*

*By*

***Don M. Jackson***

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My daily existence revolves around sport. Many of my friendships and relationships. (in life) have arisen from the game. I derive strength, motivation and inspiration from the sportsmen and sportswomen with whom I have interacted over the years. I find a commonality of purpose, goals emotion intensity, preparation and execution among high level sportsmen and sports women. When taught, practiced and played correctly, I believe that sport is formative, reformative and transformative. It can also be restorative. My relationship with my father was shaped (to a substantial degree) by a commonality of sport and a belief that sport can be used for a purpose that transcends its recreational or competitive value.

In effect, Dad taught me that sport was a mean not an end. The game was to be used to accomplish a goal (i.e. to secure an education to see the world, to support a

family, to elevate a community) not as the goal itself. Although I did not recognize it at the time, he utilized sport to educate and compose me as a socially uncomfortable, restless minded youngster and to be calm and comfort me as a restive, despondent man as I ungraciously fought the inevitability of his death.

At its best, sport can be used to educate, uplift, unite and support communities. Throughout my grief and writing, a number of people with whom I have connected through sport have played vital, supporting roles, either through the examples that they set or simply engaging in consoling conversation (with me) about my father, the game or life. At times, a simple conversation about sport and games served to ease my mind (at least temporarily) from the pain of Dad's physical decline and death. These friendships have meant the world to me and have carried me through a very difficult period. I am inspired by men and women that

utilize the game to elevate, educate and support. I offer sincere thanks to University of Memphis Men's Basketball Coach Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway, former University of Arizona and current Loyola Marymount University Assistant Coach Mark Phelps, former University of Virginia Men's Basketball Coach Tony Bennett and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Famer and former Auburn University-Montgomery Head Men's Basketball Coach Larry Chapman, four outstanding coaches and upstanding men that have utilized sport to uplift those around them.

There is no one in the modern game that has demonstrated as much of a commitment to community as has "Penny" Hardaway. I have always respected the men and women that used the game to accomplish a greater end. No one in the modern collegiate game has had as much of a social impact on a city as Coach Hardaway has had on Memphis. I appreciate the example that he has set for me as a stakeholder in sport.

During my father's hospitalization, he (Dad) and I watched the Memphis Tigers on live television several times from his hospital room. In the worst of times, he felt a sense of pride knowing that I was fortunate enough to represent a man of Coach Hardaway's character. On one of those days, I sat in his room and re-read On These Courts by Wayne B. Drash, a biography of Coach Hardaway that detailed his commitment to faith, family, the Memphis community, education and sport. all the things that my father valued in life. As always, (when Dad saw me reading), he questioned me about the book that I was reading. I read a chapter to him. I know that he felt a sense of pride in knowing that the lessons of my childhood had such an impact on my adult life and that I surrounded myself with people that shared the values that he passed on to me. Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway is one of those people. To Coach Hardaway, I offer sincere thanks. Your commitment to sport, the University of Memphis, the City of Memphis, education of your student-athletes, your faith and

family are commendable. I feel privileged to have you as a friend. Your friendship elevated me during a very difficult stretch.

# Dedication

Almost by osmosis, Theodore, III picked up his grandfather's mantle and ran. The values of his grandfather were instilled in him. The mannerisms, faithfulness and discipline of Theodore, Sr. were inherited by Theodore, III. The calm yet commanding demeanor was passed from one man to the other. For that progression of values and their commonality of faith and spirit, I am grateful to both. To my son, Theodore Lorenzo Jackson, III: You add purpose to my life. You are the realization of my, your mother and your grandparents' dreams and your work is a testament to your grandfather's vision. The journey from your Grandad's Arthur Conley, Sam Cooke, Charlie "Bird" Parker, Marvin Gaye and Tom Jones to my Luther Vandross, George Howard, Kool Mo Dee, Jackson Browne, Bruce Hornsby and the Range, Hall and Oates and your Trevor Jackson, Brian McKnight, Joe, Jon B, Ed Sheeran and Robin Thicke is shorter than you think. I look forward to

continued participation in your journey and watching your progression. It is my hope that the strength of your memories helps you to navigate through your grief. You are a good man. I am proud of you. I know that your Grandad, your great grandfather Smith Jackson, Sr. and your great, great, great "Uncle William" Saxton are pleased with the man that you have become. You walk a well-trodden path.

## Author's Biography

Don M. Jackson is an internationally prominent sports attorney. He is a former collegiate pitcher and the author of *Fourth Down and Twenty-five Years to Go: The African American Athlete and The Justice System*. Since his graduation from the University of Virginia School of Law, he has represented hundreds of amateur and professional athletes, coaches and stakeholders in sport from around the world. He is widely regarded as an expert in sports regulatory matters, having represented amateur 16 and professional players, coaches, clubs, corporations and institutions in legal and arbitral matters for over three decades. He is called upon quite frequently by the sports media and has appeared as a commentator on sports law issues on ESPN, ESPN Radio, and MSNBC, among others. He is frequently consulted by the print media on similar issues and has been quoted extensively in *The New York Times*, *ESPN Magazine*, the *New York Post*, the

Washington Post, USA Today, the Louisville Courier-Journal, Huffington Post, National Public Radio, TIME and the Los Angeles Times, among others. Jackson has been an Adjunct Associate Professor of Sports Law at the Samford University, Cumberland School of Law since 2012. He is a native of the Gibsontown Community of Coosada, Alabama.

