***Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.***

Throughout junior high, I was always consistent in one thing: being both the shortest and smallest in my basketball team. My skinny, 5’2” stature meant that I lacked power and my opponents could easily swat away my shots. As a result, I ended up getting benched for most of the games, but my passion for basketball never diminished.

This left me with questions that remained unanswered: Why do I like playing basketball? Is it the thrill? Is it the sweat? Is it the victory?

As the pandemic struck, I began to feel a growing desire to find the answer. Every 5 pm, loud thumps of dribbling coming from outside would mock me of my lockdown. With each passing day, I grew more and more uneasy as I yearned for the times where basketball was a regular part of my life. So, I started investigating.

I chose a quiet time to sneak out and play basketball alone. In a small basketball court near my house, I took a couple of shots and practiced some moves. It gave me a sense of relief, but something still felt lacking. I realized that my attachment towards basketball wasn’t just something physical, but something of deeper philosophical value.

Arriving home, I proceeded to scour through old photos of my basketball team. As I went through each file, one photo stood out: the pregame photo of our team before the championship finals. Kneeling next to me was Bobbie, my closest teammate. A talented shooter who was quick on his feet and one of the team's core playmakers. Standing behind me was Rayner, the Dennis Rodman of our team. Though not the tallest or the biggest, his dedication to put his own body on the line makes him an exceptional defender. Next to him was Dillon, the heart and soul of the group. A great leader who trusts his teammates and motivates through optimism.

Looking at those pictures made me realize that it wasn't the game that I fell in love with—not the thrill, not the sweats, not the victories. What mattered most were the connections I established with the incredible individuals in my team; getting to know them alongside their strengths and weaknesses and making up for one another's shortcomings while developing together as a team. I loved basketball because it allowed me to connect with people.

Upon discovering the answer to the long reigning question, I proceeded to search for alternative activities to fill in the void left from being unable to play basketball. I first gravitated towards school organizations like the student council and school event committees, starting as a member but gradually earning the respect of the group as I invested my time and efforts. In the following years, I was entrusted with a higher position which allowed me to connect with more people. Afterwards, I started approaching organizations out of school and participated in social activities to satiate my prevailing appetite for community.

Upon reimmersing myself in positive communities, I was finally able to feel complete again. I came to understand how this had improved me as a person and helped me find purpose in my life. Being part of different organizations allowed me to meet and connect with many more people than basketball. I was able to learn about different cultures, their perspectives, observe their ways of living, and concurrently, adopting the ones I find most beneficial and righteous. Ultimately, this shaped me into a more insightful and open-minded person and allowed me to build a positive network of friends throughout Indonesia.

I aspire to study abroad at an institution with a diverse student body so that I may interact and connect with diverse people from around the world, learning something new from each one of them while developing myself as an individual.

Hi Samuel:

I think this is almost good to go.

My suggestion is to limit verbose sentences and keep your sentences concise. Limit the use of prepositions and read over your whole essay for any redundancy. In addition, you might want to limit using incomplete sentences.

Great work, all the best!

Thalia