



*A 350-500 word essay describing how the applicant meets the requirements listed above*

*and the role that running has played in his/her life*

Hard work is accessible magic. Exercise it, really exercise it, and whatever you work for is yours. It is this idea that has driven me towards the accomplishments and through the challenges of my high school career: the self-designed 6 a.m. summer workout regimen that got me off the bench for my senior year of varsity soccer; the early wake-ups and pushed-back bedtimes that turned seven Advanced Placement courses into a salutatorian average; the hours spent practicing speeches in front of my mirror that led me to the State FFA competition two years in a row. It was hard work that drove me toward running.

I left my school's lacrosse team this spring to run track. It was one of the hardest things I have done. After years of spending hours in sun and in snow practicing stickwork and shots, I at last accepted that I could not overcome a system of social prioritization no matter how hard I worked. I was running in circles for people who laughed at me for it, and after the first game of my senior season, I decided I would not take any more. It was not an easy transition. When I left, each flaw of the program became the fault of my thoughtless, coldhearted absence. I kept my chin up walking through the hallways at school. "If drawing boundaries was easy, more people would do it," my mother told me.

Over time, my mind moved on from the bounds of my previous environment to the endless opportunity of my new endeavor. My school's running community welcomed me. I have teammates and coaches who give me everything I had yearned for in my previous springs. This is a community that teaches me everything I desire to know, motivates me to succeed, pushes me to be ever better, and recognizes my every success, however small. In track I found affirmation for the value of hard work, and in running my dedication and ambition revitalized.

It was running that allowed me to regain faith in the principle that had failed to keep me lacrosse. I have run independently my whole high school career (summer training, a 5k here or there, a way to spend time outside), but it was nothing to me like it is now. I used to run to let things out: anger, energy, calories. Now I run to let things in. There is a freedom in running for the sake of running, in pushing my body to its very limits just because I can. It is an onslaught of subtle triumph and an overwhelming sight of potential and I love it all not for what it makes me, but who it allows me to become.

Running has shown me that hard work is *always* an accessible magic. Situation may cloud its potential, but situations are, in many cases, controllable. Prioritizing effort and recognizing self value is a strength I am just beginning to develop, but one that will carry me far beyond proposed limits for the duration of my life. I no longer run in circles or for anybody else. Track has shown me how.

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Spring 2022