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From: **KAJ**

Date: January 15, 2013 3:03 PM

Subject: Becoming a Pro Basketball Player

To: Max

Hi Max,

Thank you for your recent email. I'm glad you enjoyed my visit to your school and that I was able to autograph your book. I'm just happy kids your age know who I am let alone ask me for advice. You wanted to know the best way to become a professional basketball player.

The first part of my advice you're probably not going to like very much. Ready? Here it comes: Go to college, study really hard, and get good grades. I know the life of a pro looks pretty glamorous with fancy cars and lots of money, but the truth is that money doesn't make life interesting and neither does just playing basketball. What makes life really fun is interacting with all kinds of people and if all you can do is talk about the shot you made or the ball you stole, you won't be very interesting to people.

Also, life is long but basketball careers can be short. Injuries, age, or just better players make the average length of the pro career about six years. Mine was twenty years, but that's unusual. Even with my long career, I've been retired from the game longer than I played it, which is why I'm so grateful I studied so hard at UCLA. My studies in history and English have made it possible for me to become a writer rather than just a guy who used to play basketball.

Now, if that scared you off, then you never really wanted to be a pro, because a pro can't be scared off. He or she can't picture anything else but themselves playing on that court night after night. There is no one path to becoming a pro, but there are some general guidelines that might help:

1. Practice every spare moment you can.
2. Never neglect your studies for basketball.
3. Don't rely only on the moves you're already good at. Keep developing new skills. Each skill you have that someone else doesn't makes you that much more valuable on a team.
4. Go to college and play your heart out, but don't go to college just to play. Treat it as an extra-curricular activity—one that you love, but that's not as important as your studies.

Hope that helps, Max. Good luck to you.

Kareem