

Value of Hard Work

I'll never forget sitting in the doctor's office, awaiting MRI results. The surgeon walked into the room. "You tore your ACL. It's a clean tear." He talked on for a while about human anatomy and the structure of the knee. However, I only heard one thing. "You'll be out of the game for about a year. You'll be on crutches and in a brace for a few weeks. After that, you'll have physical therapy several times a week." I was facing the hardest work I had ever done in my life, but in the end, it taught me so much that will be useful in college.

As I faced this major bump in the road, I had so many worries, but my most prominent worries were my health and my financial stability. With a torn ACL, I was looking at a 1-year absence from soccer, a sport I loved so much that I not only played but also made it my part-time job. This was a hard way to learn not to put all my eggs in one basket. As I move forward into college, I will maintain a more diverse set of interests so that if I have to drop out of one, I won't be left lost and floundering.

Another thing I learned was that my eating habits had to change. My athlete's diet at the time consisted of carbs, meat, and dairy, and that wouldn't fly too well without the hours of exercise each week. I focused on drinking water and eating whole foods. While I've been warned about the "freshman 15," now that I've learned how to eat healthier, I feel less susceptible to those health risks.

The last lesson from this experience that I'm taking into college is that no one controls my future except me. If I wanted my life back, I would have to put in the work. After the surgery, I started doing sit-ups and lifting weights since my legs wouldn't be of use for at least two months. I did all the exercises prescribed by the physical therapist four times a day, twice the suggested amount. I never missed a physical therapy appointment and I did all the exercises they gave me more than the minimum number of times. In the end, I was released from my last visit to the doctor two months early after which I was back on the field refereeing and playing like I never left. As much as my family and friends love me and wanted to help, they couldn't do it for me.

Though I didn't realize it at the time, now I see that the experience of a torn ACL and the hard work required of me has helped me prepare for college in ways nothing else could. All of this helped me to not only recover, but it also helped me become a more confident and harder-working person. After going through all of this, I know I can face down homework, exams, finals, and everything else that goes with college life.