Soccer has been a large part of my life ever since I started kicking a ball at age 3. Though some consider it just a game, soccer is much more than that as it teaches life lessons one doesn't learn easily in the classroom or at home. I am grateful for having played competitive soccer and I am confident that the lessons I learned on the field will serve me well later in life.

At its basis, soccer is a competition with winners and losers. The objective is to score more than the other team. There is no incentive to cooperate, to see the other team's perspective. The aim is to score and defeat the opponent. Like everything in life, soccer is governed by its rules, and there is a system of justice in place to ensure everyone plays fairly. But after that, it is dog-eat-dog. Soccer reinforces competitive desire and pushes one to become the best by overcoming others. It also forces you to deal with the realities of losing. Losing graciously is much tougher than winning graciously, and losing a game graciously teaches one how to handle defeat in more important circumstances later in life. Soccer hones the competitive spirit and accustoms one to the ecstatic highs of winning and the crushing lows of losing.

Competitive soccer has also afforded me the opportunity to forge a bond of loyalty with my club and my teammates. I have played at Idaho Rush since 2006 and have been instructed by a wide range of coaches during my career. As I have grown up in the club, I have enjoyed getting to know these coaches more personally and getting to see their love for coaching first hand, particularly at volunteer camps like the One World camp. My respect grows as I get older as I realize the commitment they make to improving youth soccer in the area. In addition, some of my closest friendships have been formed through playing soccer. I have played with two of my teammates since age 9 and I know the bonds and memories we made on the field will last us a lifetime. I am still in regular contact with these friends even though I am miles away on another coast at a new school with new friends. It is a testament to soccer's power to unite that I count these people as people I trust with almost anything.

To conclude, soccer has enriched my life because it kept me and my teammates engaged and I could not have asked for a better experience. It teaches one life lessons about winning and losing while encouraging camaraderie off the fields between coaches and players. I am grateful to Idaho

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Rush for affording me the opportunity to play competitive soccer and hope that those following me have similar experiences.