

Topic: Sports (soccer) as a path to a healthier life.

Abstract: From an early age I was bullied because of my weight. Poor eating habits created significant health issues and contributed to my weight gain. Sports were a way for me to escape my problems; however I continued my poor eating habits and reached a point where I had no choice but to change my eating habits. I committed to a healthier diet and dedicated myself to a challenging fitness routine. Today I am much healthier and continue to play soccer. Having experienced bullying and health issues due to my weight, I now feel like I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. “sky is the limit”

Key Word: Bullying, insecurity, weight gain, weight loss, sports, soccer, health, bad eating habits, talented, Struggle to breath, overcoming challenges

Heart of a lion

As a kid I was fat, short, and very insecure about myself. I would always wear big sizes in clothes to hide my stomach and big waist I had. Everywhere I went, I would always think people were judging me and making fun of me because I was a fat person. Throughout elementary school, a lot of people would make jokes about my weight and make fun of me. I was often the center of attention for a lot of kids my age because since I was the fat kid, they made fun of me about it. Every time I would get in arguments with other kids, the way they would say something back to me is by offending me by saying horrible things of my weight. This would really get me upset and lead for me to just eat even more. I was bullied a lot in my life and I believe to this date that it was a huge reason of why I would eat a lot. Eating was like a relieve to me it made me feel happy and free. I have always been a great eater but when I was younger, bully's would get me upset and even make me cry. The only way to relieve my pain was by eating. This was really hurting my physical appearance because it was making me gain even more weight. Being bullied hurt me a lot mentally; it would weaken me and just make me feel terrible about myself. As a child, I was always the fat kid in the class. I was always the fat kid everyone messed around with. I was always blamed for everything. The fact that I was fat was

the reason a lot of kids in my schools would bully me. I would tell my parents that kids were hurting my feelings everyday because I didn't want them to snap at them or anything bad to happen. So I would keep it to myself and just eat food to cure my pain of being rejected and made fun off by everyone.

The neighborhood I lived in when I was a child was a neighborhood full of gangs. Salinas, California was where I was born and raised and lived there for 11 years. My neighborhood in particular was always full of drama. Fights between neighbors would always occur; gang violence was seen almost every day. Food became one of my ways to just get away from all the drama that would occur on a daily basis in my neighborhood as a young kid. It was about the age of 7 years old when I started playing sports and to my surprise I was really good at sports. I was actually one of the kids that would be the reason our teams would win even though I was very fat. It's a gift god gave me to be a great athlete. Once I knew I was great at sports, I would spend all day, every day, almost 7 days a week playing with my neighborhood friends. Sports and eating were the only things me and all my neighborhood friends would do to ignore the violence that was very often in Salinas, CA. I became a huge fan of sports in general. My life was full of happiness when I was playing a sport. Everything bad that would happen to me was forgotten once I was playing sports. Every TV channel I would watch was related to sports. Even my parents were surprise of how talented I was when it came to playing sports.

Even though I was a very active kid, I would also eat a lot of bad food. Such as tons of sweets because I have always had a sweet tooth for desserts. My parents would always lecture me about the way I should eat. But I just heard it through one ear and let it out through the other. My eating habits were terrible; I would wake up in the middle of the night and just eat like a big. My health started to go out of control, I would struggle to breath a lot of times. Even in the

middle of the night I would wake up not being able to breath. It was a horrible feeling. It felt like a fish with no water. I told my parents what was going on. They took me to the doctor and the doctor didn't find anything wrong. The doctor told my parents that it was most likely my weight that was causing me to have breathing problems. He recommended me to lose weight because I was extremely obese. I didn't listen to a thing the doctor said and kept my bad eating habits.

I was about in 6th grade when I decided to join a soccer team. A lot of my teammates would often say "oh look at that fat kid, he's going to be the water boy haha". I would get really mad but didn't say anything; I just kept it to myself. But once I started playing soccer I was playing the sport like if I've been playing for years. I was naturally awesome at soccer and my teammates started praising me about how good I would perform even though I was fat. Soccer became my favorite sport and to this date is still the only sport I will ever play. hearing good things me just motivate me more to keep on playing soccer because I was always the center of attention, the fat kid everyone made fun off. But it all changed once I was playing soccer. I was finally being respected by others even though I was fat. I started to be a leader in my soccer team where my teammates looked up to me and listen to me. For the first time in my life I was not being made fun of or have anyone said something bad about me. Every time my team had an away game the other team always had comments about me because I was the only fat kid on the soccer team. I would hear "oh he's fat he won't be able to play against us." That would jus motivate me more, it gave me a boost to perform even better. I would often embarrass my opponents in the soccer field by just out performing them in soccer. My will to succeed in every soccer game, brought all the bad memories of be being made fun of. It gave me an energy I had never felt before, made me just unleash all my anger. Since that point on every time someone said something bad I would just shut them up by performing amazing out in the soccer field.

Every time someone would say something bad about me or made fun of me just motivate me even more to prove them wrong and it didn't hurt my feelings anymore. I was starting to become a stringer person that knew was capable of doing anything I wanted to even if I was fat. My health got to a breaking point when I was about 15 years old. My bad breathing problems got out of control. Went to the doctor and I weighed 210 pounds and was only 5'4 tall. The doctor said if I didn't lose weight I would have heart problems and I would have diabetes. The doctor told me "you have to make a change; I know it's not easy but it's for your own good. Always remember we only live once". I left the doctor office almost crying. That's when I decided I was going to change my eating habits and loose weight. I told my parents and they said they would support me and help me loose weight and get my health back to normal. I also told a lot of friends and others. But most of them said I wouldn't be able to accomplish it. That just motivate me to prove everyone wrong and that anything is possible as long as you set you mind to it. I started by eating just chicken and turkey sandwiches. I let go of all the junk soda, chocolate, chips, etc... I stopped eating all the bad things that were making me fat. I would only eat healthy things such as milk, carrots, chicken, turkey. I got on a very strict diet where I would eat 3 small portions a day. I would run 4-6 miles a day everyday even on Sundays. Little by little the pounds were coming off my body. The first month of my diet I had already dropped 26 pounds. That made me very happy and gave me a greater reason to push myself even harder to loose weight even fast. I became a running machine and the extra pounds in my body kept on being shed. By the end of the second month of my diet I had a total of 52 pounds shed of my body. My family was extremely proud of me and people were finally recognizing my hard work and praised me to keep it up. I kept on dieting and at the end of the third month of my diet I had lost a total of 69 pounds weighing 141 pounds. I was a whole new person my physical appearance was quite

different. A lot of people didn't even recognize me they didn't even think it was me. I entered my junior year in high school a whole new person that was positive and felt good about himself. Everyone at my school praised me and said you are an inspiration. You have the heart of a lion, you didn't let no one get in your way and you are now a healthy young teen. I went to the doctor three months after he told me I was close on getting diabetes and having heart problems. His reaction of when he saw me was priceless. He said he had never seen someone tried so hard to achieve something like me. He said I went above and beyond. My weight was above normal and I had also grown three inches over the summer. I was now a 141 pound teen at 5'7 tall. My family was so proud of me, my friends were speechless. They said it takes guts and will to do what I achieved. To this date I have kept the weight of. I have a healthy normal weight and soccer became even a better thing to me now that I'm skinnier. I became an even better soccer player more agile, more athletic, more energetic and most importantly it made me a better leader. I became a person that whatever I want to achieve I achieve no matter what. I will not stop until I achieve what I want. I don't let anyone's opinions get in my head I just respond to the haters by proving them wrong. Success is all I want in my life and I have the heart and power to achieve anything I set my mind to. I am currently still playing soccer and I'm going to school to get my bachelor's in criminal justice to be a probation officer. I will do anything in my power to achieve my goal and I will achieve it one way or another.