

Delaney Gahm Kaiser Scholarship Essay:

It was the most important day of my entire life. My stomach was flipped upside down, twisting so much it felt like a pretzel. I tapped my foot impatiently waiting by the car, wondering what could possibly be taking my parents so long to get out of the door. *Don't they realize how important the first day of Kindergarten is?!* It was finally my time to shine, make new friends, meet my teacher, and most importantly, play at recess! No more nap time, as I had graduated from such a preschool activity. It was now time for more important things, like curing cancer, or playing on the monkey bars.

The school day seemed to fly by, as before I knew it, it was already lunch time! I enjoyed my yummy sandwich and side of fruit snacks, fueling up for the best 20 minute game of 5 year old soccer imaginable. My excitement was through the roof. That was until I walked up to the boys who had the ball and asked whose team I could be on. When I was faced with silence and stares, I knew something wasn't right. My best friend, my neighbor, the boy I had always counted on- was the one who told me soccer wasn't for girls. It was simple, I couldn't play.

In that moment, my heart shattered. I felt like a lego tower that had been kicked right down the middle. My true passion, my zest for life, had been taken away from me, just like that. So it was no surprise when my parents picked me up and were extremely concerned when they saw the pout on my face. Their giggle girl was nowhere to be found. There were no fun stories of the new friends I had met, or cool facts about my teacher. Instead, they had to listen to my story of rejection through the sobs that came from the backseat. It was a rejection more brutal than from Stanford. But it was a rejection that changed my life for the better.

I showed up the next day at school wearing a smile on my face. I walked past all of the boys, the ones with cooties who gave me dirty looks. I made it to my teacher and handed her my gift. A bright pink soccer ball, one only girls were allowed to play with. That day I learned a lesson that has stuck with me ever since. I learned that I should never sell myself short, that I should fight for what I believe in, and that I am strong enough to stand my own ground. I learned that if I put my mind to something, I can break past any boundaries that may be set in my way.

11 years later and it was my junior year of high school. It was the first Friday night football game of the year and my friends and I sat in the stands, cheering on the boys. The loud music, bright lights, and neon colors filled the air with joy, but I couldn't help thinking about how badly I wished I could be out on the field, playing the big game with all of the boys. It wasn't fair that they could play such a fun sport and I couldn't.

Two weeks later, with a coach by my side, I successfully started the first girls flag football team at Newport Harbor. Girls who were never given the opportunity to play, now had the chance to learn and compete in this sport at a high level. The first lesson I learned in Kindergarten was already proving strong, as I learned that when I put my mind to something, I will make sure it gets done. This football team changed my life for the better, as it introduced me to some of my best friends and allowed me to make some of my favorite high school memories. This past year, we were the runners-up in the championship game, only losing by one point in overtime. We made school history and paved the way for

success in girls football at Newport Harbor. If it wasn't for the little girl holding a pink soccer ball, it couldn't have been possible.