

## He Shoots, He Scores.....a Winning Smile!

There are twelve seconds left in the game. Eleven. My teammates know what to do. They pass me the ball and I dribble it down the court. Ten. Nine. We are down by one point and can't lose because it is against our rivals, the New Trier Trevians. Eight. I decide to use my secret weapon, the weapon that has plagued my existence all throughout high school, but has helped me succeed on the basketball court.

I approach my opponent with the ball at my side. Seven. Six. I move to the left. Five. Then unleash my famous trick: the Reflect and Score. Four. Braces exposed for the first time during the match, I turn them towards the lights and send a laser reflection into the eyes of my challenger. He falls to the side in blindness and I listen to the announcer take over, "Three seconds left! He shoots! Two seconds! He scores! The buzzer sounds and the Hawks win it with a winning smile!"

With the fans shaking the bleachers and my teammates jumping all around me, I am awarded the MVP of the game. When Dr. Gartner first glued those sterling silver beauties on my crooked smile, I thought my life was over. My friends mocked me for the drool that dribbled down my lips and the rubber bands that snapped out when I laughed too hard. Little did I know that one day those tiny braces that were ruining my life would turn me into an amazing basketball player.

The day Dr. Gartner called me to say that it was time to remove my secret weapon, I couldn't help but ache inside. The braces that originally brought me such grief were also responsible for my excellence in basketball. I guess I'll learn to live with just beating the competition with pure skill alone and use my new winning smile to excel in college and lead me to victory in other facets of my life.

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A winning smile doesn't come all that easy. It takes a lot of work, but in the end it's very rewarding. A winning smile is one that had gone through countless hours of pain and is created through the effort of oneself, the doctor, and staff. Every child's dream is to have a winning smile and is every dentist's goal to make that dream come true.

As a child on a basketball team, one must be committed to his or her game, so must a child with braces be committed to his or her smile. As a child one must attend games and practices, a patient must regularly go and get his or her braces tightened. While a basketball player must take time out of his or her day to practice shooting, a patient must maintain his or her braces. This means taking the extra time to floss everyday, regularly brushing his or her teeth like always, and rinsing with the "ACT", which means no eating for a half an hour.

There is a lot to getting that winning smile. Some athletes have to wear head gear and so do people with braces. Every player has a uniform, so do braces. The patients have to wear rubber bands, and they even come in sizes, like uniforms. Then to really show some team spirit, some patients get their team colors for their bands. Some players wear mouth guards; we wear retainers.

Having a winning smile involves a long process of check ups, fill ins, cleanings, x-rays, and in some cases oral surgery. However, it's all worth it in the end! It's like that feeling when a teenager asks his first date out and gets back that winning smile. Or when a girl is dazzled by that handsome young man's smile. Having that winning smile can really build up one's self esteem and you can't help but show it off.