

Faith Catapults NBA Coach's Bounce Back

A **cardiologist** once gave Monty Williams a crushing diagnosis: an enlarged muscle was making it difficult for Williams' heart to pump blood. The doctor said the condition meant an end to Williams' college basketball career, the end of his NBA dream—and possibly the end of his life. 

Two years later, the condition known as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy vanished. Doctors called it inexplicable; Williams called it a healing from God. A 6-foot-8-inch forward, Williams played nine seasons in the NBA. Chronic knee injuries tested his faith and led to his retirement.

Today, Williams continues to proclaim his faith as the second-year head coach of the New Orleans Hornets, despite relentless hardship. Over the past year and a half, the NBA's youngest coach has seen his general manager fired, his top scorer blow out a knee (then opt out of his contract), another player arrested, a third player lose two relatives in a fatal car accident and the franchise sold to the NBA.

"Adversity," he says, "has a way of getting us to listen to God."

His second season began with more trouble. The Hornets dealt their best player, Chris Paul, to the Los Angeles Clippers in a controversial trade. Yet through numerous trials early in his coaching career, Williams has shared the source of his strength with media. "No question, it's my faith in Jesus Christ," he says. "I read my Bible in the morning and I study in the evening. When tough times do come, it's not easy. But I realize a guy like me is blessed to be in this position."

Previous challenges make NBA conflicts seem minor. Williams

says he suffered abuse and molestation as a child. He became suicidal when he learned of his fatal heart condition. With God's help, Williams has emerged with a strong faith and a powerful testimony.

The Lord is present in our most trying times, Williams says, working all things for our good.

"I'm blessed to be in this business," he adds. "I pray I can keep this attitude as long as I'm able to coach." —Ken

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