I joined the Rush Soccer Club my U11 year, playing with my best friend on the same team. We had a lot to learn. We practiced two times a week and played two games every Saturday. One of the two practices was with Lee Riley, who was teaching us the technical and tactical aspects of the game. I never really enjoyed his practices but as I grew older I realized that we were being challenged day in and day out. It was tough for me to realize the importance of what I was learning. At that age all I wanted to do was hang out with my best friend.

When I reflect back on my U11 year, I wasn't the greatest player but that's the year that I learned one of life's greatest lessons: hard work. It's stuck with me ever since, especially because I've always been one of the smallest players on the field. Hard work isn't just showing up to practice and putting in a decent effort on game day or scoring a couple goals. It's giving your best effort with every opportunity at hand. Sometimes you have to make a 40-yard sprint to get back on defense to mark a player or make run after run down the sideline or maybe just double team a player. I remember marking a player that never received a pass or I never was played the ball. I had to dig deep inside myself to find the motivation to keep making those defensive and offensive runs. When playing soccer you have to work hard because you never know when you're going to get that ball and make something happen.

Soccer is a wonderful teacher. Each game is a learning experience. I've learned the most from my losses. During my U12 season, we lost to a team that ended up playing in the championship game. That's when we learned to never give up, no matter what the score is. The next day in our consolation game versus the Boise Capitals we were down 4-1 in the first half. It was another reminder of how awful we felt after our loss the day before. Our coach reminded us that it's never too late to get back in the game. One of my favorite teammates, Mesa Selimovic, reminded us of a professional team that was down 4-1 in the first half and came back in the second half with a tie of 4-4 and then won in a penalty-kick shootout. We came out the second half burning with the desire to dominate the Capitals. It was the greatest come-back I've ever been a part of in all my years of playing club soccer. We tied the game 4-4 and for some odd reason the referee refused to give a penalty-kick shootout. I don't think it would have mattered. We had decided to overcome our loss and make the win.

I've learned that in every game there's a lesson to be learned. From my U11 season to my final U18 season, I've won three State Cups, Surf Cup, Performance Cup a few times and played in many out-of-state championship games. In all of those tournaments, there's been something to take away from them. During our Surf Cup championship, I learned the value of passion and love

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of the sport. We expressed those feelings throughout the tournament and proved to everyone that “Podunk, Idaho” doesn't just grow potatoes. I could go on for days about every individual lesson I've learned from my successes and defeats over the past eight years with Rush. I understand the importance of hard work, teamwork, unity, team spirit, passion, self-control, wisdom, situational awareness and leadership. These values are an important role in my personal performance and my team’s success.

For the most part I've played with the same team throughout the years with Rush. We lost a few players along the way and gained a few players. My Rush soccer team is like a second family to me. I’m attending college and playing soccer now but I miss and love my Rush teammates and the coaches that helped me become the player I am today. We’ve been through so much together, we weren’t always on the winning side but it was the joy that everyone brought to the table that kept us together.

To all of you soon-to-be soccer studs that are reading this, you should be proud to be a part of Rush. At times things won't go according to planned but if you stick it out you will be rewarded with life-time relationships. Appreciate your coaches and parents; they will be your biggest fans. They will witness your success and comfort you when you believe you have failed or been defeated. I will never forget my coaches starting from my U11 season and ending with my U18 season. Sincerely, thank you Bill Reimers, Jerry Chouinard, Carlos Correa, Lee Riley, Steve Brent, Matt Billings and Shaun Dunn. If it wasn't for the skills that you all taught me, I wouldn't be here writing this paper today. I probably wouldn’t be playing soccer at the collegiate level or have earned the NWAACC All-Region award. I came away from Rush with a second family and some of the best memories. Most importantly, thank you for teaching me follow-through. It’s playing a big part in my higher education.

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