

I've been swimming for basically my entire life, but over the last 4 years, swim has become an even bigger part of my life than it had before. It's a big difference going from a club team where if you have too much homework or your sick you can skip practice, to a team where everyday immediately after school you work as hard as you can for almost 4 hours, on skipping for homework, or sickness, (even if you end up with whooping cough) . But through that mandatory hard work, I've met some of the best people I know.

My freshman year, there were more swimmers in my grade than just Val and me, but over the years, its seems as though were the last ones standing. Being an individual sport, and a brutal one at that, it can seem like swimming is survival of the fittest, but our team is a family, and I know that every team says that, but when it comes down to it, making it through killer sets with each other everyday, changing with each other every day, joking with each other every day, and basically being forced to spend every spare minute together has made us closer than any other sports team. Whether we wanted to be there in the beginning or not, by the end of the season, we were all wishing for more time together. Out of all my years of swimming, this year was the hardest year of actual work, but somehow we managed to tell stories and joke around with each other through that hard work, even if we only have about 5 seconds at the wall before we get busted, and have to push off again.

This year was by far our most successful year as a team, and I think we can all credit that to mike, and heather. Even if, as a team, we aren't feeling energized before a meet, or maybe were feeling a little to energized, Mike and heather have always found a way to get us in the mindset to swim, and swim well. Whether its compliments after practice, or visualizing before big meets, or having us tell jokes in the middle of a hard set, he always tries to keep a happy, hardworking vibe during the season.

In life, there are some moments that are just picture perfect and that you wish you could have captured on camera. And lucky for us swimmers, they will be! All. of. Them. Even if there not picture perfect, or even great at all, they will, without fail, be captured and on instagram within

a few hours of practice. And even though there are probably more pictures than I can count that I wish weren't on social media, I always find myself smiling and looking back at all the instagram posts and remembering the story behind each one. But regardless of if he is capturing us at our absolute worsts, Mike is always there. He's always pushing us to be our strongest, and looking out for our best interests.

In all of the things i've done throughout my time at Mainland, participating on the swim team has best prepared me with the characteristics I need to be successful in the world : work ethic, passion, confidence and the ability to have fun in any situation. When I go to college, I think being on a team as close as this one will be the thing I miss most, but having this experience on this team will drive me to create that happy, family-like environment in everything I do. I'm so happy that I got to spend my last year of swim with this group of amazing girls, and I can't wait to hear about all the wonderful things you do next year.

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March 2019