

## COVID Class of 2020

2020 was supposed to be the year where I closed one chapter of my life and moved onto the next chapter smoothly. Your entire life everybody always hypes up the excitement of senior year. You hear about all the fun stories from prom and graduation. Everybody tells you to enjoy it while it lasts because it'll be over before you know it. I was doing exactly that, the start of the year was going just how I expected it to be. I was enjoying my senior year, taking super easy classes, and soaking up every last moment of childhood. Sadly, due to the pandemic and other reasons, 2020 has been an extremely tough year and has thrown so much at me.

At the end of February my uncle unexpectedly lost his battle with cancer, leaving behind my aunt and his 11 and 13 year old daughters. He was only 49. My cousins are the sweetest and most intelligent little girls ever and they did not deserve to lose their father. About a week or so after he passed away, my family and I flew to Switzerland for the funeral. We wanted to comfort my cousins so badly and grieve with them, but they hate being the center of attention. With how overwhelming everything was, all they wanted was some sense of normalcy during this incredibly sad time. They are so disciplined that they chose to still go to school that week. Seeing my cousins spread their father's ashes into his grave was easily one of the most heartbreaking moments of my life. Something they should never have had to do at such a young age. I remember seeing them grasp onto my aunt as she cried. I was so proud to see how strong and supportive they were. I check in with my cousins as often as I can, but the time difference makes it very difficult. As we were at the airport for our flight back home, I remember seeing some people wearing masks and stubbornly thinking that they were being paranoid for no reason. Little did I know, one week later the world would shutdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leading up to March I had been working my ass off for so many months in preparation for my senior volleyball season. My junior year we lost in the regional championship and lost most of our roster to graduation. I stepped up and was fully prepared to lead my team to another shot at winning a regional championship—my life revolved around it. March 12th was the first practice of my senior season. I didn't know it then, but that day was also the last practice of my high school volleyball career. Schools all across the country temporarily postponed in-person classes as a precautionary measure. At first, it was just supposed to be three weeks, then three weeks turned into just until the end of April and then my high school called the year. No senior season. No regional championship. No prom. No real graduation. I have trouble putting words together to describe how devastated I was. I felt like every ounce of effort I put in towards volleyball went to literally nothing. I've never worked so hard for something in my life, not even remotely close. Missing out on my senior season is something I will never get over. I am lucky enough to be playing in college but I would trade anything to get that senior season back.

After finding out there was no chance of me having a senior season, I had no motivation to do anything and I don't think I smiled for weeks. On May 3rd, my mom came into my room and woke me up around 7:30am which was way earlier than I intended on waking up. She told me that one of my best friends' mom unexpectedly died from cardiac arrest. I was completely blindsided by this news and knew I had to help him. My friend ended up living with me for a week until his siblings could find somewhere for him to live. He, like many kids from my town, grew up in single parent homes in extreme poverty and have no one helping them stay on track. It was really stressful having him live with my family right after his mom passed away, because we wanted to make sure we were doing everything to help him in that unimaginable situation. Losing my senior season was still so fresh and painful but during that week my problems became

so much less important than what he was going through. Some things are much bigger than sports, but without sports I would have never met him and would not have been able to help him.

Part of me feels like I still haven't closed the high school chapter of my life yet. I should have gotten the opportunity to showcase all of my hard work on the volleyball court for my senior season. I should have gotten the opportunity to take my girlfriend to prom. I should have gotten the opportunity to walk across the stage and get my diploma in front of my parents. It pains me to think about all the other little memories that I missed out on. The craziest part about how badly this year has gone is that 2020 is not over and it could get even worse. Thinking back to my early memories of 2020 literally feels like ages ago. I have high hopes that 2020 will get better and the good will outweigh the bad.