

Playing on various sports teams for the past 13 years, I have always had a life structured around athletics. As I conclude my senior year, I approach my final appearance of competing as a high school athlete. Although I am saddened that this incredible chapter of my life is coming to an end, I could not be more grateful for all of the values that I have gained, the friendships that I have made, the opportunities that I have been given, and most importantly, the lessons that I have learned that I will use to continue on to the next chapter of my life.

High school athletics have given me some of my greatest, lasting memories with my best friends. From beating our rival in volleyball to breaking my ankle on the soccer field early on in the season, the good and the bad alike, these are the memories that I will forever cherish and miss as I continue in life. The lessons that I learned through these experiences are what have shaped me into the person that I am today, and will stick with me for the rest of my life.

I have played three sports all year round for the past six years. Going straight from school to basketball practice, then to soccer practice, and then to volleyball practice was more than exhausting. However, it taught me the importance of hard work and dedication. I learned that athletics is more than just sports, it's about seeing how far you can push yourself, and about overcoming mental setbacks. Playing sports has taught me to persevere when things get tough, and to always put in my best effort.

One of the most important lessons that I learned throughout my time playing sports was to overcome adversity. In the soccer season of my junior year, I was elected captain and led the team from the back of the field, as I played center back. My coach had told me prior to the season that I would be stepping into a big role that season, as we had several incoming freshmen. I worked hard at practice and in games to build a backline that wouldn't let anyone through, helping the newcomers to learn how to communicate and recover quickly. We had a perfect record, 6-0, and we expected to do great things for the team. However, in our seventh game, I took a hit and ended up breaking my ankle. I had to finish off the season from the bench, which was difficult for me. There was nothing I wanted more than to be out on the field competing with my teammates. I continued to go to every practice and game and soon learned how to support my teammates from the sidelines. We ended up winning the league title, and I could not have been more proud of my team. However, I continued to fight through adversity all throughout the summer, as I was still healing. I continued to get into the weight room and on the field and pushed my body to its limits.

High school athletics has been one of the most influential parts of my life, as it has taught me so many valuable lessons and skills and introduced me to my best friends. It has brought out the best in me, and I could not be more thankful for all of the opportunities and memories that I have gained throughout my time as a student-athlete. I could not have done it alone, and I am forever grateful for all the support from my coaches, teammates, and my parents.

## **"How High School Athletics Has Impacted My Life."**

Campbell Hague, Cheney High School

Over the past 13 years of my life many things have changed, but one constant has always been sports. I've come to find structure in the cycle of practice and games each week. As my high school career comes to an end, I am taking the time to reflect on my relationships and actions in high school athletics. Reflections on lessons I've learned, the values I've gained, and the character I've built and will continue to build will only benefit me for the next chapter of my life.

The most important lesson I learned through high school athletics is how to fight your biggest enemy: yourself. No one is tougher on me than me. It's a mental struggle I have had my whole life. I found that instead of worrying about myself, I had to put others best interests in the front of my mind. Once I was able to free myself from my own intrusive thoughts, my mindset substantially improved. I also learned that attitudes are contagious especially the negative ones. To this day, I still battle finding the positive outlook on most situations. Having faith in your teammates and being positive is the ultimate way to have strong, connected relationships.

As an athlete that has played three sports for all four years of high school, I have gained the value of hard work. At Cheney High School, success is a given. It is a great standard to have, but it also comes with the high expectations and pressure that can only be completed by working hard at both athletics and academics. I have also learned the value of time management. With a busy schedule of a student-athlete, I had to understand how to prioritize. Maintaining a healthy balance of school, sports, sleep, and a social life was not easy. These values are important tools that can only impact me for the better as I transition into adulthood.

Sports has taught me that winning doesn't build character, failure does. Losing the volleyball state championship my junior year is the example that first comes to mind at any mention of defeat. Failure causes you to be humble and accountable. The next season I made it a point to be more dependable, more disciplined, and especially more empathetic. The characteristics I have gained from my failures are far more valuable than the ones from success.

High school athletics as a whole has taught me things that no individual teacher or mentor could. They have also given me a sense of belonging and purpose. I am forever thankful for the lessons I've learned, the values I've gained, and the character I have built from them. No part of my life would be possible without my support system. I never had to go through a single win or loss without my family, friends, and coaches by my side. If it wasn't for them, I never would have found my way to college athletics, and I don't know where I would be without them.

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. These words come from a poem that I've read at every basketball team orientation for the past 4 years. It emphasizes everybody's role in a program; that when simple tasks come up that need to be done, you don't need to wait for somebody else, you should just do it. This doesn't only apply to sports, I also carry this approach into other parts of my life.

As a third and fourth grader, I played quarterback for a very serious youth football team. We went 26-0 in the 2 years I played with them and had multiple teammates who have since committed to playing in college. I was certain I was going to commit myself to the game and position until a very serious accident changed those plans. I fell backward from a waterslide, about 10 feet high, and suffered an epidural hematoma which had to be removed via craniotomy. During the procedure, there was a complication that resulted in the loss of 1 of 4 arteries to my brain. In an instant, my path had changed. I was no longer able to play the game that I had planned on playing for many years to come. Because of this, I had to pivot. I had no choice but to adapt, and what resulted was a new field of competition: Running.

I have since been given an extremely unique set of opportunities, lessons, and experiences because of my choices to compete in Cross Country, Basketball, and Track. The combination of sports I have chosen to compete in has given me a unique point of view. Each sport has offered different coaching styles, teammates, team atmospheres, and connections to my coaches and administrators.

My favorite part about Cross Country is that you get what you earn. If you don't put in the work and mileage at practice or in any part of a race, you will suffer the consequences. My favorite part about Track is how I get to determine the fate of my team when I anchor my 4 x 800 relay. It is in my hands to put the product of everyone else's hard work into one unified goal - winning the race. This taught me how to perform under pressure and how to build trust with others. My favorite part about Basketball is that while I'm not the best player on my team (and I never have been) I pride myself on being the hardest worker to earn my spot. At tryouts this year, I was told I was the 10th man, and I wasn't guaranteed any playing time for my senior year. I accepted the challenge and focused on working hard, proving myself, and helping us get better as a team. Less than two weeks later, I found myself in the starting lineup of the first game. I have since stayed in the lineup and have used my position and work ethic to help my team win games.

Another thing I've been able to accomplish is to see the impact I have on younger kids. The kids in our basketball team's youth development program sit directly behind the bench at home games. I know my actions are visible. So, I've tried to make it a priority to give a high five or fist bump to as many of the kids as I can and to exemplify my school's cornerstones: Family, Pride, Grit, and Excellence. In talking to some parents later, they thanked me for acknowledging their child. Just that small action made their kid's week - "they won't stop talking about it." It can be easy to overlook my impact, but high school athletics has helped me become a role model for these young athletes.

I can't imagine where I would be today without the many lessons learned in high school athletics.

## How High School Athletics Has Impacted My Life Grant Waite

I have been playing sports for as long as I could remember. I was gifted my first miniature basketball goal when I was one year old, and have loved the sport every second since. I have been a part of various basketball teams since 2012 through YMCA leagues, AAU, and school teams. My love for running did not start until I just our middle school cross country team in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I suffered a non-sports related concussion when I was younger, so I was not able to play football like most other kids. I had ran in a couple of Sk's before, so I thought I would give cross country a shot. Immediately I enjoyed it and knew running was going to be a big part of my life in the future.

Sports have greatly impacted my lifestyle through schoolwork, friends, and family. As stated earlier in this application I have been able to maintain a 4.0 GPA throughout all of high school. The main reason for working hard to achieve this goal, was because I had always wanted to play sports in college. I knew this was going to be a tough task, as only a few are chosen to compete at the Division I level. I was hoping that if coaches saw that I had a strong work ethic in the classroom and not just on the court or track, it would increase my chances of pulling a scholarship. Without sports, I would have no motivation to strive for good grades in the classroom.

I would not know half of the people in my life today without the use of sports. Sports activities are the best way for any athlete to make new friends. I have met hundreds of new friends through cross country and track meets, as well as through basketball games and tournaments. Because I am around new people all the time, it makes it easier to go up and talk to someone I had never met before. This can translate to my career ahead, as communication skills can bring a multitude of opportunities to myself in the future.

Finally, sports have created a second family with my teammates and coaches. At Abilene High School we create a culture with each and every sports team we are a part of. We lean on each other in the down times and celebrate our successes together at our highs. This has taught me to love each and every person just like they are a part of my family. By focusing on team success and not just individual success, has really taught me the meaning of being a teammate. Whenever I went to our high school basketball games as a child, I always dreamed of playing on our home court and wanting to score 30 points every night. Being a part of this culture has helped my learn that I could score zero points every night and still be happy knowing that our team had won.