

A bright white saucer floated above my head. It spun in the air so fast I couldn't tell if it was actually spinning at all. Frisbees are plastic, but hanging in the air so majestically, it might as well have been made of ivory. Its beveled edges reflected slivers of early May afternoon sunlight.

I still don't understand how frisbees fly. Science explains this. Two forces battle to turn a flimsy plastic circle into a soaring vessel. This first is lift. The frisbee's distinct curved shape forces air above to travel faster than air below. Spin supplies angular momentum, keeping the disc flat, and allowing it to cut through the air like a knife. Faster air, lower pressure, lift. Flight. Drag tries to pull it down. Straight down. The longer it resists the inevitable tug of gravity, the longer it flies. The slow dance between drag and lift gives the frisbee its grand arcing path, and makes no two throws alike.

No matter how well I may understand the physics there is something supremely unscientific about a flying disc. It defies gravity just longer than expected. Hovering, it hangs just long enough to think that there is something supernatural holding it there. Something preventing it from crashing until it reaches its desired destination.

This particular throw floated forever. My teammate, about 20 yards behind me and another 15 yards to my left, wound up and released it from his left hand only split seconds earlier, but I never saw it launched. The last game of the weekend put extra weight on tired legs. Striding forward I sensed the extra work of splitting the dense, moist, air around me. Humidity hung in the air like a translucent fog.

The action of the game muffles sound like fog obscures view. Distinct noises – grass being mowed, chatter on the sideline, cheering – they all fade away. I felt sounds bouncing around the air past me, but listened only selectively. I didn't hear my own heavy breathing or accelerated heartbeat.

Frisbee is an oddly silent sport. No crack of bat hitting ball, helmets smashing together, sneakers squeaking or balls bouncing. Only an occasional smack when sweaty hands clap the disc.

A piercing call of “UP!” broke the calm like sudden thunder in a lightningless sky. I located the disc over my left shoulder, guessed at its destination, and ran.

Gravity is the nemesis of the ultimate player. When gravity beats you to the disc, the frisbee bounces off the turf and kicks up a spray of jet black pellets, like a skier coming to a hard stop in the snow. A receiver chasing down the disc races gravity. The gravity tugging at this disc was particularly strong. The throw carried a season and a program. Another point would send Davidson to the national championships. The weight of the moment pulled the disc down too.

The disc towered over the field, perched in the sky like a second sun. Every eye on the field focused on it, a web of crossing gazes. It reached its climax over the end zone and drifted down gently, looping back toward from where it was thrown. I felt like the only one on the field. It found me in its path. I took one gallop and snapped my hands together on either side of the disc in midair, like a croc leaping from the water and chomping down. This prey would not slip through my jaws.

I didn’t need to check if I was in the endzone. The frisbee expressed its intentions quite clearly and navigated into my outstretched arms. The daze lifted, replaced by euphoria. Davidson would go to nationals for the first time.

These moments of magic aren’t possible without the moments in between, constructed to form a game, a season, and a life. Countless hours of practice, late night strategy talks, and unforgettable friendships strengthened by teamwork create permanent memories that, in the emotion of victory, explode to life.

Moments embody the spirit of frisbee. I chase the moments I spend alone with the disc. When time and gravity, suspended, wait for some higher force to navigate the frisbee home.

But the moment right before the catch, before the fulfillment of a season long dream, where the outcome remains uncertain but somehow destined... that moment is perhaps even sweeter than the moment that follows.