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Life went on for Jim and Lorrie Morris. In his late-twenties, the baseball player became a college-student football star. He won the NCAA Division II punting championship. He made consensus All-American. Not one NFL team checked him out. Not one football scout called. Morris wondered: Was he too old?

Although they initially planned to have none, the couple eventually had three children: a boy and two girls. Hunter, the oldest, was six when his dad got a job teaching science at Reagan County High School in Big Lake, Texas. Jamie, the youngest, was not yet born.

The school was about 70 miles away from the family's home in San Angelo. But this job was important to the family. Jim and Lorri had recently reunited after a brief separation. And for the first time in his married life, Jim would earn as much money as his wife.

Big Lake is a West Texas town whose residents, like so many other West Texas residents, love high school football. Baseball, however, was another matter. In addition to teaching integrated chemistry and physics, Morris would coach a baseball team which had won only three games in each of the last three seasons. He would also serve as assistant football coach.

He pitched to his baseball players during batting practice. Ten years after he'd walked away from professional baseball, he was throwing well. His students complained he was throwing too fast. Although he didn't realize it, he was throwing better than ever. He was 34 years old.

Urging his baseball team to shake themselves out of their "lackadaisical attitude," Morris told his students they could be winners if they would first be dreamers. It was March, 1999. His words would soon be used against him:

What you better start realizing is that it takes dreams to accomplish anything. You have to have dreams. Without dreams, you're nothing in this world. You need them. And the bigger your dreams, the more you can accomplish, the more you can do, the farther you'll go. (The Rookie, page 226.)

Morris had more to say to his mostly Latino students:

Reach out! Put a dream or goal just past where you can touch it at that moment. Then, once you do touch it, you've gotta reach a little higher. And a little bit higher. And a little bit higher. That's how you get better, no matter what you do in life. (The Rookie, page 227.)

The pep-talking coach wasn't prepared for what came next. His catcher, Joel DeLaGarza, spoke candidly:

What about you, Coach? You're preaching one thing and doing another. Don't get me wrong. We all love you a lot. But the way you can throw the baseball ...pause... why aren't you still playing? (The Rookie, page 227.)

The stunned teacher, and enthusiastic students, agreed to a pact which DeLaGarza proposed:

If we win district, Coach, you have to try out for a major-league team.

His students meant it.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/KEEP-DREAMING-Rookie-The>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/KEEP-DREAMING-Rookie-The>

Media Stream



Reagon County High School

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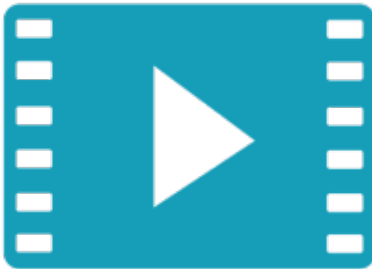
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Big Lake Texas

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The Rookie - Trailer

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