



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 15, 2012

## Asian-American NBA Star Becomes Latest Christian Role Model

Move over Tim Tebow. There's another squeaky clean professional athlete breaking out of the pack to inspire sports fans of all ages. It all started several days ago when 23-year-old New York Knicks point guard Jeremy Lin (left), who up to that time had basically sat on the bench, stepped onto the hardwoods to lead his team to a 99-92 victory over the New Jersey Nets, scoring a very respectable 25 points, five rebounds, and seven assists.



While that performance was enough to garner some casual nods from sports writers and basketball insiders, Lin — who had previously been released by the Golden State Warriors and Houston Rockets, and been sent down to the lowly developmental league by the Knicks just weeks before — went on to score a total of 109 points in the next four games, leading the Knicks to victories over the Utah Jazz (28 points), the Washington Wizards (23 points), the Los Angeles Lakers (38 points to Kobe Bryant's 34), and the Minnesota Timberwolves (20 points). (Watch the video below of Lin's performance against the Lakers.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shJbtVPA8as>

What makes Lin's early accomplishments all the more amazing is the fact that he is a graduate of Harvard University, the first from that school to play in the NBA in 60 years. Suffice it to say that a good share of the multi-million-dollar NBA superstars Lin plays with and against had a hard time making it through high school before getting their free-ride scholarships and "earning" bachelor's degrees in community relations or recreational sports.

By contrast, after graduating from Palo Alto (California) High School, Lin got no scholarship offers (both Stanford and UCLA later kicked themselves for the oversight) and made his way to Harvard ([Ivy League](#) schools do not offer athletic scholarships) to get his degree in economics and play on Harvard's mediocre team. Incidentally, Lin's parents, who came to the United States from Taiwan in the 1970s, are well-educated, both working, according to [ABC News](#), as engineers.

Another important point to note in this story that has become known in the media as "Linsanity" is that Jeremy Lin is the very first U.S.-born player of Chinese or Taiwanese descent to play in the NBA, a



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footnote that is making him the biggest current sports story throughout Asia. [CNN](#) reported that “even though Lin hasn’t built up celebrity status in the Chinese leagues like retired center Yao Ming did, the Chinese interest is already there, with 900,000 followers on [Weibo](#), China’s answer to Twitter, already secured. The NBA has also said its TV partners in Asia will soon start showing Knicks games.”

Perhaps most important in this evolving story of a potential sports legend in the making is that, in a league that thrives on trash-talking players with huge egos, Lin is a committed Christian who gives credit to his teammates and glory to God. Before the Knicks’ victory over the Lakers February 10, as sports writers asked him about his sudden celebrity and prowess on the court, Lin said he wished more focus would be put on his teammates who were working alongside him to win games. Following his all-star performance later that night, Lin said, with evident humility: “I just give all the praise to God.”

Like Tim Tebow, Lin’s Christian faith is more than mere posturing for the media and fans. In an [interview during his senior year at Harvard](#), he recalled that while he grew up in a Bible believing church, “I didn’t really become a Christian until I was a freshman in high school. That’s when the gospel really started to make sense to me and I was ready to give my life to God.”

He added that “Christianity didn’t become a significant part of my approach to basketball until the end of my high school career and into college. That’s when I began to learn what it means to play for the glory of God.”

Like many talented players, early in his college career Lin was focused on his own accomplishments. But, he said, little by little he learned how to trust in God, “not to focus so much on whether I win or lose, but to have faith that God has a perfect plan.” He added that God helped him “to put more of an emphasis on my attitude and the way that I play, rather than my stats or whether we win a championship. I learned more about a godly work ethic and a godly attitude, in terms of being humble, putting others above yourself, being respectful to refs and opponents. There are really so many ways you can apply your faith to basketball.”

While some sports writers have tried to turn the comparison between Tebow’s and Lin’s rise into a sort of cross-sport competition, Lin has actually looked to the Bronco’s quarterback, a demonstrative Christian both on and off the field, for inspiration in his own situation. “... I think the things he says in interviews, his approach to the game is just unbelievable and I respect him so much,” Lin said of Tebow. “I want to be able to do some of the things that he does in terms of the amount of charity work and the nonprofit work, and the way he impacts people off the field. I think that is what is most inspiring to me about him.”

While Lin is riding high on the emotion of some great performances and the adulation that comes from fans, he recalled that, when he was cut abruptly last year from the Golden State Warriors’ squad, he looked to his faith in God to get him through. “I definitely didn’t see it coming and got pulled out midway through the first practice,” he told San Francisco sports radio station [95.7 The Game](#). “... It was really tough for me at the time, but I just tried to hold on to a lot of the stuff in the Bible that God gives to trust, have joy in the sufferings, and trust in His perfect plan. That’s what I tried my best to do and I’m thankful the way things turned out.”

Lin has said that post-NBA he would like to become a pastor. In the meantime, he recently told the [San Jose Mercury News](#), his main focus is keeping his eyes on God. “There is so much temptation to hold on to my career even more now,” he said, “to try to micromanage and dictate every little aspect. But that’s not how I want to do things anymore. I’m thinking about how I can trust God more. How can I



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surrender more? How can I bring Him more glory?" He added that it is "a fight, but it's one I'm going to keep fighting."



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