

2013 Winning Scholarship Essays

Peter Brodeur, Granby, CT - Granby Rovers Soccer Club
What Soccer Means to Me

It was a perfect pyramid we made in a photograph that day, my brother, Nick, and his third grade friends beaming in their Granby Rovers uniforms on the bottom, and me, six years old, standing proudly on top in my Juventus jersey. I am certain that when the pyramid broke, I chased after them to play more soccer. If we could have predicted it, we would not have known that as nearly grown men, we would one day be in the Class M State final together.

On that day, the culmination of hours of preparation, the crowd roars as we approach the pitch. The whistle blows, and the ball makes its way back and forth over center field. Passes received with ease, kicks defying the laws of physics, shots curving around the keeper past the goal, all of them punctuated by a thirst for victory. And the intensity of the crowd grows. Finally, a goal, but it is for the other side. I squat down, cupping my hands, knowing as the freshman who plays premier and ODP, I am still standing atop a pyramid, the team holding steady underneath. We scope the field, we acknowledge the positioning of our adversaries and we score a goal, but we lose by one. It is a defeat on paper, but a win in life. Soccer, to me, is the perfect union between players who know that there is also victory in giving everything you can, and on that day, we gave it all.

Lauren Clark, Wallingford, CT - Wallingford Youth Soccer
What Soccer Means to Me

Joga Bonito: play beautifully. My coach has been preaching this Portuguese adage to me since I was nine. Soccer has always been an outlet that provides both physical and mental exercise. No two games are exactly the same. I love the challenge of mastering new moves and finding new ways to score. Soccer is always changing and it is the creativity required to keep up with the changing game that makes it beautiful.

The poem "Soccer-The Game of Life," by Anonymous, aptly defines my perspective on soccer and the significance it holds. "I hope you win for your sake, not mine, because winning is nice. It's a good feeling. Like the whole world is yours. But it passes, this feeling. And what lasts is what you've learned."

As a sport, soccer is competitive. Competition is healthy. However, I have learned there is more to soccer than beating the opponent. When players cry over a loss and coaches scream at the referee, an essential part of the game is lost. Playing, above all, must be fun. The objective is simple: get the ball in the goal. The fun comes in the different ways this end can be achieved. It is fun to score and win, but it is also fun to be humbled by someone's skill and have something to reach for. Soccer has taught me to play beautifully in the game and in life. Through soccer, I have learned to think creatively, remain positive, and strive for my best.

Kathryn Francis, Bethlehem, CT - Woodbury Bethlehem Soccer
What Soccer Means to Me

I pull up the socks on my feet, tuck my jersey into my shorts, and lace up my black cleats. The team makes its final preparations before the start of the game. We make our way onto the field and take our proper positions. The entire sideline of the field is lined with excited family and friends, all cheering loudly. Everyone is still, until the whistle blows and the chaos begins. The only exception: Is the one blowing the whistle and the organizer of said chaos.

As the center referee for a state cup final game, I'm just as nervous as the girls competing around me for the title. Even though I have no goal to shoot on or team to beat, there are 22 players that are counting on me to keep them safe and ensure a fair contest. If I make a mistake, someone could get seriously injured or the outcome of the game may be wrong. I am also being watched by state referee administrators who decide if you move on to higher level games.

I sprint beside the other players, working just as hard to keep up with the high intensity of play. Like a strategic goalkeeper, I must read play to determine where it is moving next. At the conclusion of the game, no one is there to celebrate nor mourn a loss with. I simply pack up my gear and head home alone. Despite all of the challenges and responsibilities that come with being a referee, I still take pride in what I do and continue to find ways to improve my abilities. If it weren't for people like me, there wouldn't be a goal to shoot on nor a team to beat. I know I make it possible for players, coaches and spectators to enjoy the game, and that makes it worth all the while.

Although I no longer play for a team, soccer still is and will always be an important aspect of my life. It taught me camaraderie, perseverance, leadership, and responsibility. Being a player, coach, and referee at one time or another, I have always taken pride in what I have accomplished. I have learned that although one door may have closed in playing, another one opened to refereeing where I could still experience my love for the game. As my reality changes in the next few months to bigger endeavors like living on my own and the greater academic challenges of college, I know that I can bring the lessons I have learned from soccer with me to help me succeed as well as continue to love the game.

Sarah Irvine, Milford, CT - Milford United Soccer Club
What Soccer Means to Me

My love for soccer is not something easily expressed in words, it comes in flashbacks. It is born out of grass stains and sweat. It is filled with moments spent with my dad, his embrace a constant fixture in my soccer career. He was there through it all; the injuries, the exhaustion and the tears, but also for the moments of pure joy after winning a tournament or game or the unexplainable happiness of having a standout game. And then there are those glorious embraces shared with friends after a hard-fought win. Soccer is never easy, but that is what makes it the most rewarding sport to play. Much like life, soccer wears on you and knocks you down. It is through the constant fight that soccer players go through, that we learn how to get back up and fight. Soccer teaches you to never be intimidated, never back down, and that only giving 110% is acceptable in any situation. You learn to be faster, stronger, and a better person. You learn to lead your team into battle, knowing that the victory is worth the fight, the scars, and the tears. It is amazing to be standing on the field with the girls you would trust your life with. The word teammates does not adequately describe these girls, they are your sisters in arms, your best friends, and your family. Your teammates will forever be your lifelong sisters and friends. Soccer is not just a game, it gives you a family.

Jennifer McNamara, Oakdale, CT - Montville Soccer
What Soccer Means To Me

Anyone who has ever tried to draw a soccer ball knows that it is much more difficult than it seems. It is the same with trying to explain what soccer means to me. After 10 years on the field it seems like I would be able to answer this prompt with ease. However, just like the numerous eraser marks of attempting to draw the perfect ball, I struggle to write in words how this sport has become a part of me.

On the surface, soccer has kept me physically fit and taught me the value of teamwork and discipline. If I were to ask myself why I played soccer though, my answer would not include those aspects. The fact that the world is full of stress and evils is not a secret to anyone. Everyone deals with his or her own struggles each day. Even the smallest issues can consume someone. I can recall countless days when school or my personal life has dragged me down. However, I can only recall one solution that seemed to lift me up regardless of the issue and its severity. Soccer. It is almost as if stepping onto the field transports me into a new dimension. The tangled mess of worries and pressures in my head unwinds with every dribble and pass. Within minutes the anxiety that restrained me disappears and I am able to move freely.

Some people choose the beach and for others it is just a quiet room, but my sanctuary is soccer. Eventually, the eraser marks fade and the picture becomes clear. Hopefully I have succeeded in drawing the perfect soccer ball.

Nicholas Sumbly, Old Saybrook, CT - Southeast Premier
What Soccer Means To Me

Have you ever felt such bliss in life that nothing could upset you, no matter what? Have you ever been in such convivial state, that all the bad thoughts and negative feelings around you seem to dwindle away completely? I have. Every time I step onto the soccer field I enter a state euphoria where all malevolent emotions seem to be suppressed deep into the grass, and I can't help but smile as I start to kick the ball around. I guess you can say soccer is my emotional outlet. If I'm ever upset, angry, stressed, or just need something to cheer myself up a little bit, I hit the soccer field. I've played for as long as I can remember and have very few instances where I wasn't completely content with life while running around the field, kicking the ball back and forth with a couple of friends. There is no sport that I've played longer than soccer and spent more time and dedication for. Soccer is not just another sport for me; it's more than that. It's a way for me to release tension that sends me on an emotional high. It's more than just a game. It's more than just a sport. It's more than just something to do on the weekends. For me, soccer is a passion, a compelling emotional diversion that pushes me through life.

Alejandro Tobon, Windsor, CT - FSA
What Soccer Means to Me

Soccer is my life; I eat, sleep and drink soccer. It all began on June 26, 1995 in Medellin, Columbia. I was born with a common abnormality in blood type in Columbia; I had soccer running through my veins. When I came to America, I didn't know any English, I had to attend school without understanding my classmates or teachers, however, I did know the language of soccer. Soccer is a universal language that helped me meet new friends and transition into a new culture. My official career began when I was 7 years old playing for the Lasers, a West Hartford Rec soccer team. Although it was Rec soccer, a common activity which parents sign their kids up for fun, and to help them develop their social skills; that is not how I experienced it at all. My father having been born and raised in Columbia began playing soccer at a very young age. He wanted me to grow up with the same passion for soccer that he grew up with, and he got exactly what he wanted. During my time with the Lasers I became known as "Alejandro, the soccer player with the crazy soccer dad" and that still follows me until this day. My dad pressured me since day 1, he would yell at me from the start of the game to the final whistle. I used to dread the ride home after a game, he used this time to point out all my errors and suggest how to correct them. At the time I hated this, but now I'm very thankful for it because it helped me become the soccer player that I am today. My most memorable highlights of my life so far involve soccer in some way; and I'm sure that is the way that it will be for another good while considering that I'm moving on to play soccer at Eastern CT State University next year. I could not imagine my life without soccer.