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### “What Soccer Means to Me”

Soccer is a game of freedom. When I started playing as a three year old, I just wanted a chance to run free, but I soon fell in love with its fluid pace. In other sports I felt constrained by the rules, in soccer I could just play.

As I got older I began to understand the sport even more, captivated while playing and watching on TV. I still remember being filled with joy following Landon Donovan’s historic 91st minute goal versus Algeria. I learned that while a soccer game lasts 90 minutes, the outcome can be determined in a few crucial seconds, causing many memorable victories, and a few last-minute defeats.

I also learned that soccer is a teacher. It teaches practice, dedication, teamwork, and effort. No games are ever won without hustle or communication. In soccer I have learned to recover from mistakes and loses, to play with pride, and to always believe in a comeback, no matter how unlikely it may seem.

Above all, to me soccer represents a community. I have made friends from other towns, states, and even countries through my passion for the sport. I have seen my own high school team bond around a player from El Salvador who--despite not speaking any English--understood the language and freedom of soccer. While I am saddened to think my high school career has come to a close, I know wherever I go there will be new soccer fans to meet and new experiences to be had.