

'All Things Work Together' in Jeremy Lin ESPN Controversy

In the middle of the night, during the peak of one of the best sports stories to sweep the nation, one word changed everything for an ESPN journalist.

And brought him closer to God in the process.

"Linsanity" had become a household axiom, as Asian-American basketball player and committed Christian **Jeremy Lin** blew up on the NBA's biggest stage, New York's Madison Square Garden.

The sports world could simply not get enough.

An unknown Harvard graduate, who had been cut twice in the past year, Lin was now starring for the Knicks, pouring in 25 points and dishing 10 assists a night. The lifeless Knicks had won seven in a row and were instantly playoff relevant again.

Madison Square Garden stock was at an all-time high. TV ratings had spiked 70 percent.

The hype seemed limitless. The feel-good stories about Lin never ending.

Until the night of Feb. 17.

Anthony Federico—an online editor for ESPN who had written more than 5,000 headlines for ESPN's website and mobile site over six years—wrote a headline at 2:30 a.m. that would forever define him.

Lin had played poorly, committing nine turnovers and the Knicks had lost for the first time in eight games, 89-85, to the lowly New Orleans Hornets.

Federico, a huge fan of both Jeremy Lin and the Knicks, read

the story about the team's exposed flaws and typed in the same headline he had used over 100 times: "Chink in the armor."

"At that moment, at 2:30 in the morning, I wasn't thinking of him as an Asian basketball player, just a basketball player," Federico told BGEA in an interview last month. "It was a pretty standard cliché. If I would have gone over it one second further, I would have realized it shouldn't be used in this situation."

The headline was up for all of 35 minutes. By 3:05 a.m., the Twittersphere was abuzz, wondering how such an insensitive phrase could be used on a national website.

Almost instantly, Federico realized the enormity of his mistake. His poor choice of words had started an Internet firestorm and that feeling in his stomach went from a twinge to a massive pit within minutes.

"That night when I saw Twitter was blowing up about the headline, I went to the bathroom and vomited," he said. "I was shocked. I was distraught that I had brought so much negative attention on a product that I love, that I was so passionate about for six years."

Immediately, Federico was vilified for his mistake. Less than 48 hours later he was fired by ESPN. But the ridicule didn't stop there.

"*Shocking* is not an adequate word," he said. "I was so annihilated. Hate emails. The paparazzi were at my house. My name was on every talk show, newspaper, on every blog. *Shocking* doesn't begin to describe it."

But that's not where Federico's story ends.

A **follower of Christ**, Federico relied on his faith and family to carry him through the roughest patch of his life.

Sure, he felt misunderstood. He was not this evil headline-

writing villain.

He spent two weeks of his vacation to help in a Haiti orphanage after the earthquake. He befriended a homeless man at the end of an exit and has developed a mentoring relationship with him. He started a coat drive in New Haven for those in need.

"I didn't have any intention to write a racist headline," Federico said.

But he's learned to let that part go. He can't convince everyone, and that's not where his identity comes from anyway.

"I've learned so many truths of the faith through this ordeal," he said. "I learned how instinctively I retreated into the Father. I was thankful for the blessing of relying on Him."

Romans 8:28—"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him..."—has been Federico's "battle cry."

"It doesn't say some things work together for good or just on Mondays," he said. "It says 'All things.'"

"I just thank God for steering me through. After going through this, I can endure anything with God's help."

Federico's life has spun 180 degrees since losing his job. Within a month, the 28-year-old was hired by a sports technology company, which reached out to him after hearing about his faith story.

And he's been able to share his journey with many media outlets along the way.

"God's way is perfect," said Federico, the oldest of five children. "God has had His plan for me in place for all eternity. If this evil situation is part of His plan for me, I'm happy to bear it. Not my will but thy will be done. Isn't

that what we're all called to as Christians? "

Federico received a call in late March that has helped put closure on this chapter of his life. **Jeremy Lin** wanted to meet for lunch to make sure there were no hard feelings on either side.

Federico, who had followed Lin since his days playing at Harvard, was more than excited to meet one of his personal **heroes of the faith**.

And the lunch went well, with only about three minutes spent talking about the headline. Shortly after the headline, Lin was quoted as saying, "I don't think it was on purpose."

And that's exactly the exchange Lin and Federico had.

"He totally gets that the headline wasn't intentional. He gets that there was no intent," Federico said. "He knew there was nothing to forgive. He was extremely gracious."

The two spent most of the lunch talking about their shared **faith in Jesus**.

"We talked about our personal faith journey. We talked about how crazy the media can be," Federico said. "He was unbelievably humble. It's just so refreshing that this guy who's so internationally famous is just a great humble guy."

Lin, who has been sidelined for about six weeks with a partially torn meniscus in his knee, has talked about returning to the Knicks' playoff series on Wednesday against the Miami Heat. Reports today say that Lin is doubtful to play.

Still, the future for both Lin and Federico is bright. Far brighter than the one negative headline that will forever connect the two.

"I don't think I believed it was possible that I could be this

happy this quickly,” Federico said. “I’ve got an unbelievable job that’s really exciting. And I have the peace that transcends all understanding.”

[Click here](#) to read the original story at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.