



Basketball Player Takes on Bullies

Before Reading Poll

Anthony Ianni exceeded other people's expectations and reached his goals of playing basketball and graduating from college. What do you think?

It's important to set your own goals and work hard to achieve them.

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did.

Article

RED BANK, New Jersey (Achieve3000, August 12, 2020). Shoes squeaked, fans shrieked, and a buzzer blared. A young basketball fan named Anthony Ianni put his hands over his ears to drown out the game's frenzied soundtrack. He'd attended basketball games since he was a toddler and had been playing the game just as long. But the sounds of the sport still overwhelmed his senses.

Within a few years, Ianni hadn't only learned to deal with the sounds—slowly removing his hands from his ears instead of waiting until the noises subside—he was on the basketball court *playing the game*. In fact, he was playing for Michigan State University (MSU), the team he'd grown up rooting for. In doing so, Ianni became the first known basketball player in Division I—the highest level of college athletics—with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

At age 4, Ianni was diagnosed with ASD, a developmental disorder that can cause difficulty communicating and interacting with other people. It can also cause noise sensitivity, which explained Ianni's early reactions to the squeaks, shrieks, and buzzers at basketball games.

Growing up, Ianni knew he wasn't like his classmates. He needed extra support academically and had difficulty discerning whether people were joking or being serious—another characteristic of ASD.

"I wanted to be the cool guy," said Ianni. But his efforts to fit in with his peers were often mocked, and he became the target of bullies. His basketball skills grew quickly, as did he—he was 6 feet (182.9 centimeters) tall by sixth grade—but even becoming a standout athlete didn't prevent him from being the target of bullies.

"I was bullied from my kindergarten days until I was a freshman in high school," Ianni told *Forbes* magazine. "A lot of it was because of my autism, because I would say and do things differently than everybody else."

Less was known about ASD when Ianni was a child in the 1990s. Doctors at that time told Ianni's parents he would never succeed in school or sports. His parents didn't believe that, though.

Neither did he.

As a teen, Ianni grew determined to prove the doctors wrong. He made a list of three goals: Graduate from high school. Get a basketball scholarship. Graduate from college.

"Nothing else mattered to me in high school but those things," he said.

Before long, the first two goals were checked off. Ianni graduated from high school with a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan. Two years later, he transferred to MSU. At first, Ianni said, he struggled with some strategies and maneuvers, but his coaches and teammates supported him and worked with him to tackle those challenges.

After graduating from MSU—the final check on the list—Ianni discovered a new passion. He became a motivational speaker for Michigan's Department of Civil Rights. Ianni tours the country to share his experiences with autism and spread an anti-bullying message. Through this work, Ianni encourages kids and teens to be a part of the solution by supporting one another and focusing on achieving their dreams.

It's a message that's resonating with thousands of young people.



Photo credit: MSU Athletics Communications

Anthony Ianni has gone from taking aim at the hoop to taking aim at bullying.

Ianni's advice and anecdotes inspire kids and teens to think carefully about the way they choose to treat people—and how they face challenges in their own lives. While Ianni's message is focused on students struggling with autism and bullying, he wants *all* students to know that they can overcome any obstacles—and achieve any list of goals they set their minds to.

Dictionary

anecdote (*noun*) a short story about an interesting or funny event or occurrence

resonate (*verb*) to have particular meaning or importance for someone: to affect or appeal to someone in a personal or emotional way

subside (*verb*) to become less strong or intense

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

What is this Article primarily about?

- Ⓐ Anthony Ianni was diagnosed with ASD when he was a child, but less was known about the disorder at that time.
- Ⓑ Anthony Ianni became the first known Division I basketball player with ASD and now works to support kids and teens.
- Ⓒ Anthony Ianni had attended basketball games since he was a toddler, but the sounds of the sport overwhelmed his senses.
- Ⓓ Anthony Ianni went to Grand Valley State in Michigan on a scholarship and transferred to MSU two years later.

Question 2

According to the Article, why did Ianni make a list of three goals?

- Ⓐ Nothing else mattered to him in high school but the list of three goals.
- Ⓑ He graduated from high school with a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan.
- Ⓒ Doctors said that he would not succeed in school or sports, and he wanted to prove them wrong.
- Ⓓ He wanted to graduate from college and pursue a career as a motivational speaker.

Question 3

Which two words are the closest **synonyms**?

Only some of these words are used in the Article.

- Ⓐ resonate and restrict
- Ⓑ characteristic and trait
- Ⓒ interact and inspire
- Ⓓ passion and disdain

Question 4

Which of these is a statement of opinion?

- Ⓐ Ianni's developmental disorder is one that can cause difficulty communicating and interacting with other people.
- Ⓑ Ianni is a motivational speaker who tours the country to share his experiences with autism and spread an anti-bullying message.
- Ⓒ Ianni graduated from high school and was given a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan.
- Ⓓ Ianni's success should inspire people with ASD to overcome their challenges and work to achieve their goals.

Question 5

Read this passage from the Article:

Before long, the first two goals were checked off. Ianni graduated from high school with a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan.

Why did the author include this information?

- A To explain why Ianni was determined to make a list of goals
- B To convince readers that they should set goals similar to Ianni's
- C To illustrate the success of Ianni's goal-setting and determination
- D To demonstrate that Ianni was only successful in achieving two of his goals

Question 6

Read this passage from the Article:

While Ianni's message is focused on students struggling with autism and bullying, he wants *all* students to know that they can overcome any obstacles—and achieve any list of goals they set their minds to.

In this passage, the word *overcome* means _____.

- A to collapse under a heavy load
- B to successfully conquer something difficult
- C to quickly surrender without trying
- D to embarrass oneself in front of a large audience

Question 7

Suppose Bo wants to find out about ASD. He would find **most** of his information _____.

- A on a website titled "Common Developmental Disorders"
- B on a website titled "Overcoming Noise Sensitivity"
- C in an article about students struggling with bullying
- D in an article about Division I basketball players with ASD

Question 8

Which information is **not** in the Article?

- A The reason Ianni was bullied by some of his classmates when he was in school
- B The types of basketball strategies and maneuvers Ianni struggled with at MSU
- C The reason Ianni had difficulty with the squeaks, shrieks, and buzzers at basketball games
- D The goals that Ianni wanted to accomplish in order to prove his doctors wrong

After Reading Poll

Now that you have read the article, indicate whether you agree or disagree with this statement.

It's important to set your own goals and work hard to achieve them.

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did. Then read and respond to what others have to say.

Sorry, comments are not available at this time. Please try again later.

Thought Question

Explain how Anthony Ianni has overcome challenges in his life and how he is using his experiences to help others. *Use facts and details from the Article in your response.*

Type your answer in the text box below.

Poll Results

OPINION STATEMENT: **It's important to set your own goals and work hard to achieve them.**

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING
HOW YOU VOTED	
Agree	Agree
Disagree	Disagree

WORLDWIDE RESULTS					
Agree	<input type="text"/>	98%	Agree	<input type="text"/>	99%
Disagree	<input type="text"/>	2%	Disagree	<input type="text"/>	1%

1% changed their opinion after reading the article.

Math

PART 1

If a basketball court is 94 feet long and 50 feet wide, what is the measurement of the diagonal of the basketball court? Round your answer to the nearest tenth of an inch.

Pythagorean Theorem

For right triangles, $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$, where **a** and **b** are the lengths of the legs and **c** is the length of the hypotenuse.

- (A) 107.5 feet
- (B) 106.0 feet
- (C) 106.5 feet
- (D) 107.0 feet

Stretch Article

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Within a few years, Ianni hadn't only learned to deal with the sounds—slowly removing his hands from his ears instead of waiting until the noises subside—he was on the basketball court *playing the game*. In fact, he was playing for Michigan State University (MSU), donning the jersey of the team he'd grown up rooting for. In doing so, Ianni became the first known basketball player in Division I—the highest level of college athletics—with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

At age 4, Ianni was diagnosed with ASD, a developmental disorder that can cause difficulty communicating and interacting with other people. It can also cause noise sensitivity, which explained Ianni's early reactions to the squeaks, shrieks, and buzzers at basketball games.

Growing up, Ianni knew he wasn't like his classmates. He needed extra support academically and had difficulty discerning whether people were joking or being serious—another characteristic of ASD.

"I wanted to be the cool guy," said Ianni, but his efforts to fit in with his peers were often mocked, and he became the target of bullies. His basketball skills grew quickly, as did he—he was 6 feet (182.9 centimeters) tall by sixth grade—but even becoming a standout athlete didn't prevent him from being the target of bullies.

"I was bullied from my kindergarten days until I was a freshman in high school," Ianni told *Forbes* magazine. "A lot of it was because of my autism, because I would say and do things differently than everybody else."

Less was known about ASD when Ianni was a child in the 1990s, and doctors at that time told Ianni's parents he would never succeed in school or sports. His parents didn't believe that, though.

Neither did he.

As a teen, Ianni grew determined to prove the doctors wrong, making a list of three goals: Graduate from high school. Get a basketball scholarship. Graduate from college.

"Nothing else mattered to me in high school but those things," he said.

Before long, the first two goals were checked off: He graduated from high school with a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan. Two years later, he transferred to MSU. At first, Ianni said, he struggled with some strategies and maneuvers, but his coaches and teammates supported him and worked with him to tackle those challenges.

After graduating from MSU—the final check on the list—Ianni discovered a new passion: He became a motivational speaker for Michigan's Department of Civil Rights, touring the country to share his experiences with autism and spread an anti-bullying message. Through this work, Ianni encourages kids and teens to be a part of the solution by supporting one another and focusing on achieving their dreams.

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Dictionary

resonate (*verb*) to have particular meaning or importance for someone: to affect or appeal to someone in a personal or emotional way

subside (*verb*) to become less strong or intense

Stretch Activity

PART 1

Question 1

What is this Article primarily about?

- Ⓐ Anthony Ianni became the first known Division I basketball player with ASD and now works to encourage kids and teens to be supportive of one another.
- Ⓑ Anthony Ianni was diagnosed with ASD when he was a child, but less was known about the disorder at that time than is known now.
- Ⓒ Anthony Ianni graduated with a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan and transferred to MSU two years later.
- Ⓓ Anthony Ianni had attended basketball games since he was a toddler, but the sounds of the sport overwhelmed his senses.

Question 2

According to the Article, why did Ianni make a list of three goals?

- Ⓐ Nothing else mattered to him in high school but the list of three goals.
- Ⓑ He wanted to graduate from college and pursue a career as motivational speaker.
- Ⓒ Doctors said that he would never succeed in school or sports, but he was determined to prove them wrong.
- Ⓓ He graduated from high school with a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan, but he transferred to MSU after two years.

Question 3

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *subside*?

- Ⓐ dwindle
- Ⓑ amplify
- Ⓒ ebb
- Ⓓ commend

Question 4

Which of these is a statement of opinion?

- Ⓐ Ianni's success should inspire people with ASD to overcome their challenges and work to achieve their goals.
- Ⓑ Ianni's developmental disorder is one that can cause difficulty communicating and interacting with other people.
- Ⓒ Ianni graduated from high school and was given a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan.
- Ⓓ Ianni is a motivational speaker who tours the country to share his experiences with autism and spread an anti-bullying message.

Question 5

Read this passage from the Article:

Before long, the first two goals were checked off: He graduated from high school with a basketball scholarship to Grand Valley State in Michigan.

Why did the author include this information?

- Ⓐ To explain why Ianni was determined to make a list of goals and prove his doctors wrong
- Ⓑ To illustrate the success of Ianni's goal-setting and determination
- Ⓒ To demonstrate that Ianni was only successful in achieving two of his three goals
- Ⓓ To convince readers to remain determined by setting specific goals similar to Ianni's

Question 6

Which two words are the closest **synonyms**?

Only some of these words are used in the Article.

- Ⓐ maneuvers and gadgets
- Ⓑ interacting and engaging
- Ⓒ sensitivity and persistence
- Ⓓ ecstatic and realistic

Question 7

Suppose Bo wants to find out about ASD. He would find **most** of his information _____.

- Ⓐ in an article about students struggling with bullying
- Ⓑ on a website titled "Common Developmental Disorders"
- Ⓒ in an article about Division I basketball players with ASD
- Ⓓ on a website titled "Overcoming Noise Sensitivity"

Question 8

Which information is **not** in the Article?

- Ⓐ The reason Ianni had difficulty with the squeaks, shrieks, and buzzers at basketball games
- Ⓑ The reason why Ianni was bullied by some of his classmates when he was in school
- Ⓒ Some specific goals that Ianni wanted to accomplish in order to prove his doctors wrong
- Ⓓ Some specific basketball strategies and maneuvers Ianni struggled with at MSU