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Appreciating Adversity

I chased the player down the court. I could tell that she planned to go all the way to the hoop by the look of determination on her face. I strained to go faster. She protected the basketball until the last moment, and we simultaneously leaped into the air. At the peak of my jump, I knocked the ball out of her hands. Unfortunately, I landed clumsily. My leg crumpled in 4 painful pops. That fall caused a knee injury that prevented me from playing sports for 19 months. In July 2015, I had knee surgery for a torn Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL), torn meniscus, and a small micro-fracture located in the bone. Through overcoming this challenge, I learned about the tools of success. In pursuing my college and career goals, I must have a positive attitude, work hard, and remember the ones who support me.

Immediately following both my injury and my surgery, I experienced physical pain, but I kept a cheerful perspective. For almost 3 months, I could not put my full weight on my leg due to the pain. Pain relievers and ice bags were nearly my best friends. I tired of feeling sorry for myself. I began looking on the bright side. Even though my injury had me under house arrest, I could still do many activities I loved: playing piano, singing, hanging with friends, spending time with my family, and learning new skills. In light of these blessings, I devoted my extra time to school and extracurricular activities by taking challenging AP and college classes and learning to play the drums and the guitar. Once I decided to focus on my blessings rather than my circumstances, I had more enthusiasm for life. In the future, I will face financial, academic, and personal challenges, but I will stay positive to reach my goals.

Although I could not play basketball, I found ways to get better. Before my injury, I trained many hours a day for basketball, so transitioning to my new workout routine was difficult. For cardio, I biked, and for basketball development, I settled for sitting or standing exercises. Being able to simply dribble a ball kept me sane for the first few months. Everyday, I went to the gym or physical therapy, where I had to re-learn to do simple movements like squatting, running, and jumping. My knee was recovering at a slower rate than I liked, and I grew impatient to play. One week, I pushed myself too hard, and I paid the consequences. Due to

pain and swelling, I had to rest. Despite the setback, I learned to persevere no matter how many times I had to try. Finally, 19 months after my surgery, I played in the first basketball game of my senior year. Evidently, hard work produces results, but also important, support drives success.

Throughout the entirety of my injury and my recovery, I had a great group of family members and supportive friends who encouraged me to succeed. Truly, my parents supported me emotionally in everything I did, and they gave me the motivation to overcome my circumstance. Also, my basketball coaches kept me involved with the team by giving me doable drills and by making me team manager. Basketball teammates and good friends watched movies with me when I had to stay home and rest. Most importantly, however, all of these people believed that this injury would make me stronger. Specifically, I remember when Coach Hales told me that I would be a better player and a better person because of this injury. This belief encouraged and gave me the drive to work harder. Much of my success is due to the people who encouraged me on a daily basis.

Now 21 months post-surgery, I still have to take care of my knee with ice, rest, and proper maintenance. Nevertheless, I have had lots of successes this season, including helping my team make it to the state tournament and being ranked as one of the top ten girl basketball players in the state. Truly, my injury has taught me that the biggest challenges in life are the most rewarding. With this in mind, I will eagerly pursue my collegiate and career goals. For it is a very weighty task ahead of me, but I have a very hopeful mindset and a great support group to encourage me. Despite this challenge and the knowledge that many more challenges await, I will pursue my dreams even more vigorously than before.