

DEL VAL CHARGERS SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

"Honor the Game"

It was a dark, cold, day in March. I was scared. What was I doing in my short, shorts and pony tail with a bunch of tall, sweaty guys? Why was there a helmet on my head and these very unflattering shoulder pads? It was the first day of practice; here I was 5'4" maybe 105 pounds, 13 years old, and playing boy's lacrosse?

After I got over my initial fright I had a great time. I wasn't very good, but surprisingly that didn't matter. I was shocked when no one ever said "Win!" Instead I always heard, "Honor the Game." I heard it on that first night of practice and every practice and game after that for the rest of the season. This was an organization that didn't pride itself on wins, losses, or goals; instead they wanted us to respect ourselves, teammates, coaches, officials. They wanted us to help people when they needed help and encourage others rather than put them down. They wanted us to honor our commitments and try our best. Not once during that season did someone yell at me for dropping a ball, missing a catch or failing to mark someone appropriately. I learned by example that it is more important to be a good person than a great lacrosse player.

I have challenged myself in school both academically and with my extra curricular activities. I have strived to bring this spirit of "honoring the game" to all aspects of my life. I tried to lead by example on the field hockey team, by not putting others down and constantly encouraging. In school, I have respected my teachers and classmates by paying attention in class and doing my best on homework, tests and quizzes. While coaching, middle school field hockey, I tried to teach them to honor the game and end the inner fighting that was tearing the team apart. At work, I honor my commitment to work. Even if I might want to, I don't cancel my job to hang out with my friends.

The most important part of honoring the game is working hard to get what you want, however, my favorite part of honoring the game passing that message on to others. I have been an assistant coach for the third and fourth graders for the last three years. It is exciting to watch them learn how to throw, catch, pick up ground balls but I LOVE hearing them cheering each other on. I love the smiles that I see after every game that we win or lose. I love how they are excited when anyone on the team scores a goal. I love the hugs I get at every practice and game. I love watching them move up to the fifth and sixth grade team. I know that I have honored the game when I see them honoring the game. Kids learn by example and I feel that my actions are reflected in them.

Who would have thought that one tiny phrase could change the way I see the world. It's a very simple philosophy, one that I think more people should live by. I am so glad that I stepped into the gym that day four years ago, not only is it fun to see people's faces when I tell them I played boys lacrosse, but it gave me a phrase that has helped shape my life. How do you "honor the game?"