

FEATURE

Jeremy Lin and the Power of Mind

By Yuan Chen

Originally, the 2011-12 NBA season was not highly anticipated by Chinese basketball fans. The revenue sharing dispute that locked out the season for several weeks, the retirement of the Chinese superstar Yao Ming, and the mediocre performance of Yi Jianlian, all contributed to the low expectation of Chinese fans

Just as Chinese fans started to accept the facts and get used to their rundown spirit, from nowhere came a brand new Chinese name: Jeremy Lin.

The rise of Jeremy Lin was truly out of the blue. Ever since the beginning of the season, the performance of New York Knicks had been quite disappointing. Whilst the spectators began to lose interest in watching the games of Knicks, the little-known Jeremy Lin came to its rescue. Not only did Jeremy Lin consecutively score the highest points per game, he also delivered New York Knicks from the nadir and staged an exciting show that ignited the enthusiasm of the entire New York City. All of a sudden, the glamour of Jeremy Lin became unparalleled. Lin made the number 17 jersey that he wears the bestseller in the NBA stores; he also led the stock

of Madison Square Garden, the home stadium of New York Knicks, to go on a rally.

The sudden fame of Jeremy Lin aroused unsurpassed interest of the media. From the



endless inquiries into his past the media dug out the quite unusual adversities Lin struggled within his nameless days: he was “mised” and rejected by Stanford University, his first choice of college; he endured unpleasant

discriminations from the audience when he played for Harvard because of his ethnicity; he was not selected in the draft the first year he played in NBA; he was fired from two teams, Golden State Warriors and Huston Rockets, within two weeks; he crashed on his friend’s couch because he was at the verge of losing the contract with New York Knicks. However, undaunted by all the harsh conditions, Jeremy Lin made his journey from unknown to celebrity with elevated spirit.

Jeremy Lin’s success not only proved himself, but also challenged the stereotype of Asian basketball players. Although Lin had been a victim of such discriminations toward Asians throughout his basketball career, he himself was

unrestrained by any stereotypical thinking. He had always had a headstrong belief in his potential to be a great basketball player eventually. It is such belief that ultimately complemented his self-realization. It can be fairly assumed that in the future, not only will the basketball professionals look Jeremy Lin with new eyes, they will have to adjust their evaluation on other Asian basketball players as well.

The shackle of stereotypes broken by Jeremy Lin cannot be underestimated. It is a shackle that restrains breakthrough. Once broken, the changes brought about can be far-reaching. It reminds us of another legend in the history of sports, a story of Sir Roger Bannister, the first athlete to run one mile in under four minutes.

In Roger Bannister's time, the four-minute mile was a common hurdle for all professional middle distance runners. Athletic experiences, as well as evidences from medical researches all agreed that it was impossible for human beings to complete the one-mile run in less than four minutes. In other words, the four-minute mile was believed to be the scientifically corroborated human limit.

Ever since the idea of the four-minute mile was proposed, the best professional runners from around the world had confirmed its validity in their practices and competitions. They were indefinitely close to this limit: 4 minutes and 3 seconds, 4 minutes and 2 seconds, 4 minute and 1 second, and so forth. But nobody could actually surpass the four-minute hurdle. Therefore, all these failed challenges to the legend further proved that the four-minute mile was truly the human limitation.

However Roger Bannister believed otherwise. He practiced hard, and set his goal to break the four-minute mile myth.

On May 6th, 1954, witnessed by over three thousand spectators at the Iffley Road Track in Oxford, Roger Bannister made his moment in history: he finished one mile in 3 minutes and 59.4 seconds.

When the news of Roger Bannister breaking the four-minute mile reached audience worldwide through the broadcast of BBC, people could hardly come to terms with the fact that their long-held belief was actually a myth. After all, the "human limit" that has been substantiated over and over again by both medical theories and athletic practices, was in fact a "shackle".

Could more miracles happen ensuing the breaking of the shackle? Fourth-six days after Roger Bannister set the record, the four-minute mile, was once again broken by another middle distant runner, Bannister's long-term rival Landy: in a sports convention held in Finland, Landy finished his one-mile run in 3 minutes and 57.9 seconds. After that, within one year, over forty middle distance runners around the world broke the four-minute hurdle that was once believed to be unsurpassable. Ever since then, the world records of one-mile running had been broken and set over and over again. The "curse" of the four-minute limitation was therefore permanently left behind and cemented only in people's remembrance. After Roger Bannister retired from his athletic career, he became a neurologist. Later he became the first Chairman of Sport England. In 1975, Bannister was bestowed knighthood for his extraordinary contribution to the history of sports, especially, for his achievement as the first man to break the four-minute mile myth.

As a matter of fact, the story of Roger Bannister was not only a legend in the history of sports, but also a commonly cited anecdote in the history of medicine and the history of psychology. His story, as well as Jeremy Lin's story, both demonstrated that hard work and talent alone do not always result in breakthroughs. The more dominant factor is to break free from any constraints affixed to the mind. Eventually, it is a free mind that releases the true potential possessed by the body.

In other words, if we can draw a metaphor with a beloved Chinese fairy tale, whether the stereotype of Asian basketball players or the four-minute mile, are both like the

Gold Fillet that Buddha put on Sun Wukong's head. When Sun Wukong finally finished his one hundred and eight thousand miles of journey to the west, and asked Buddha to remove the Gold Fillet that used to torment him, Buddha simply told him that there was no more use of the Gold Fillet as a restraining force, since he already attained his Buddhahood, his Enlightenment. No need to be removed or to be broken, the Gold Fillet simply disappeared when Sun Wukong touched his forehead again. Some scholars maintain that the story of "The Journey to the West" was a story of the "mind": the entire book was dedicated to tell the disorientation of the mind, the journey of the mind, how the mind

conquered the evil, and finally, the nirvana of the mind. The same interpretation can be applied to Jeremy Lin's story in a similar way, as all the breakthroughs are eventually breakthroughs of the mind, and all the miracles are ultimately the miracles of the mind.

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