# Chapter 5: HiiiPoWeR

“The sky is falling, the wind is calling / Stand for something or die in the morning.” — Kendrick Lamar

The gym was loud.  
  
Not joyful loud. Not the buzz of sneakers or the energy of good basketball. It was oppressive. A dense, emotional fog. Coaches yelling. Players shrinking. Parents pretending they didn’t hear what they just heard.  
  
“He’s gotta be a dawg,” one man said to another on the sideline. “You can’t teach dawg.”  
  
Then he turned to the biggest kid on his team—a fourth grader who had just missed a layup—and yelled, “That’s the softest layup I’ve ever seen!”  
  
And I felt it. Not just the weight of that moment. But the recognition.  
  
Because I’ve done it too.  
  
In fact, I’m probably still doing it. If you’re reading this, I might’ve done it last week.  
  
I’m a work in progress. And that’s the point.  
  
I’ve never said it was daycare. I’ve never screamed for toughness like some badge of honor. But I’ve subbed a kid out without saying a word—just letting my face tell him everything I was too proud to explain. I’ve let a sigh do the talking. I’ve designed drills that looked like skill-building but were actually just control mechanisms. Polished chaos, engineered insecurity.  
  
I’ve coached through noise.  
  
And what scares me the most is how natural it used to feel.  
  
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That’s what makes Cole’s silence hit harder.  
  
He didn’t break down that day. He didn’t have a panic attack. But he was pale. Quiet. He kept biting his nails—more than usual. I noticed the pause before answering, the way he gripped his water bottle, the way he wouldn’t make eye contact. I told him to take some deep breaths. I said, “It’s just a game.”  
  
But it wasn’t.  
  
Not to him. And if I’m being honest, not to me either.  
  
Because even though I wasn’t coaching that day, my energy was still coaching.  
  
What we normalize has a volume. And that day, mine was yelling.  
  
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That was when I made the shift—not away from competition, but away from environments that reward exposure over experience. That celebrate dominance over development. That market transformation but preach performance.  
  
There’s a tournament circuit out there. Run by someone well known in the grassroots basketball space.  
  
And one of the most painful days of my life is forever linked to that world.  
  
Max had just started a new experimental treatment. It was Monday, June 17th. My wife’s birthday. We’d been told the treatment might be rough, but no one warned us just how brutal it would be. This wasn’t just medicine. This was pain therapy.  
  
So when the worst part was about to start, I asked my wife to go get lunch. I didn’t want her to see our son like that. Not on her birthday.  
  
Earlier that morning, I had posted something on Twitter—about a college coach involved in a recruiting scandal. The kind of thing people in the sports world debate endlessly. I mentioned that the sentence he received—three months—seemed light considering the charges. Not because I thought he deserved more. Just an observation.  
  
It got misconstrued. Some thought I was calling for more punishment. That I wanted to see the man behind bars. I didn’t. I was venting. Processing.  
  
While Max was screaming—literally screaming through the pain—I missed a call. I was holding his hand, trying not to cry myself. A few hours later, when things had calmed down, I returned the call.  
  
It was the tournament director. He didn’t ask how Max was doing. He didn’t ask what was going on. He didn’t even give me time to speak.  
  
He cussed me out over speakerphone. My wife sat next to me. My son was dozing off from exhaustion and morphine. The man hung up before I could say a word.  
  
That’s the kind of person we let shape youth sports. That’s who decides what development looks like.  
  
It’s not just immoral. It’s bankrupt.  
  
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So I started shifting. Quietly at first.  
  
I didn’t post rants. I didn’t name names.  
  
I started reading. Studying. Listening. I went deep into CLA, Ecological Dynamics, motor learning, perception-action coupling—not for buzzwords, but for \*truth\*. I started designing differently. Practicing differently. Coaching differently.  
  
And I started sharing what I was learning—not loudly, but intentionally.  
  
In coaching communities. In DMs. On sideline chats after tournaments. I started asking questions. Hosting discussions. Sharing content. Asking others to do the same. Not to prove I was right, but to find alignment.  
  
The truth is, I don’t need the wins to validate this.  
  
Because I’ve already seen what the old way did. I’ve seen what it took from Max. What it tried to take from Cole. What it still takes from kids every weekend.  
  
And I’ve seen what happens when you make space.  
  
When kids feel safe enough to fail. When a player makes a read that wasn’t called from the bench. When breath returns to the gym.  
  
That’s why I’m still here.  
  
Not because it’s efficient. Not because it’s popular. Because it’s true.  
  
And I’ll take true over trendy every day of the week.  
  
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# Chapter Style Rationale  
  
This chapter is constructed as a slow burn—starting with philosophical critique and letting the weight of the anecdote crash in like a second-act gut punch. The voice remains introspective but resolved. There’s a conversational texture to the tone, because the goal isn’t to preach—it’s to testify.  
  
Pacing is deliberate, sentence structure compact, and emotion metered. It’s designed to reflect both self-accountability and systemic indictment—without turning to anger. The power here comes not from the volume of the voice, but from the clarity of the lens.