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Personal Essay

“My name, my name is Daniel. I came from Korea. No. I’m from Seoul, South Korea. I am 15 years old. I love, I love playing baseball. Again. My name is Daniel...”

Repeating those sentences, I took my first step into my new high school. I remember the feeling I had at that time. September 8, 2015. It was my first day of school in United States. I moved to United States in 2015 as a result of my father’s relocation to San Jose, California as an engineer at SK Hynix.

When I was in South Korea, I followed the baseball specialized curriculum in which student athletes mostly focus on sports rather than academic curriculum. There were more than 6 hours practice everyday and many tournaments during the school year. I couldn’t fully participate in the classes because I was also a Korean Junior Baseball National Team player, attending Cal Ripken World Series in Baltimore in 2012, one of the biggest world junior baseball championships. As a result, I was not fully provided enough educational opportunities. Even though this system would help me to become a more competitive, professional baseball player, I always had a desire to study, and it grew larger and larger as time went on. When my parents asked me if I would move to United States with them, I resolutely left all my baseball accomplishments and chose to experience the bigger world. On August 26, 2015, I walked off the plane and took my first step toward the long adventure.

Everything was new to me. New language, new environment, new foods, and new people. 15 years of my memories in Korea made it difficult for me to adapt to this new country.

Adapting to the new language was an especially big challenge. I was not able to understand most of the lectures because I was still learning English. Even during group projects, I couldn't work with other members. I was such a stranger and felt separated from other people. However, I couldn't realize that it was me that separated myself from everything until I found my Golden Glove that I was awarded in the Cal Ripken World Series in 2012. When I looked at it, I closed my eyes, and my mind flashed back to the memories of my journey.

“True effort never betrays you.” - Seung-yuop Lee

Grabbing my bat and glove, remembering my favorite quote, I walked into the vacant batting cage one evening. I stayed late after regular practice to review my baseball journal and apply what I learned from practice. With a high batting average of 0.750, I was the best hitter on my team but needed to improve my defensive game to achieve my ultimate goal: the best all-around in the world. During practice, I repeatedly dashed and dove onto the ground to catch fly balls. I kept running until I caught 300 fly balls. I hit more than other players hit, threw more than they threw, and ran more than they ran. Eventually, my efforts were honored as I was selected to play on the Korean Junior National Baseball Team, and I was nominated for the Golden Glove, which is given to the best defensive player. When the championship chairman called my name for the award, about 300 baseball players and crowd whistled and applauded as I stepped on the podium. I was thrilled, overjoyed, and overwhelmed with excitement. My effort didn't betray me, and it rather gave me a wonderful memory and a big lesson that still influences my life. True effort finally pays off.

Even after I opened my eyes, all the details of that moment were fresh in my memory. I walked into my room, grabbed a pencil, and opened my textbooks. This time, it was not my defensive skill nor batting mechanism that I needed to improve but was new language, new environment, and me, myself.

To improve my English skills, I finished 3 fictions, non-fictions, and grammar books per month. Everything was complicated at first, but after diligently studying, I became progressively more confident and could eventually finish a full sentence by myself. I made an effort to actively participate in my classes by raising my hand confidently. Now I voice my opinions, present my projects in front of many people, and have complex discussions with my classmates.

2 years have passed, and I look back upon the past. It was really hard to learn and adapt to a new world, but I have embraced them as my own. Now, desiring to experience the bigger world and to be a global leader, I interact with other people as much as possible in order to understand the shape of their thoughts and encourage them to retain their individualities, serving my church youth group as a group leader and managing the Korean Culture Club in my school as a treasurer. I also help international students like me to adapt to their new environments and encourage them to maintain and pursue their academic goals. I believe it helps me to expand my range of perspectives and teaches me how to work with other people, which will help me to be a competitive leader in the society.

Currently, Korean Professional Baseball league officially declared that all the players can hire their agents when negotiating their salaries, and the problems that student athletes don't get enough academic opportunities became more controversial. For this reason, I want to establish the biggest sports agency firm that specializes in baseball and to be a sports agent who not only

help athletes negotiate their salaries but also help all the student athletes in the world have good quality of educational opportunities as well as better conditions in which they can perform their best plays without having any problems regarding their academics. I am sure that my experiences in South Korea and United States will help me to pave the path for this big sports market and am not afraid to begin a new chapter of my life.