

If the beckoning finger wasn't enough, the fierce gaze had me petrified like a cowering dog. Wide-eyed and apprehensive, I walked over to my coach as he prepared to give me the lesson I deserved. He may not have known it then, but he was about to deliver one of the most impactful lessons of my life.

"Jake, why didn't you pass the ball to Griffin? He was clearly open."

"Well, he wasn't going to catch it," I said. In this moment, I could see the fire light up in his eyes.

"So you decided running through a couple opponents and scoring a goal was the appropriate thing to do?"

Standing there a bit bewildered, my mind raced for the right answer. I thought to myself, "I was scoring goals. Isn't that what you are supposed to do in lacrosse?"

At this time my coach took a knee, putting himself on an equal playing field, his eyes staring deep into mine. "Jake, win or lose, it doesn't really matter to me. Griffin was open. Throwing the ball to him was the right play to make." At this he paused to let this message sink in. He began again, "I don't care if he catches it or not. If he drops it, run and pick it up and throw it to him again. The wins and losses will take care of themselves." At that my coach motioned to the end of the bench where I was left to ponder for the duration of the match.

That coach was my father, and for the rest of the game I watched as he coached with passion, intensity, and most importantly impartial dedication to the other players on my team. His vision of sportsmanship, humility, and honor lit a fire inside me that day, a fire of desire, not just to be a good teammate, but to dedicate my actions to the success of the team.

My father made the effort to treat me like the rest of the players on the squad, living out his vision with intensity and passion. It was this act of fairness that proved to me that I could be like my father and honor his

mindfulness as a coach. I will never remember the score of that game, but I will remember the feeling of throwing Griffin the ball in the games to follow. With my father's help, my personal vision found real estate within my sole, and from there it grew on a daily basis with the hundreds of hours I spent in my yard, imagining different scenarios and plays that I hoped would translate into a real game, a big game, a game at the highest level of the sport. Day after day I would come home, often bypassing homework and food to work on technique of my crow hop or the skill of my off hand.

These habits became meditations as I heeded the advice of the most influential teacher I have ever had. That teacher was Dan Christian. In the classroom, he helped me to maximize my potential by introducing me to one of the most important lessons that I have learned to date: the ability to begin again. In athletics, Mr. Christian had a vision of the ideal basketball game being zero to zero. Think about that, zero to zero—a basketball game! This is not because there were ridiculously uncoordinated players out on the court; rather, it was because both teams were unimaginably dedicated to playing team defense. With the help of my father, Dan Christian, and many other mentors, I began to realize what dedication looked and felt like; I started to envision the person I wanted to be in conjunction with that of a team.

Now let's fast forward roughly twelve lacrosse seasons later. It was mid-May in my third year of college. I was attending my dream school, playing the game I love the most, and making some of the best friends in the world. That year we had had a successful lacrosse season by most team standards, but for the third year in a row we had yet another poor performance in the NCAA tournament, leaving a bad taste in all of our mouths. A few days later, I stepped into my coach's office for the end of the year meeting. The conversation moved slowly, but quickly became one of the worst collective moments of my life. Long story short, the coaching staff

falsely accused me of breaking team rules, they questioned my dedication to the team, and I was essentially told that I had failed the program. There were no suggestions of hope for the future, and now I had the whole summer in front of me with nothing to do but to let these feelings fester and eat at my core. Since my first day as an active Tar Heel, there wasn't a day that went by where I didn't think about my obligations as a teammate. All the hours we had put in together, the ups and downs of three seasons, and this is how I was going to be treated before my senior year. I left Chapel Hill questioning the relationships with my closest teammates and my coach. I reached the rock bottom of my sporting career, but, worst of all, my desire to play the game and to be a good teammate was dangling by a thread.

At this point it became clear that there was only one thing I could do—to fall back on my values, on the wisdom of my mentors. As Steve Jobs once said, “The heaviness of being successful is replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again.” I had to begin again. But how?

This was a difficult question for me to answer; at least it was until I arrived at Pasquaney. Not only was I able to center myself here at camp, but I also reconnected with the game of lacrosse in such a way that echoed the days of my youth. Playing Beggattoway (lacrosse as the Native Americans played it without any sidelines or garment restrictions) reminded me of why the game is so special. It brought me back to the fundamentals, to the days of old with my father, who encouraged me to play for my teammates.

That summer came to an abrupt close, and my return to UNC was jarring to say the least. I went from the cleansing hillside of Pasquaney to an over air-conditioned locker room where I was met with blank stares and half-hearted greetings. Fortunately, I brought with me a clear mind and a hardened vision to unify the 2016 UNC men's lacrosse team. But, most

importantly, there were a few guys who had come with a similar vision. Together, we set out on a journey to accomplish our collective goal.

We started with mending relationships, and although that couldn't happen overnight, we made it known to the team that this was a new year with new beginnings. Day after day we began to strengthen our bonds of friendship as we battled together with run tests, grueling lifts, and intense practices. A culture of what can I do to make US better began to swell amongst our ranks. Thus, each individual player's goals started to take shape around the needs of the team with an emphasis on accomplishing small daily tasks. To paraphrase John F Kennedy, "The tide was rising, and so were the boats." At times it was hard to stay afloat. I felt like we were nearly drowning at different points along the way, and when I say, nearly drowning, I mean we were this close. We had team disputes, player disputes, coach disputes, tough losses, and point deficits that were almost insurmountable. Almost.

The team trudged on, and we eventually found ourselves with a bid into the NCAA tournament. "So what do we do from here," we thought. Everyone was saying we were just lucky to be in the tournament. In the three years prior we had often been one of the favorites because we had had more talent, more supporters, and more All-Americans. So we did what Dan Christian and Steve Jobs would have done, we began again.

We developed a frenetic energy that none of our coaches had seen before. We started playing lacrosse at an unbelievably high caliber and we were attacking practices with a newfound intensity. There was no talk of trophies. We quite simply didn't have time for it. We were too busy with the present. As the stoic philosopher Epictetus alludes to in his discourses, we had authority over ourselves to do what was in our power. Do what was in our power. Nothing else.

Three weeks later, at around 2PM on May 30<sup>th</sup>, our team was deadlocked, 13 to 13 at the end of regular time against the top ranked Maryland Terrapins. We were going into overtime, playing for the National Championship. People can speculate all they want. They call it luck or call it a stroke of divine intervention, but I knew just what it was. As my father had taught me long before, focus your attention on being a good teammate and dedicate your actions to the success of the team and the wins and losses will take care of themselves. As my fellow Tar Heel Chris Cloutier shot the ball past the Maryland goalies hip, the whole world seemed to stop. Just like the five acutely quiet seconds after taps plays, signaling the end of a day, in a flash, my lacrosse career at UNC was over.

Now I would like to ask you to find yourself in the present. We are here at Camp Pasquaney for one more week. What is it that you can do to contribute to the overall success of P16? Just the other day, I bore witness to this sort of contribution taking place: a few guys with broomsticks, starting at the showers, and methodically work their way up to Dana for the last thirty minutes of the duty period. They were helping each guy who had yet to finish his duty. They had the desire and the collective vision to dedicate themselves to the success of camp. I urge you to honor the call of your duty, to place your brothers need before your own, and envision the person you wish to be in conjunction to that of Pasquaney. Take the time to be yourself, for as Oscar Wilde once said, "...everyone else is already taken." Think for a moment, after the final notes of taps ring out over the hillside on Water Sports Weekend, what will you feel in the five seconds that follow?