

Thank you Mr. Manley for that introduction. Good morning everyone. My name is Jack Baldwin. I graduated from Sacred Heart in 2018, and will graduate from St. Ignatius later this month. As Mr Manley said, I was recruited to sail for Stanford University starting this fall. I am truly honored to be here to talk about my athletic journey, which started here at Sacred Heart.

When Mr. Manley called and asked me to speak today, I was ecstatic. A rush of memories filled my head. Playing pickup basketball on Sheridan Road, riding the bus to school with my friends, conge, my 1st grade buddy, it all came back to me. This sports assembly has always been one of my favorite traditions here at SHS. I remember sitting in this chapel with my friends where you are today, with lots of excitement. Each of us had our fingers crossed, hoping we would be awarded for an athletic accomplishment. If that doesn't happen for you today, don't be dismayed. You have a long path ahead. You're only in the 1st quarter! Keep working hard!

Until 6th grade at SHS, I played every sport. It was pure joy to try everything...football, baseball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, golf, and of course messing around in sailboats. I'll never forget this period of my life, trying all these new things for the first time, having fun, making friends, and just being a kid.

As I entered middle school, I started to learn it's not just about having fun. Competition was increasing and school work was getting harder. I had to make tough choices. I gradually dropped every sport except the two I loved the most, basketball and sailing. Playing basketball for Hardy Prep from 4th through 8th grade was a dream come true. Our team was very talented and had strong chemistry. We won the Chicago Catholic League championship every year from 5th grade on, and even qualified for the state championship in 8th grade where we placed 6th. Those were formative years where our team learned to appreciate the basic values of hard work, cooperation, and sportsmanship.

Despite my love for basketball, sailing was my true passion. I have always been drawn to the water, the wind, and the big waves on Lake Michigan. I started with summer sailing camps, but found myself wanting more. I joined the race team at Chicago Yacht Club and began competing in youth regattas around the Midwest and eventually the East and West coasts. I was hooked.

Freshman year was a tough transition.....new friends, new teachers, more homework, and two sports. I had trouble balancing it all. The basketball team wanted me to play year round, but that conflicted with sailing. I was at a crossroads, and had to make another sacrifice. I gave up basketball my Sophomore year, and committed to sailing full time. It was a tough decision, but it

felt right. I set a goal for myself of winning the high school sailing national championship.

It wasn't easy. Throughout my high school years I was often competing on the weekends and out of town frequently. I missed parties, and I wasn't able to see my friends as much. I would often talk to them on Sunday night and hear about all the fun things I missed. Schoolwork also wasn't getting any easier. I started to question, is this worth it? Maybe I should give up sailing and focus just on my academics. At least I could hang out with my friends more. I had many late night talks with my parents about the meaning of sacrifice.

How near term pain can be rewarded with long term gain.

We talked about "the three S's." School, Sports, and Social. How do you balance them? It became clear to me that you can't have all three, all the time. You have to make sacrifices. I worked with the Ignatius counselors to help me balance my academics and sailing, I turned off social media, and I came to accept missing a few parties at home. In time, my future began to brighten. I was sailing well and making friends from all over the country at these regattas. It opened my eyes and I looked forward to seeing my new friends in exciting venues like Ontario, Long Beach New Jersey, Newport, Annapolis, the Outer Banks, Miami, San Diego,

San Francisco, and the beautiful Columbia River Gorge in Oregon. In essence, my sport and my social life became one and the same. My advice to you is this: Don't be scared or sad to make these types of choices. It is through sacrifice, that you will eventually find reward. Embrace it. It will take time, and you will have doubts, but you will find more success, freedom, and happiness in the long run. Through my own experience, I firmly believe in this. By my senior year, everything was clicking. My grades were good, I took second at high school nationals, I was recruited on to the US Olympic Development team and accepted at Stanford University. This summer I'll be racing with Team USA in Portugal, and training in Marseille, France, the site for the 2024 Summer Olympics.

I want to thank Mr Manley and the faculty of Sacred Heart for giving me a great education, and creating a positive environment that gave me the faith to dream big, and the strength and confidence to persevere when I struggled. To the boys of Hardy Prep, Good luck to all of you on the field and in the classroom.

Remember the three S's and know that sacrifice is a part of life. It's supposed to be. It's not something to regret. It's something to aspire to.

Thank you.

