
Picking Myself Back Up: College Admission Essay Sample

It's 6am. My alarm clock squawks at me to wake up. With legs aching from practice, arms tired from shooting drills, and head throbbing with pain from only sleeping four hours, I squint at the illuminated red numbers, contemplating whether or not to hit snooze. But, somehow, I find the strength to get out of bed. Since freshman year, I have honed my offensive and defensive skills, internalized out of bound and sideline plays, and perfected my shots and dribbling moves. Game days are test days. This type of test may not cover problems on definite integrals, alpha glucose molecules, or the Adams-Onis Treaty; nevertheless, it assesses my deftness with the ball and how well I have mastered plays. The court is my haven. Even when coming to practice annoyed or stressed, I leave the gym refreshed and reinvigorated, ready to tackle seemingly endless schoolwork.

Squeaky shoes pounding the wooden floorboards fuel me to play aggressively. As I fastbreak down the court, I try to charge all the way to the basket, despite other players in my way. Suddenly, an opposing team member pushes me and we both tumble, resulting in my ankle breaking.

My injury thrusts me out of my haven. At first, I tried to look at the positives of my injury. Maybe now I could finally redesign the 6-year-old logo on our Kiwin's Club's sweatshirts, or start pre-planning gifts for the annual gift exchange friends, or even update my *Pretty Little Liars* theories.

My optimism did not last long. As school resumed, I could feel the stress starting to bubble within my mental cauldron, with the SAT's and AP's adding to the concoction. Still unable to play basketball, I turned to art as a refuge from stress. But the meditative brush strokes and calculated paint splatter on the canvas did not provide the same amount of solace as the explosion of energy required from sprinting down the court. Without basketball to refresh my mind and body; stress, anxiety, and tension bottled up inside.

My hiatus from basketball was harder than I had imagined. With 3 extra hours after school, I could focus on identifying the subtle messages in *Othello*, or perfecting the art of figure drawing, but nothing seemed to fill the void. Meanwhile, without exercising, I gained excess weight while my muscle mass dwindled. But the effects were not just physical. I had lost my haven, and sense of identity. I no longer do a little behind-the-back dribble with an invisible ball, or imagine myself making the buzzerbeater as I ready myself for school. I do not see "JZ," the affectionate moniker given to me by my teammates and coaches. I only see numbers: the pounds gained, the hours required to get back in shape, and the numerous games missed.

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As soon as I could walk without crutches, my dad enrolled me in physical therapy. After a tough day of doing calf raises and squats, I woke up and found my muscles were aching. The soreness made me reminisce about conditioning days, when we would sprint 100's, 400's, and 800's under the blazing, August sun. I realized that not everything happens as planned because of unexpected or sudden obstacles. I could either let obstacles stop me, or power through them.

Setting my mind to regaining my strength, I challenged myself to perform all the exercises with perfect form at my next physical therapy session. Little by little, my ankle reacquired its' flexibility, my speed returned, and my progress fueled even more motivation and determination. I escalated from just barely walking, to jumping, sliding, running, and finally returning back to the court. Intangible determination, solidified by years of basketball powered me through my injury. But, learning to cope with unexpected side effects, ultimately taught me to overcome future obstacles and fill the void.

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