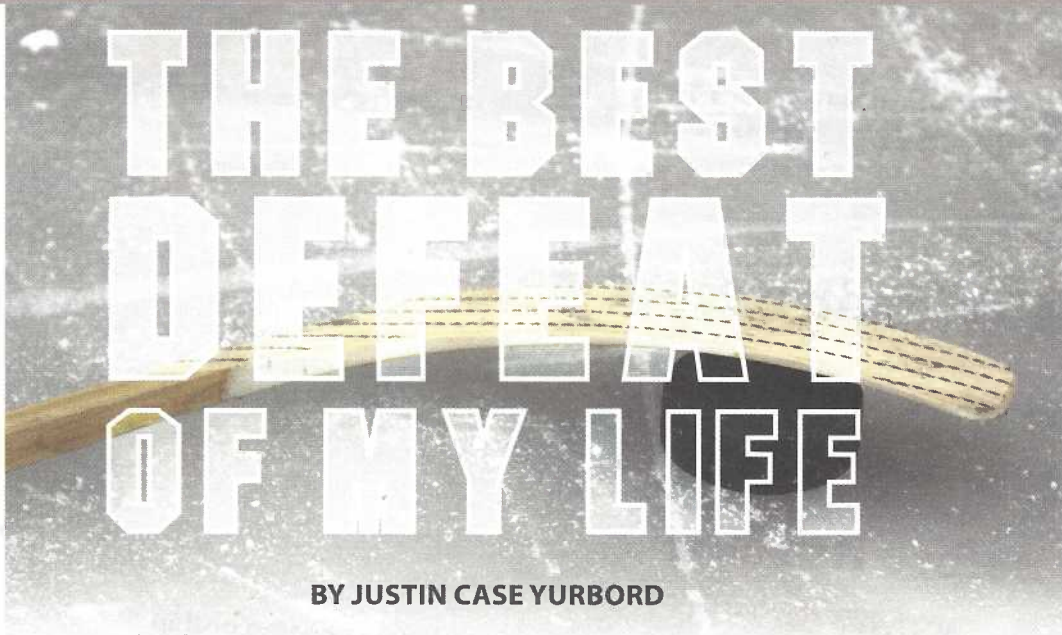


notes

Lined area for taking notes.



# THE BEST DEFEAT OF MY LIFE

BY JUSTIN CASE YURBORD

In March of last year, independent journalist Rutger Shinbocker interviewed 20-year-old university hockey sensation "Eric the Great." Eric's decorated hockey career really took off on one **fateful** day in high school, when his team had made it to the national finals. The interview below, between Rutger and Eric, **recounts** the events from that game that led to Eric's spectacular athletic and academic accomplishments.

### Glossary

- fateful:** critical
- recounts:** tells
- fortunate:** lucky
- dropped out:** stopped going
- grade-point average:** number that indicates the average of all your grades

**RUTGER:** Thank you so much for being here today, Eric. I'll try not to take too much of your precious hockey-practice time.

**ERIC:** The pleasure is all mine, Rutger. Don't worry; there is no practice scheduled for today. I do, however, have a finance exam tomorrow that I need to study for.

**RUTGER:** That's right, you've also got your studies! I forget that a star hockey player such as yourself is still a full-time student. I'll keep it short, I promise. I see from your biography that you played hockey every year that you were in high school. Is that true?

**ERIC:** Yes, I was very **fortunate** that way. If I hadn't had hockey in high school, I don't know what I would've done. I might even have **dropped out**.

**RUTGER:** Really? How is that so? You're in university now, so you can't possibly hate school, right?

**ERIC:** You're absolutely right, Rutger, I love school. Right now, I am in my second year of university and my **grade-point average** is the best it's ever been. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case when I was in high school.

**RUTGER:** What happened?

**ERIC:** I can honestly say that my first year or two in high school were terrible. I felt out of place and I just wasn't as funny as the rest of the guys who got all the attention. My grades suffered and my motivation was very low.

**RUTGER:** So what kept you going?

**ERIC:** My hockey coach at the time, Daniel. He taught me discipline

through hockey and was probably  
50 the toughest coach I ever played for.  
He was extremely demanding. He  
always followed my academic  
progress and made sure I wasn't  
failing anything. If ever I **fell behind**  
55 in my studies, he would come to  
my house on Saturdays and literally  
force me to do my homework. He  
**kept track** of all my progress!

**RUTGER:** Wow! He sounds like  
60 quite the coach.

**ERIC:** He is. I can honestly say that  
it is because of him that I am where  
I am today. Without his rigid  
discipline and guidance, I would  
65 not be a top-ranked national player.

**RUTGER:** It sounds like he definitely  
100 contributed to your success. Do  
you think his contribution was  
more important than the famous  
championship game that got you an  
athletic **scholarship** at the country's  
most prestigious university?

**ERIC:** Oh yes, without a doubt.  
However, that game was certainly  
75 a crucial game in my life.

**RUTGER:** It sure was, especially  
considering the defeat you suffered  
at the hands of your **rivals**. Can  
you tell us what happened?

80 **ERIC:** I don't know if I really want to  
recall that day again! (laughing)

**RUTGER:** We don't have to talk  
about it if you don't want to.

**ERIC:** No, no, it's quite all right.  
85 There was an upside to my defeat,  
after all. I'll gladly tell you what  
happened. Where should I begin?

**RUTGER:** I guess you can start by  
telling us how you set a new record  
90 with the six goals you scored in the  
first two periods.

**ERIC:** Yeah, that was incredible!  
I was really playing well that day.  
Funny thing is, I didn't even know  
95 there was a **scout** in the audience.  
I was just focused on defeating our  
rivals, Égault-Lemile.

**RUTGER:** But two **bat tricks** in two  
periods is simply amazing! Imagine  
how many points you could've had  
if you'd finished the game.

**ERIC:** I have thought of many "if"  
scenarios for that game. I try not to  
think like that anymore. Whatever  
105 happened happened. There's no  
changing the past.

**RUTGER:** So what happened to cause  
your expulsion from the game?

**ERIC:** As you mentioned earlier,  
110 I was on an incredible **hot streak**  
and the only way our opponents  
were going to win was by taking me  
out of the game. And that's exactly  
what they did.

115 **RUTGER:** But it was the **referee** who  
ejected you from the game.

**ERIC:** Yes, it was the referee, but  
that was after the other team's  
defenseman intentionally **cross-**  
120 **checked** me in the back.

**RUTGER:** Did the ref call it?

**ERIC:** He never called it because he  
never saw it. It was all planned that  
way. That's exactly what the Égault-  
125 Lemile player wanted. He hit me so  
hard, I immediately dropped to the

**Glossary**

- fell behind:** was not up-to-date
- kept track:** followed
- scholarship:** money offered in the form of free university education
- rivals:** (disliked) adversaries
- scout:** someone who looks for young (usually athletic) talent
- bat trick:** three goals
- hot streak:** playing very well for a period of time
- referee:** an official who arbitrates the game
- cross-checked:** hit with the middle of a hockey stick



ice. Everyone started screaming for a penalty, but there was no **whistle**. When I finally got up, I skated right up to the ref and started screaming for a penalty.

**RUTGER:** And what did the ref do?

**ERIC:** He told me to calm down and skate away because the other team did nothing wrong.

**RUTGER:** How did you react to that?

**ERIC:** It enraged me even more! It was at that point that I got a bit too close to the ref and mistakenly bumped my **helmet** on his, pretty hard.

**RUTGER:** Is that what got you ejected from the game?

**ERIC:** Precisely! After I got the game-**misconduct** penalty, my team went on to lose in the last period. Everyone still believes that if I had stayed in the game, we would have won the championship final.

**RUTGER:** So even though you may have cost your team the championship game, the scout still offered you a full athletic scholarship?

**ERIC:** When the scout approached me after the game, he said he had never seen any high-school hockey player play with as much passion as I did in those two periods. He was especially impressed by the confrontation I had with the referee. I insisted on what I believed was right and I paid the price for it. The upside? I got a full athletic scholarship out of it.

**RUTGER:** Do you feel like you disappointed your team?

**ERIC:** Not particularly. I think I contributed greatly with the six goals I scored. I don't believe missing the last period cost my team the game. I wasn't the only player on the team, after all.

**RUTGER:** That's true. Apparently, your team just **crumbled** in the last period. Is that true?

**ERIC:** Our morale was at its lowest in the third period. Our opponents felt it and took full advantage. For me, it was a bittersweet loss: **bitter** because we lost the championship to our rivals, and sweet because of the scholarship I got out of it. The rest, I guess, is history.

**RUTGER:** I couldn't have said it better myself: bittersweet. Eric, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me today. Your kindness is greatly appreciated.

**ERIC:** You're very welcome, Rutger. Thanks for having me.

## Glossary

**whistle:** a small wind instrument that the referee uses to sound the end of a play

**helmet:** hard hat worn for protection

**misconduct:** bad behaviour

**crumbled:** fell to pieces

**bitter:** acidic or bad tasting





Name:

Group:

## After Reading

### ACTIVITY 3

- ★ In your own words, summarize the upside to Eric's defeat.

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- ★ Go back and verify your answers to Before Reading Activity 1 on page 123. Were any of your or your partner's guesses accurate?

### ACTIVITY 4

- ★ Answer the following questions about the text.

1. Why do you think people call him "Eric the Great"?

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2. "I'll keep it short, I promise" (lines 19-20). What does the "it" refer to?

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3. How did Rutger know that Eric had played hockey every year he was in high school?

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4. Why did Eric persist in high school when his motivation was low?

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5. What do you think contributed more to Eric getting a scholarship: his coach or his performance in the championship game? Why?

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EXTRA READING EXTRA READING EXTRA READING EXTRA READING EXTRA READING

Name:

Group:

6. What record did Eric set in the championship game?

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7. What do you think Eric might have done differently during the game if he had known the scout was there? Why?

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8. Why was Eric ejected from the game?

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9. Why did the scout offer Eric a scholarship?

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10. Do you think Eric disappointed his team by getting a game misconduct? Why?

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**ACTIVITY 5**

★ What would you have done if you were Eric, when the referee told him to calm down and skate away? Why?

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**ACTIVITY 6**

★ Choose one of the four titles below and write a short one-paragraph newspaper article. Be sure the article you write is directly related to the title you choose and the interview you read.

- ◆ A New Record
- ◆ Star Hockey Player Attacks Ref
- ◆ A Disappointing Loss
- ◆ A Great Scholarship for a Great Player

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**Quick Chat**

• Find a partner and flip a coin to decide who will be for and who will be against the following opinion: Eric does not deserve the scholarship because he got a game-misconduct penalty.

• Take a few minutes to prepare your arguments, then debate the topic with your partner.

• At the end of the debate, decide who gave the better arguments.

• Was this an easy subject to debate? Why?

• *I think Eric deserves the scholarship because ...*

• *Eric demonstrated terrible sportsmanship when he ...*

• *The scholarship does not depend on ...*