

Following in Her Footsteps: How Noel Macdonald Robertson Inspired Me

By Carley Lam

Have you ever heard of Noel Macdonald Robertson? She was an amazing basketball player who made history in Canada. Even though she played a long time ago, she still inspires girls like me today. Noel's leadership, courage, and determination helped me believe in myself, especially when things got tough.

Noel was born in 1915 and played for the Edmonton Grads, one of the greatest women's basketball teams ever! The Edmonton Grads were the subject of a Canadian Heritage Minute released in 2017. Noel wasn't just a great player, she was the captain! She scored 1,874 points in her career and helped her team win so many games. People respected her because she was smart on the court and helped her teammates play better. She showed that girls can be strong leaders in sports. In 1938, she won the Velma Springstead Trophy and the Bobbie Rosenfeld Award, which showed that she was one of the best female athletes in Canada.

Noel married Harry Robertson, who was a one-time world hockey champion in 1939. Noel also retired from playing professional basketball that year. Noel and Harry had two children and eventually she became a grandmother of three. After marrying Harry, Noel was not allowed to play professional basketball anymore because, at the time, married women were not allowed to play on professional sports teams. She began coaching girls' high school basketball in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and at the University of Alberta. In 1978, Noel was inducted into the Canadian Basketball Hall of Fame. She was one of only 10 people who were inducted into the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame twice!

Her story really inspires me because I started playing basketball in Grade 3. I practiced a lot, even with my older male cousins who never went easy on me. I have always wanted to be a strong female player, just like Noel. This school year, I made my school team, and was one of the youngest and smallest players. I felt nervous at first, but I kept working hard and helped lead our team to win our division. I consistently tried to share the ball and include everyone, especially girls who were just learning to play. I think Noel would've done that too. This is important to me because to me it's not just about winning, it's about being a leader and sharing the ball and having a good attitude.

There were times when I got hurt. I rolled my ankle and injured my foot that stopped me from playing in games and tournaments. It was frustrating. But then I thought about Noel, she didn't give up when things got hard, and I wouldn't either. I still went to every practice. I worked on shooting and dribbling, even when I couldn't run. I cheered for my teammates from the bench and stayed involved. I didn't quit just because I was injured. Like Noel, I stayed strong and kept

going. I would also never give up on a sport that I really enjoyed just because of a sprained ankle. I continued to have fun and cooperate with my teammates.

I have a goal. I want to keep practicing every day after school, learn new plays by watching my teammates do plays, and earn a spot as one of the starting five on my team. On my club team, there weren't many girls because as we get older, a lot of girls lose interest in sports. For example, I had to play with the younger team sometimes, and our team had to face older teams because there weren't enough people on my team to make a tournament. I encouraged my friends to try out for my team because they might end up loving it. Being on a team helps us practice cooperation and sportsmanship and also might make them feel better about themselves. Due to my encouragement, two of my community teammates tried out and made my club team!

Now this wouldn't be an essay about Noel Macdonald Robertson if there wasn't anything to help you in basketball. Here are some things that can help you improve your skills even at home!

- Get any type of basketball but I prefer full size and with one hand flick the ball in the air and you can do this on your couch, watching tv, and outside.
- For this one you need a full size basketball and just dribble on your dominant hand for 20 seconds and then switch to your non-dominant hand for 20 seconds this could help you a lot in your dribbling.
- Go to your local park that has a basketball hoop and just work on your dribbling and shooting and also even play against your family. That's how I got better at basketball, playing with my really good cousins.

Noel taught me to never give up and to keep getting better every day. Because of her, I want to give back too. Next year, I plan to volunteer at the YMCA and help younger kids, especially girls, who are just starting out in sports so they can believe in themselves. Some girls don't get the same chances to play or improve, so I want to help them achieve their dreams in basketball. Noel showed us that being kind, working hard, and helping others are just as important as being part of a team. That's why she's my champion and has inspired me a lot. Because of her, I want to build girls' basketball in my community. I want to help other girls achieve their dreams in a sport that I love.

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