

How to achieve my “Bunbu Souzen (文武双全)”

Bunbu Souzen. According to the Keio Academy website, it means to master both academics and athletics to the fullest. But mastery, I have learned, does not begin with skill. It begins with belief. Through thirteen years of football and my first year at Keio Academy, I have come to understand Bunbu Souzen in my own way: to have "confidence without evidence" in every field I enter. This single principle has carried me from the bench to the starting lineup, and from the bottom of a Japanese class to its highest award. It is not because I was the most talented, but because I refused to wait for proof before believing in myself.

I first understood this through football. I started my career in an unambitious team where my counterparts were unaccountable, never showed up on time, and never reflected after losing. Despite practising hard, I felt I was not improving. So I made the difficult decision to leave the team that had become my comfort zone. My second club was the complete opposite, which was full of rigid discipline, harsh language, and physical demands I had never experienced. I was afraid, but something shifted in me. I understood that I had to evolve. While my teammates rested, I practised. While they practised, I practised harder. Yet the promotion never came. It was a painful lesson in the gap between effort and reward.

In seventh grade, I earned a spot in the tryouts for my club's junior youth elite programme. My teammates were hungry, talented, and fiercely competitive. Effort alone was no longer enough. I had to discover who I truly was as a player. Despite earning my place, I found myself on the bench again for two years. The gap between where I was and where I wanted to be felt enormous. I faced a choice, to either shrink into the role of a bench player, or to keep persevering. Sitting on the bench for weeks, I felt the quiet danger of the same path. I could have convinced myself that my role was simply to wait and serve the team from the sidelines. But doing so would have never provided me a chance to grow.

So I persevered. When I finally earned opportunities as a starter, I was nervous. But I realised the only way through nervousness was to practise, so I practised until confidence replaced fear. Then I made a decision: I would tell myself *I am the best player on the pitch*, even without evidence to support it. That confidence without evidence silenced my nerves and allowed me to play as my true self. This was when I first understood what expressing myself truly meant, and it became the principle I carry into everything I do.

What football taught me was that the most important progress is often invisible before it becomes undeniable. Perseverance is not stubbornness, but it is trust. Trust that the person we are becoming through the process is worth more than the result we are waiting for. Since I joined Keio Academy of New York in 9th grade, I applied my own way of perseverance on the field when I joined the varsity soccer team. Fortunately, I was able to be a starter of the team since the beginning of the year as a freshman, and have won the Sectional Championship title and Undefeated League

Champions title as a team. I was also individually awarded All League Award this year, and All Sportsmanship Award last year. Receiving All Sportsmanship Award truly proved that my courteous personality and my unrivaled passion interlinks with a prosperous result.

I carried this lesson into the classroom. As a freshman at Keio Academy, I found myself placed in JHL, a Japanese class for non-native speakers, despite Japanese being my first language. My counterparts doubted my proficiency, and every mistake I made became a moment of judgement. I could have shrunk into that role, by accepting the label and letting their perception define me. I had seen that same trap on the bench through football, and I knew exactly where it led.

Instead, I chose the same mindset that had carried me through football. I told myself I was the best student in that class, without a single piece of evidence to support it. Not out of arrogance, but out of necessity. This is because without that belief, I would have had nothing to build from. I knew I could get out of JHL, just as I had once known I could earn my place as a starter. Effort combined with an unshakeable belief in who I was becoming could close any gap. I studied harder and harder, just because I wanted to make my friends understand that I am different from them. I am not just like everyone else, but a student who can prove via results. Fortunately, at the end of the year, I was awarded the JHL award from the Japanese Department during the Award ceremony, and successfully ended my JHL class in one year, as I expected. Moreover, I was promoted to the Japanese Honour class next year. Starting my Keio life as a JHL student and ending my Keio life as a Japanese Honour student. This proved that I was able to revamp by utilising my own way of Bunbu Souzen.

This is what Bunbu Souzen means to me. It is not the passive balance of two disciplines. It is the active, daily choice to bring the same ferocious mindset to both the body and the mind. Whatever field I enter, whatever environment underestimates me, whatever result refuses to come quickly enough, I return to the same principle. The “Confidence without evidence”. Not because the evidence does not matter, but because the belief must always come first. That is the only way I know how to express myself. And expressing myself, I have learned, is the only way I know how to truly grow.