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### From Sidelines to Finish Lines

I've never been in love with a sport as much as Track&Field, yes of course there's many other sports like soccer, basketball and swimming but these are just sports I've just played before, Track&Field was a sport I put my mind and soul into and was willing to do it for all my four high school years but unfortunately not everything went as planned. Track&Field wasn't going to be my initial start, I always grew up playing soccer for fun or just watching the games on tv or playing online games, I used to be so obsessed and was actually a fan, the bright green field, the smell of the fresh cut grass and the loud cheering from the stand but as I was growing up my love for the sport started to fade away but not because something bad happen I just think it was like growing out of it, the field started to feel empty to me, the silence of the cheers, I still played a lot because all my friends would play with me after school or during recess back in middle school. When I started high school I wanted to try out for the team but their coach said that try outs were almost going to be over and didn't believe she had room for someone like me who has no past experience anywhere but just playing for fun. My hopes went down very low. The coach told me to try out next year and that I should lose some weight to get more fit. I thought I still had a chance so I was going to wait but I had to be determined to lose the weight because of how out of shape I was so I decided to join the track to run and lose it. I remember the warm grin from my coach and the rough confident handshake I was giving him, the nervous running down my spine as I saw the 6 lanes on my feet going along the field. Not only I joined

but people I've met like 3 years ago back in middle school before during some summer program were also joining the team so I felt very comfortable.

Track&Field has two seasons, indoor season which takes place in the winter and outdoor season which is in the spring, during fall it's Cross Country and it counts as a different sport but our coach coaches all 3 seasons, so it was one whole. When I joined it was the start of Indoor season and I honestly was very consistent with showing up to practice and running, The feeling of my burning lungs trying to catch a breath, how my legs felt like I had 100 pounds around my ankles. I was running every day except maybe during the weekends. If there was a race on the weekends, those weeks I would run 6 times a day. 5 being practice days and 6 was race day. My performance during indoor season was really bad because not only was I very slow but I was barely showing any improvement and I was nowhere near being known. My friends were all doing really good for being freshmen and I was happy for them but I wanted to know how it felt like being in the spotlight. I was never in the A relay team which is the fastest relay your school puts out there. I was always in C which was very slow. I showed a little improvement in my outdoor season and still didn't win anything or make any good achievements and I honestly didn't lose any of the weight. When the season was finishing my coach didn't want me to leave and told me that if I stayed he would make sure I become one of his best runners and it was his mission to make it happen since day 1 i joined. I stayed and now I had a goal, something to actually go after. I did my cross country season and lost a ton of weight during summer training, I even got my first medal when the season started. My coach told me it was only the beginning, at this moment I fell in love with the sport and was fully dedicated to it now. Indoor came by and I was actually starting to show so much improvement compared to my first indoor season and my coach was so happy with me with how far I came and that it was only the beginning to. During

the end of my outdoor season I got to run the Varsity A relay team as my last race and it was Freshman & Sophomore city championships. I ran with my best effort and me and my team got second place in the city for my race. Sophomore year was very important when it came to loving the sport.

Unfortunately right when I thought I was only going to start going up things for me started to go down. It was the beginning of cross country season and I was in the middle of running a race and I came across a very steep hill going down, the gravel very un-leveled, the bumpy rocks, I felt half my body fall to one side and fell, feeling the hard sharp rocks against my skin. I was determined to finish the race even if I had to limp my way to finish. Everyone was worried about seeing me limp through the last mile but I finished. Many weeks went by and my ankle never got better. I still went to practice, ran on it until I couldn't anymore. I was getting slower, limping through school until one day I went to the hospital because I needed a new medical form to get cleared for the whole year and keep running. They didn't like how my ankle looked or felt so they didn't clear me and send me to make a new appointment to get x-rays done. When I found out what it actually was I was shocked. The doctor couldn't believe I was able to stand because this whole time I broke my fibula near my ankle, a clean split. And that right at that moment it was already stated to heal even though I spent previous weeks walking around and still running. I believe only my determination could explain how I was able to handle such pain. I had to bring the news to my team and coach and we were all not happy with the news. My coach couldn't have me in the team until I fully recovered so I was out for my whole indoor season and half of my outdoor because I had a brace on trying to get my injury to heal. I physically couldn't really do anything to stay in shape and I unfortunately got back to my poor eating habits and gained a little, I got out of shape very easily, I lost all the strength I used to

have. I came back eventually but basically back from grown zero. I didn't finish the outdoor season stronger at all and then cross country came. I wasn't improving during the summer and I seemed stuck and I didn't know how to get myself out of that endless loop of not improving but only getting slower. I lost my spot in the top 7 varsity runners for cross country and I accepted the fact I just wasn't going to be good any more. told myself I would only finish my senior year running indoor and outdoor as well, but just as a slow runner.

Though it was all over until a new freshman team member joined and he needed guidance, everyone in the team was so busy with their long workouts and during practice I had so much free time because of how short mine were trying to get back to my peak shape. Helping him in some way brought up my determination like I wanted to show I could do and commit to the goal I had before. I started to focus more, started to actually feel good after practices, making that 110% effort every day. Race by race during my indoor season started to get better, the nerves weren't there at the start of the gun, the smell of the arena made it feel like home, my muscles more loose and relaxed and I was getting faster rapidly compared to my past years. I made it all the way back to varsity before indoor season ended. During my outdoor season I started to win my own medals and running the varsity relays and giving the best performances I've ever done. I looked forward to having amazing moments. I did so well I qualified for an outdoor states meet. It was the biggest meet I've ever been to, just being able to compete at that meet was such an accomplishment for me because I was at grown zero and it was an experience I will never forget. I ended the season the right way and was so proud of myself. Never thought I would love a sport so much, from the smell of the track, sound of my spikes impacting on each step, the feel of the baton being passed, all contribute to making me love it and yes I'm not running anymore but I'm carrying on that determination on to my new goals.