

2007

Rich Stetler

Scholarship Entry

Essay #1

July 23, 2007

Essay Topic: How has playing sports taught me lessons of life and influenced my views on society?

Since I was four years old, I have had the privilege of participating in a variety of sports. These experiences have molded my character and provided a framework for the way in which I view society.

The ability to participate in sports has been truly a blessing. Not all children, and adults for that matter, have the opportunity to engage in such a fun and educational activity. The life lessons that I have learned from participating in sports are endless.

From a very early age, I learned the value of teamwork. It is not necessarily how well you perform on a given day but rather how have you helped your team achieve its objectives, whether it's learning the fundamentals of the game or winning the contest. It's easy to focus on personal achievements until you realize that the ultimate value is to move forward as a team. There is no better feeling than realizing your potential as a team and exceeding the expectations that were established in the beginning of the season.

Dedication, commitment and hard-work are other life lessons that are developed through participation in sports. The three are closely linked and are paramount not only in sports, but in life. It requires a passion for the sport to commit countless hours of practice to develop and refine physical and mental skills.

The sheer competition of participating in sports has always been motivational for me. The reason why you work hard off the field is the key to success on the field. Kevin Durant once said "Hard work beats talent when talent stops working hard." I am a very big believer in this point of view. There are people who have been blessed with God given talent who don't work hard and never achieve their potential.

The most underrated quality that I have learned from playing sports is the listening and learning aspect of the game. The little things you pick up from your coaches can be the difference from being a .300 hitter and a .400 hitter. By simply paying attention and making recommended adjustments, your game can be improved dramatically. Listening and being able to learn from your mistakes is a skill that can be used on the field, in the classroom and throughout your career.

"Act like you've been there before" are telling words from Joe Paterno, referring to the class act you should emulate when you win a big game. As a player, you win with grace and even more importantly, lose with dignity. Humility is a very special life lesson. It's all about having a good attitude and respect for your opponent and for the game.

The taste of winning has made me urn for more and has increased the desire and passion I have for the sport. There's no better feeling than running out onto the field and giving everything you have to help your team win the game. It's what drives good teams to be great.

The game has given me the desire to win and grow in defeat. A "TEAM" sets out to accomplish goals and Together Everyone Achieves More. There isn't a worse feeling in the world after losing a close game than knowing you left 110% out on the field and not being able to change the scoreboard. As long as you know in your heart that you gave it your all and didn't slack off, you'll be able to look at yourself in the mirror and know you gave it everything you had.

Sports helped me learn how to establish a thick skin and be able to shake something off and move on. Life doesn't always go the way you want it to. It's important to learn from your mistakes and not allow them to paralyze you. I know this will be of value after my playing days are over.

Sports influenced my views on society, specifically how people look up to their role models. Athletes are always under scrutiny. When they do something of value for their community, it isn't always publicized and the general public may not know how good of a person he or she is. But as an athlete when you do something you shouldn't, it blows up in your face. There is a small margin for error when you are in the public eye. My role model, who is also my favorite player and a person I admire, is Chase Utley of the Philadelphia Phillies. He is consistently a good player and person, who never loses his cool and is never in the media for the wrong reason. There are so many upsides and advantages for athletes. If they choose to use these advantages in the wrong way, it may affect the way people view them, especially young fans.

I believe that participating in sports, specifically baseball, helped to mold me into the person I am today. I hope to continue to grow and further define the skills and characteristics I have learned. I look forward to taking these life lessons with me into the working world and throughout my life. I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to play sports and to have coaches that put me under their wing and helped make me the person I am today. Now it's my turn to show the world my true character and how it will affect my life as I go out on my own and move on with my life.

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Essay #2

I have been playing organized baseball for around eight years now and I have truly enjoyed almost every second of it. I love the game for what it is but I think what genuinely endeared it to me are the lessons that I continually learn whenever I step out onto the diamond.

The very first lesson I learned was how to accept failure. I remember my first few games having a pretty rough time getting a hit, and if I hit the ball well I would still seem to find a way to get out. Accepting failure was a lesson I had to learn quickly, as in baseball you are bound to fail almost 70 percent of the time.

The next lesson I learned was that with perseverance and hard work I could make myself better and lessen my chances of failure. Although I had learned to accept failure it didn't mean I enjoyed it and in order to get better I was going to have to work. My grandfather went out and bought me a tee and soon I was out taking cuts everyday creating a better swing path through repetition. I remember very clearly that the benefits of this were seen very quickly and soon I found myself hitting the baseball better than almost everyone on the team. Baseball suddenly was becoming more than just a game to me and I had only just begun.

The next season I began playing travel baseball for Warrington on Coach Harrison's team. I played on his travel and tournament teams every year until I was thirteen and then I played on all of his Connie Mack teams. It was on those travel/tournament teams that I began to learn what it was to be a teammate. I remember, especially my 11 and 12-year-old years, setting goals and talking about what it would take from a team standpoint to reach them. We would all be counted upon to do our parts and use our broad spectrum of talents to accomplish what we set out to do. We learned very early what it meant to sacrifice for the betterment of the club.

It was on Coach Harrison's 10-year-old tournament team that leadership quickly became more than just a big word to me. As one of the older and more talented players on the team I was always looked up to. At first I didn't know how to handle it, but as the season wore on I began to step into the role and learned valuable lessons along the way. The things I learned about leadership in this year helped throughout my career; right up till my last year in high school when I was a "captain" of the varsity squad. I am sure these leadership skills will continue to assist me throughout college and into my life in the workforce.

My junior year of baseball was definitely my most successful. During this year, more than ever, I learned how to perform under

pressure. Time after time I was counted on as one of the most feared hitters in our lineup and I learned how to deal with the pressure, let my natural ability take over, and deliver. This, I believe, will become an unbelievably valuable ability for me in the future, both in athletic training and on the college baseball field.

How has playing sports taught me lessons of life you ask? Well, these are just a few of the countless lessons I have learned throughout my career in sports, specifically baseball. Every time I step onto the field I am learning something new, whether it is about the game, about people, about myself, or about life. A lot of these lessons have also influenced my views of society.

When you look at society people usually refer to the youth and say they are troubled. Sure we are growing up in a rough era where we are constantly bombarded with the temptations of sex, drugs, alcohol, etc. But the teammates I have been blessed to share the field with have been great. For a bunch of strangers to come together and have the kind of chemistry that we've had on the teams I've been on is quite simply... amazing! The ability for us to come together and totally forget where we are from and what's going on in our lives to perform side-by-side has showed me that society might not be so bad. I have seen a lot of good in people through the way they care for a teammate; whether they are rooting on a struggling teammate,

showing concern for an injured player, or offering congratulations for a well-performed game. Baseball has shed a positive light on my views of society and shown that there is hope in the bleakest of places.

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Essay #3

Winning Entry

How has playing sports taught me lessons of life and influenced my views on society?

“That's what learning is, after all; not whether we lose the game, but how we lose and how we've changed because of it and what we take away from it that we never had before, to apply to other games. Losing, in a curious way, is winning.” (Richard Bach)

Anybody who has ever heard the cliché “its just a game” never will understand that it is not just a game. Sports, for me, have become a lifestyle. A sport seems to show a persons defining characteristics that make him who he is. Richard Bach puts it well, its “how we lose and how we’ve changed because of it and what we take away form it that we never had before.” Learning is mentally taking something away from what we never had before. Playing sports has allowed me the opportunity to learn essential lessons to my success as an individual. I have learned that failure is never achieved until you give up trying, I learned that cooperation with others is necessary to accomplish goals, and I have learned to have a plan when a tough situation arises. Most importantly, sports have taught me to try and never make the same mistake twice. Losing, as you know, is inevitable when pertaining to sports. I learned that you keep losing until you realize why your losing. Upon the realization, this is how you learn. Heading off to my first year of college, it is important that I recognize “losing” as an everyday experience in some way. Playing sports taught me to accept losing in a way to improve myself individually. No athlete is perfect and can always seek improvement. There are many areas of my game that I need to improve upon for the good of the team and myself. Losing, to me, is defined as exploitation of weakness. That weakness can be overcome by the determination for self improvement. Majoring in Chemical Engineering at the University

of Delaware in this upcoming fall, I know that I will meet many new people and cooperate as a team with my colleagues. A player doesn't always get to pick his team, a team often times pick the player. I have learned to cooperate with others and work with them to achieve a common goal. Most things in life, you do as a team. Work, family, school and marriage are teams that we are a part of in everyday life. Baseball especially disguises sacrifices for the good of something else. No matter what aspect of the game all successful athletes do what they have to do. Sports have taught me to work with others to achieve a common goal and to accept my role on a team. Playing sports have taught me many essential virtues in life and I will always remember my experience being involved with sports.