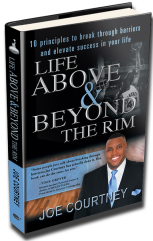


Written by Ashley R. Carlson

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**Arizona Foothills Magazine spoke with former NBA basketball player and Scottsdale business owner, Joe Courtney, about his newly-released inspirational book, "Life Above & Beyond the Rim." A book signing will be held this Thursday, July 24, at Ganem Jewelers in Scottsdale from 6 to 8 p.m.**

**AFM:** You didn't begin playing basketball until your freshman year of high school. What made you decide to explore the sport back then, and did you find that it came naturally?

**JC:** My focus until then was my original passion, which was art and design. My father said to me: "Son, you have to play sports." So I tried football and even though I enjoyed it, there wasn't a true connection there. One night while expressing this to my mother, she said, "Why don't you try basketball?" She turned on the television, and on the screen I saw Michael Jordan playing with the Chicago Bulls for the first time. I was in awe of his graceful nature and the way he played. I said to myself, "That is it, I'm going to be a basketball player."

He wore a wristband on his arm and for some reason that really connected with me. So I went to school the next day with my wristband on, and the basketball coach said, "Hey Son, what are you doing with that wristband on your arm? You're not on our team." I replied, "I'm going to be a basketball player." He said, "Meet me after school," and the rest was history.

When I first started, I was horrible; I couldn't dribble, shoot, pass or anything. But I had made the choice, and I put in the work practicing day after day. I ate, drank and slept basketball. I began to see progress and at the same time I started growing. I was 6'2 ½" when I started and by my next year I had sprouted to 6'6" tall. My game started to develop in one aspect at a time, starting with defense. I broke a state record with 17 block shots in one game. By my senior year I had developed a respectable offense as well. I was on my way!

**AFM:** Can you tell us about how you were discovered by the NBA? Did you have a feeling growing up that you would play professionally?

**JC:** It was 1992; I had completed my senior year at the University of Southern Mississippi. I had worked very hard and got noticed by NBA scouts. I had a small chance that I could slip into the NBA draft, but it was a long shot. There were talks of some of the nation's best juniors, such as Alonzo Mourning and others, entering the draft but it wasn't for sure. The day came and I wasn't drafted. My heart sank, and at that point, like most of the players that didn't get drafted, I could have thrown in the towel.

I majored in architecture and minored in graphic arts, and I had a job offer to work for a firm in New York with their graphics department. But I had a dream, and that was to be an NBA player.

So I went to every opportunity [I could] to showcase my talents. I eventually ended up in the Chicago Athletic Club. I had heard there were NBA players that trained and played there daily.

One day, after competing against the world's best players, I was frustrated because I was holding my own with the world's best but it seemed to be going unnoticed. This guy walked up to me and said, "You've got a lot of talent but you seem upset."

"I'm here to make it to the NBA," I replied.

"Meet me tomorrow morning, and I will have a workout partner here for you to train with, and we will see what you've got."

I didn't know it at the time, but that person was legendary trainer Tim Grover. I showed up early and we proceeded to do drills. After an hour, he said, "Ok, take a break; your workout partner will be here any minute."

While sitting and tightening my shoelaces, the elevator opened, and out walked none other than Michael Jordan. At that moment, the direction of my life changed forever. I trained with Jordan for the remainder of the summer. I was noticed and earned a spot in training camp, and [was] eventually signed with the 1992-93 World Championship Chicago Bulls.

**AFM:** What were some of your favorite moments playing professional basketball?

**JC:** My second basket in the NBA, being passed the ball by Michael Jordan. (Here is a link to watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oan8SLbIZ4k>.) Being mentored by arguably the greatest player that ever played the game of basketball was one of the greatest periods in my life.

Playing with Charles Barkley was absolutely amazing. He was like an illusion because of his size; some of the things he did were unbelievable. I remember playing against the Utah Jazz and they were double-teaming Barkley, and he said to me, "Keep your eyes open." The time came, [and] like clockwork they doubled him again. I cut down the lane, Barkley passed me the ball, I leaped and their seven-foot center jumped to block the shot—but I soared over and dunked the ball! I was so excited that I just yelled.

Playing in the old Boston Garden when Larry Bird announced his final year and retired [was also a favorite moment]. You could feel the history there, and one of the greatest had stepped down; it was a special feeling.

**AFM:** Can you share some people who have made a significant impact on you over your careers, both in basketball and branching out into the real estate/architecture industry?

**JC:** In Basketball: Phil Jackson, Jerry Colangelo, Lionel Hollins, Paul Wesphal, Tim Grover, Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, Eddie Johnson.

Architecture and real estate: There are significant people who embraced my passion and me. Rahm Khalsa, who shared his passion and vision of what a custom home should be, and that it wasn't just a house, but a home that people would live, evolve and experience some of the most memorable times of their lives in.

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My clients Sandy and Bob Jacobs; two amazing people who saw my vision, shared my passion, and allowed me to create art on a canvas with their home. They empowered my vision and I was able to create a beautiful home for them.

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**AFM:** Your book "Life Above & Beyond the Rim" is about overcoming obstacles to get to the life one really wants. Can you tell us how this inspiration came to you?

**JC:** I've wanted to write this type of book for some time, but wasn't ready. The inspiration evolved over time. Through my journey in life, I've experienced challenges that I had to overcome, but for a while I thought my challenges were just mine. [However] through significant experiences such as leading people while operated my companies, having to rebuild my life after the economy crash, and personally coaching and speaking to people in business, I noticed there was a consistent theme that limited people from reaching their goals and desires. Because I had experienced those same limits but broke through and experienced transformation in my own life, the answers were clear. So I made the choice to document the process, [one] that me and so many of the top coaches and successful people I've had the pleasure of learning from have used. That was the birth of "Life Above & Beyond the Rim."

**AFM:** Why is this an important book to read?

**JC:** It is important for people to read this book because there is an element of transformation in the book that will expose what's holding them back, and unlock their power from within to achieve. There are also step-by-step exercises that will assist them through the process.

**AFM:** Can you tell us some of your favorite parts about the book? Things you feel will resonate with readers?

**JC:** There are many parts that will connect with people. Firstly, most people have forgotten how to dream. They have forgotten their true desires and passions in life; in the book I show them how to identify and reconnect with those desires. This is important because in order to experience true happiness, you have to connect with your passion and what drives you as a human being.

Secondly, we all have a glass ceiling in life that I call our "rim." This exists amongst everyone at one level or another, and limits us. I identify how to acknowledge it, "expose the thief" that's stealing our success, and break through the glass ceiling so that we can go above our "rim" in life. Finally, in the last chapter the true meaning of success is revealed and I breakdown how to complete the cycle of success and leave a legacy to be proud of.

**AFM:** How is writing a book different than playing professional basketball, or running a

successful design-and-build company?

**JC:** The book was different in that unlike sports and the building industry, where you're on the move and [being] physical, writing is mental and requires you to be in complete quietness and connect with the message you are delivering. It is similar in that hard work, focus, accountability and dedication are what it takes to be successful.

**AFM:** What was your favorite part about it, and what was the most challenging?

**JC:** It was an amazing process and I will cherish it forever. My favorite part about it was receiving the first copy of the book—feeling it in amazement; that all my hard work and vision had paid off. Then hitting bestseller [status] in the first five hours of the launch, and finally breaking the top five bestselling books in the world under the Business and Money category was overwhelming.

The most challenging part was the editorial process. Since I speak and train on breaking through barriers, I wanted the process to be as real and authentic as possible. I wrote every word and one of the top editorial boards in the world took me through a very tedious and thorough process. I was about to pull my little hair out at times, but it paid off. The book received the prestigious Editor's Choice and Rising Star award, which is only awarded to the top 15 percent of all books submitted to the publisher.

**AFM:** What comes next for Joe Courtney? What plans can we look forward to hearing about in your future?

**JC:** For the past few years I have been speaking for companies, groups, colleges and organizations, and will be holding success seminars called "Life Above the Rim." My mission is to empower as many people as possible through the process. To make it easier for people to have this information at their fingertips, I have an audio series that will be launched at the beginning of August. People can find out more and get a signed copy of the book at <http://www.joecourtneysbook.com>.

**AFM:** And finally, what is something readers don't know about you, and you'd like us to? A personal trait, fun hobby you enjoy maybe?

**JC:** I love creating art and design, and love to cuddle up with my family on Sunday nights to watch the latest release on Apple TV.

*Arizona Foothills Magazine* wants to congratulate Joe Courtney on the release of his inspirational book, "Life Above & Beyond the Rim," and announce his book signing, held this Thursday, July 24, at Ganem Jewelers from 6 to 8 p.m.

The address for Ganem Jewelers is 18560 N. Scottsdale Rd., Suite 190, Phoenix, AZ 85054.

For more information on Joe and his book, go to: <http://www.joecourtneysbook.com>, and to book him for speaking engagements call:

1.855.5THERIM (1.855.584.3746) or email: [info@lifeabovetherim.com](mailto:info@lifeabovetherim.com).

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