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Literacy Memoir

Cover Letter

The most challenging part about writing this essay was what specific events or situations to use for my five snapshots. There were a lot of events I could have used but I had to remember to choose the most significant. Once I knew what topic to write about, writing it came naturally. I can easily talk about volleyball so being able to reflect on certain events was natural. Incorporating narrative techniques such as; dialogue, imagery, and description did not come as natural as I thought it would because I wanted to just simply tell the stories. But, once again I had to remember that the readers don’t know about my topic the way I do and I had to be descriptive to make it feel as if they were there. I want to keep my first snapshot because I feel it sets the tone for the rest of my essay and it really helps the readers understand more clearly my topic. One paragraph I would like to revise is my last snapshot. I need to add to it and make it longer. Another snapshot I could improve is my fourth one. I tried to make it as specific as possible but I really want to put more of an emphasis on my coach who taught me so much and he was the one who helped me improved the most. I just don’t know how to put that in my paragraph. One question I have for my peer group is how can I make my essay better?

Volleyball Journey

I

The first time I realized I wanted to be a volleyball player; I was in gym class in the sixth grade. I was young, inexperienced and everything new was so exciting to me. My gym teacher, Mr. Wilson, was the boy’s volleyball coach. He was the one who introduced me to this new and exciting sport. He was always enthusiastic about volleyball, which made me feel the same way about it. In gym class, Mr. Wilson taught the class the basics of volleyball. He taught us how to pass, set, and serve the ball. We would all try over and over again to get the skill of setting and passing perfect but instead we would just shank the ball and have to run and get it. As beginners, no one is naturally good but being so young and naïve we all thought we were. Of course all of us were terrible but I thought I was the next Olympic star.

Even when the class wasn’t playing volleyball, my friend and I would play in the corner together passing back and forth. Our arms would be bright red from the ball hitting our arms repeatedly but we didn’t care. The gym would be filled with screaming kids running around but my friend and I would be in our own world happy as could be playing volleyball. Since Mr. Wilson knew how much I loved it and knew I was too young to join the girl’s team, he let me be the boy’s volleyball manger, which is where I learned the basic rules of the game. I would keep score and be a line judge. I felt like the coolest sixth grader. If it weren’t for Mr. Wilson, I probably would have never fallen in love with the sport.

II

Growing up my parents made me and my siblings do an extracurricular activity, usually a sport. In the eighth grade, my mom gave me two options, “you have to either play basketball or volleyball on an organized team,” my mom made it very clear to me in a stern voice. She knew I hated basketball and she knew I was scared and nervous to try out for a real volleyball team. I hated her for making me. We did drills and scrimmaged to display our skills at the tryout. Luckily, I made my first traveling club team at the Sportsplex and I was overwhelmed with happiness and excitement. I didn’t realize this at the time but looking back if it wasn’t for my mom never giving up on me and always wanting the best for me, I wouldn’t be the volleyball player and person I am today.

I looked forward to every practice and every tournament. I was determined to become the best volleyball player and even my coaches could see how much I improved each practice and how much I was willing to fix my mistakes. For the longest time, I could not serve the ball to save my life and I would get so frustrated. That frustration and the encouraging words of my coaches and teammates drove me to be able to have an excellent serve. At first, it was all so confusing. The specific rules like how you can’t touch the net and your foot can’t go under the net, the plays and what each hit was called and how to do each play. But, eventually I didn’t have to think about it and it just came natural. My coaches meant the world to me and they are the ones who pushed me and taught me to be a better player.

III

It was finally here, the volleyball varsity team beach trip to Wilmington. We had been looking forward to this for a month. Every year the team travels to Wilmington and we stay in a beach house during Labor Day weekend and play in a tournament with the surrounding high schools. As a senior, it was sad that this would be my last year to be able to have this tradition that I held close to my heart. This was before the season actually started so, this trip was important for team bonding.

Communication is a key trait to have in order to be a great team. It’s not about one person; it’s about working together as a team. My coach, coach Joyner, had the team do different team building activities and practices on the beach. It included speed and agility drills, along with hitting, serving, and passing drills in the scorching, hot sun. We all dreaded this and counted down the minutes until it was over. We would have to do it over and over again until we did it right. The next morning we had our tournament at a local high school. Win after win, we noticed a big change; we were actually working together.

As a captain, it was my job to motivate the team and build a player up when she made a mistake. The physical aspect of volleyball isn’t the only aspect. A volleyball player must have mental toughness. In our last game, we were not playing well. My setter could not set a decent ball to save her life and I could tell she felt defeated and wanted to give up. The passers shanked almost every ball. We were down ten points and all my teammates had an expression of anger or defeat on their faces. Another senior and I talked to the team and tried our best to motivate them. They could tell it meant a lot to us to win every game because this was our last year playing. Soon, we began passing, which led to good sets to the hitters, and then the hitters kept getting kills. We won that game and it meant a lot that everyone picked up their games to win for the seniors and themselves.

IV

The month before nationals was the hardest month of my life. Five practices a week, three hours each, one Saturday morning practice, one Friday night practice, a couple during the week, and a beach practice Sunday afternoon. My life consisted of sleeping, eating, and playing volleyball. But, my life had always been this way ever since I joined the national travel club team called piedmont. I was used to it but that month was especially hard. Each practice my coach, Blaine, expected nothing less than perfection. If he said jump, we asked “How high?” I’ve never worked so hard and with such intensity. Not only were the three-hour long practices hard enough, the hour-long workouts after were death sentences. My body was sore to say the least. Squats, sprints, abs workouts, speed and agility drills, and other exercises were the norm. “If I see one of you slack and not try your very hardest each and every time, you all will do fifty more,” said our huge trainer.

We hoped that month would pay off in nationals as we flew to Florida to compete. After each day of competing, we progressed higher and higher and won more and more games. Of course, we lost some but as long as we made it to finals that is all that mattered to us. In our last game, it was against our rival who we desperately wanted to beat. We just barely won the first game but they kicked our butts in the second game. The third game was short to fifteen points win by two points. It was a close game and every point mattered. We were only up by one point and it was game point. I saw the ball was going to be set to me and all I wanted was a kill. I go up and it went straight passed the libero and hit the floor. We won! We got first place and it was the best feeling in the world considering it was my very last tournament. I couldn’t have imagined a better team with better girls and a better coach. This team made me the best volleyball I could be.

V

The best feeling in the world was giving back to the community while doing something I loved. My high school team ran a volleyball camp for girls in our community. We taught girls how to play and helped them become better players. I noticed that a lot of times this was where the little girls would fall in love with the sport just as I fell in love with the sport as a little girl too. Although the camp was six hours long, I would have done it longer and I know the girls would have too.

I’ll never forget this one little girl in particular named Hayley. She was so shy and quiet. I worked one on one with her during a specific passing drill that she was having trouble with. At first, she didn’t talked much and just listened to my advice and watched my demonstration but after awhile she really opened up to me and wasn’t shy anymore. The next day at camp, she never wanted to leave my side and only wanted me to help her. It was the most precious thing. The best part was that she really did improve and I made a difference in her life. At the end of the camp, she came up to me and gave me a big hug and said, “Thank you for teaching me, I hope I can be as good as you are one day.” I felt so happy and it made my day. I loved hearing that because I knew that day I had accomplished what I came to do.