I have played soccer for Idaho Rush for, well, forever. The club has seen me develop and change through a large portion of my life. As a player, I have changed from that little girl who ran around with bows in her hair, chasing the ball because her mamma gave her $5 for every goal she scored, to an athlete who cherished her role as part of a team and thrived on a challenge. As a person, I have changed from a small little girl unsure of my potential, to a strong young woman, confident that with hard work, a purpose and a bit of luck anything is possible.

I was that kid who would go home after practice and drag my brother outside to practice shooting, headers, moves and anything else I could think of. I knew from past experiences with the game and encouragement from my parents and coaches that if I worked hard enough, anything was possible.

I feel like, early in my life I learned a lesson that most adults still struggle with: “Hard work beats talent when talent isn’t working hard.” In both my junior and senior years, I broke my foot and I had to sit on the sidelines and learn different lessons from soccer. I had to learn for the first time in a long time that life goes on beyond soccer but the skills and values I picked up from being a player, a team member, and an athlete would stick with me for forever. Initially I was very upset. I felt as if I had been robbed of the fruit of all my work and that I had climbed so far up the ladder only to be shoved to the ground with absolutely nothing to show for my efforts. I almost felt like my time had been wasted and could have been better spent developing other talents. But thank heavens for dads who know which way is up. He lovingly reminded me that soccer truly had shaped me into the person I am. With the lessons I had learned from playing for so many years I could accomplish anything, with the passion I had developed I could learn to love and enjoy anything.

Soccer changed me for the better. Coaches such as Steve Lynch, Lee Riley, Jon Garrard, Steve Fredericks and Rick Mullins taught me life-defining traits every day: how to work hard, be smart, have fun, be passionate, and encouraging – they helped shape me into the person I am today.

I am currently attending Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and while I am not playing for the school, I am involved in the intramural programs and there isn’t a week that goes by that I don’t play with the ball. While I no longer have soccer practice every day, soccer will be a part of my life for forever. There will not be a day that I don’t utilize the lessons of enthusiasm, dedication, and strength of mind that I learned from playing soccer.

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