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5-27-2021

Deep Reflection

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Deep Reflection

Student

After my freshman year at Santa Clara University, as a student-athlete, I had two back-to-back surgeries. I played freshman year, but knew a storm was heading my way when it ended. I was not prepared to face it head on. I did not know the severity of the storm brewing, but had a mild sense of uncertainty. I was inviting myself into my own rut before the storm even began, so when it came; it controlled me. I had my second surgery during that summer and a month later, a car accident set me back even more. I was prescribed too many opioid painkillers to count in the span of three months. This had all happened before the pandemic.

The storm came officially when the pandemic took full effect. To say I was not prepared would not do it justice; I fell into an existential crisis. I did not have my sport as the outlet I once relied on. There was no end in sight. I considered medical retirement from the sport I had played since childhood. It was an absolute blessing to be back home with my family, but I was isolated from the team. This whole time, I had been feeling guilty. What did I have to complain about? I have it easy. This University. A loving family. Friends that I could call up. In retrospect, I have it solid. What makes me special? Why am I feeling this way?

One day in particular gave me momentum. It was a weekend trip to Lake Tahoe with my cousins and family. Life had been slow up until that point. I created bad habits. I was in an empty apartment and confined to my team bubble, with the exception of my usual workout in the morning. I wanted to be productive; to read, to draw, to work out, to meditate, you know... the things that I once did. When playing in the front yard before being called in for dinner was normal. Instead, it was my Instagram feed, watching the latest series. Lost were the days I would be lights-out as soon as my head hit the pillow, content with the day.

But this day in Lake Tahoe allowed me to wake up. For the first time, I could hear the birds and the waterfalls echoing throughout the valley below. I could feel the jolt and the pain of plunging into the frigid lake. And the funny thing is, I actually wanted to stay in that freezing cold water. I wanted to feel that pain, instead of running from it. I was at Fallen Leaf Lake, and I felt alive for the first time in a while. I allowed myself to.

The smoke, however, was saddening. The California fires had reached their worst, and the death of George Floyd was circulating in our minds and across the nation. I felt like an iceberg sitting on the rocks near the emerald water because the wind was picking up. It was uncomfortable, but I felt alive because I was seeing everything the world had to offer—nothing was hiding from me. The beauty of the mountains to the pain and sorrow of the nation. The cool mountain air to the poor air-quality. The good, the bad, the sublime. I was at peace with it all.

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