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Personal Narrative

Almost four years ago I tried out for a totally new sport. I had always been a basketball and baseball player. But everyone was telling me about this new sport. It’s not that I had never heard of it before, but I didn’t even realize that it was available in the high school. I had grown up thinking the only school sports you played were baseball, basketball, or soccer.

The spring of my freshman year of high school is when I first tried track and field. I hated running with a passion. I had played basketball for Coach Hurlock for many years so I was used to running, but I did not enjoy it at all. I knew track and field involved a lot of running and I was very apprehensive. I almost didn’t join because I didn’t want to run so badly. I then came to the conclusion that there was no way it could be as bad as basketball practice, and it could keep me in shape for next year’s season.

As it turns out however, running is definitely not the only thing you do at track. In fact, in my three years of track life, I haven’t really had to run much at all. This was a great relief to me and once this realization set in I began to relax and enjoy myself. That is when I met Coach V.

If you do not know Coach V, he is a giant of a man. I stand about six foot one, two hundred pounds, and even I was intimidated at first. He towered over me. I wasn’t scared of him, but I wasn’t sure what I thought of him because he was also the football coach and I assumed he would be hard on us. Once again though, I was wrong. He was actually very kind and easy on us. He gave us lots of workouts to do which weren’t very fun, but if you couldn’t go on or you were hurt, he would let you do something a little less intense until you could continue. This was so bizarre in my mind. I was still in the basketball mindset where if something hurts, you suck it up and push on anyway. Basketball was a place where if you got hurt, you bandaged it up and came right back to the court unless it was something serious. We didn’t take breaks in basketball so this was foreign, yet welcome.

When I heard track and field I only really heard the “track” part in my mind. That’s why I was so worried all we would do is run. But once I met Coach V I was introduced to the “field” side of things. I obviously wasn’t very good my freshman year but since I was the second biggest thrower on the team, I was close to being good. This is what drove me to continue. It was hard not being very good and getting great throws, but they were so close to being good that I pushed as hard as I could to try and get better. This is when I fell in love with track. All my life I had been just ok at a lot of things. But now with track, I found something that I was potentially great at. I found my athletic niche.

I also fell in love with track because of the people. A lot of the time, track and field is a big hang out time with all of your friends. We all work hard when its time too, but there is a lot of social time. Being coed and the biggest team the school has, it is also the best place to meet new people and make new friends. In fact, that is where I met my girlfriend of almost two years now. I made a lot of senior friends as well which is always nice to do when you are a freshman. If you have senior friends, it puts you a step up over all of the other freshman. It was a great feeling. The track meets were always exciting too. I would hang out with my friends and we would go watch the different events and check out the competition. If we weren’t doing that we could go back to our tent and hang out there until we had to compete. It was so laid back.

Not much exciting happened for me in the way of results freshman year. I never won any medals until my sophomore year. Freshman year was mostly just one big practice year where I focused on technique and learning the skills needed to improve. I slowly got better and better. By the end of the season I was only two feet away from qualifying for states in the shot put. Needless to say, I was ecstatic and came back every year.

Sophomore year is when I really met the hammer. No one on the team got to throw the hammer. It is not often used in competitions in Connecticut so we never trained anybody on it. Coach V however, pulled me and Kelly Myers aside and told us he would teach us if we wanted. He told us that only the best and most experienced could use it. I was so excited that he chose me as the only guy thrower to use it. It was a totally unique experience from anything else I had thrown before. If you don’t know, a hammer is essentially a twelve pound shot put attached to a rigid metal wire. When you throw it you spin it around your head a couple times and actually spin your whole body across the throwing circle. It is actually quite an amazing sight to watch an experienced hammer thrower. Experienced was something I was not however. The first time I picked it up and tried to throw it, it almost knocked me over. I was not used to those kind of forces pulling my body in different directions.

As time passed I became quite proficient with it. Every year at the state open meet they throw the hammer. State opens is the next level after the state competition. It is comprised of all the top competitors from high schools around that state. Because hammer isn’t widely used in Connecticut there weren’t many people throwing it in comparison to the number of people in some of the other events. There were about 25-30 kids at the competition that year which is still a good number. Somehow I managed to beat out all the other kids and go to the final which is the top six kids from the competition. I ended up leaving that competition with a fifth place ranking. You might be thinking, “well fifth isn’t very good”. Well since it was the state open championship, I was the fifth best hammer thrower in the entire state as a sophomore.

That is also the year that the New England championships were held in Connecticut. Hammer generally isn’t thrown at New Englands, but since there was a hammer cage at the track they allowed it. Everybody has bad days sometimes in sports. Unfortunately mine was that day. I didn’t throw very well at all. I did however, manage to be ranked twenty first in the whole entire new England area as a sophomore. That is why I love track. I found something I was good at and the feeling of doing well in meets kept me going.

Last track season, my junior year, is when I really took over the competition. I started to succeed in every event I did. I threw the shot put, discus, and hammer that year. I also started to pick up the jumping events as well. I was never any good at high jump, but I found a new skill I didn’t know I had in long jump and triple jump. In my first ever meet doing long jump I qualified for the NCCC Conference meet. I had only jumped in three meets by the time the conference meet came along. So I was just happy to be competing at that level. NCCC is one level below the state championship. It was only my fourth time jumping in competition, so when they called out the finals and said my name, I couldn’t believe it. I ended up coming in ninth out of about forty jumpers. Unfortunately I didn’t get good at triple jump until the end of the season. Right as the season was winding down I was consistently jumping the qualifying distance for states, but it was too late to be entered.

In the discus I went on to come second in the NCCC Conference and eventually twelfth in the whole state of Connecticut. I also managed to set a new school record. In shot put I also came second in the NCCC but unfortunately did not make it past the state championship to qualify for state opens. Even so, in indoor track I managed to break the school record for shot. When I returned to state opens for hammer I was determined to better my standings. I did just that and more. Not only did I come third in the entire state, but I set the school record in hammer as well. I have held the school record for hammer since my freshman year. Every year I keep getting better and better and breaking my own records. By the end of my junior year I had high rankings in multiple high profile events and three school records.

That is just one reason I love track and field. The results make you feel amazing. But that’s not everything. The friendships I have made over the year are even more valuable than any medals I’ve won. For me, track and field is a release. It’s a place I can go to get away from the world and just relax and have a great time. It’s a place where friendship and sportsmanship is everywhere. It is my favorite place to be and I will always be competing for as long as I am physically able to. As I approach the start of my senior year season I am excited to do even better and leave my mark on the program. I am also looking forward to applying to colleges and doing track and field wherever I decide to go.