

Basketball and Trial – It's All About Teamwork

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We had a busy but rewarding few weeks in March defending a commercial defamation case. It is an important case that has been in the paper several times and the trial was filmed by an internet television network. After a long week at trial, I met [Billy](#) and [Matt](#) on Saturday to prepare for the closing and jury charges. That Saturday night, I was player/coach in the Jawbones v. Sawbones (lawyers v. doctors) charity basketball game. This is the fifth year that this event has been played to support the [Side by Side Brain Injury Clubhouse](#).

Side by Side works with victims of brain injury and their families, helping them to be the best that they can be. Our firm has been proud to support this great cause since its inception. Last year we raised about \$76,000, but we lost the game to the doctors. I was asked to be the player coach and not just a player this year. I took it on because I like to help organize teams and make them successful. We knew the Sawbones had a lot of size and athleticism in the front court and great shooters. The Jawbones had twelve players who were solid, but the results the previous year had not been good. This year we practiced twice so all of us could learn our teammates' strengths and weaknesses. The game features lots of former college players and the occasional slam dunk. When game time came, we had a plan. I had learned over the years that the Sawbones don't have great ball handling. We started in a press to try to take advantage of our speed and quickness on defense. That evolved into a pressing half-court defense where we jumped all the picks and then double teamed the ball handler. This put a lot of pressure on their dribbling and passing skills. On offense, we spaced the floor and moved the ball to open shooters. We substituted every two or three minutes, and all our players worked hard, knowing they would come out quickly when tired. We were up double digits at the half and called off the pressure once we got up by twenty. Everybody had a good time—at least, all the lawyers did. I played less than I had in prior years, but was thrilled with the result. We had played great team defense and then got to celebrate our success over beer and pizza. Once again we had raised over \$70,000.00 for a very worthy cause.

Back to trial prep on Sunday, Billy and Matt suggested more changes to the draft closing. Matt, the youngest lawyer on the team, suggested a whole new section which was quickly incorporated. On Monday, Billy argued the charge and prevailed on a critical point. Then I argued our case in closing. On Tuesday, the jury came back after three hours and gave us a defense verdict. Basketball is a lot like trial work. Both are team sports that reward hard work, strategy, and perseverance. In the Jawbones game, we observed the opponents' weaknesses, took advantage of our strengths, modified our plan on the fly, and dominated by getting the best out of everybody on the team. We did the same at trial with each member of the team serving an important role. Matt did critical research and argued a big motion. Billy had done much of the preparation and put up multiple witnesses who were important to our success. We all had input into the closing. Team success results from a solid team effort. I could not be more proud of the [Commercial Litigation team](#) we've assembled here at [Carlock Copeland](#) and CCS is proud to support the Side by Side Clubhouse.