

Keith

WR 13100

Professor Clauss

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Come On, Wilson!

Situation: Alex Wilson is one of my best friends. He is currently a senior at Xavier High School in New York. Since his junior year, he and his parents have been traveling all over the south and east coast in search of colleges that best fit his two interests, academics (especially business) and track. As a member of Notre Dame track and field team, I am writing Alex to tell him of my current experience as a member of the team, while convincing him that Notre Dame would be the best place for him to pursue his two interests. (Alex verbally committed to Dartmouth two weeks ago, but has not completely made up his mind and is still open to opinions).

Dear Wilson,

How's it going man? It was nice seeing you when I visited the school during fall break. I'm sorry that you're injured and couldn't practice, but you know I enjoyed beating the rest of the team in those sprints. Of course that would have been harder to do if you ran with us, since we know how much you enjoy physical pain. [Wilson basically lives by the motto "No pain, no gain"] Nonetheless, I hope you come back 100% and show those other New York runners how we Xavier men do it. I wish you and, more importantly, the team the best of luck in the upcoming season, but my reason for writing you this letter goes beyond me wishing you simple luck. Instead, it deals with that conversation we had on the bus to practice that day we saw each other. This is when you first told me that you verbally committed to Dartmouth after your visit there just a few days before. However, you realized that it was just a verbal commitment and that you still wanted to know my opinion on the whole situation, especially since I was going through the same problem not too long ago. Ultimately, I ended up going to Notre Dame and I remember you telling me that you are still interested in it because nothing would be better than us being

teammates again. I won't downplay your decision to commit to Dartmouth because it is an ivy league after all, but we both know that you can get into a school that is just as academically challenging with a better track and field program. This is why I am suggesting that you decided to come here next year. Not only is Notre Dame a great school academically, its track program is one of the best in the country.

I remember when I was in your shoes not too long ago. I had to choose between Notre Dame and UVA. I am sure you remember me running around looking for advice from Mr. O'Hara [my college guidance advisor in high school] and bunch of my other teachers that year. By March, I was leaning towards UVA, but I still didn't know what I wanted to do until I spoke to Mr. Dormer [my head coach]. It took him a while to convince me otherwise, but I ended up choosing Notre Dame just one week before enrollment fees were due. Before I made my decision, I remember him telling me that I was going to make whatever decision I wanted to make, but his opinion was only what he thought was best for me based on the four-year relationship that we have had (Dormer). He is completely right about that because if you think about it aside from our family and friends, no one else knows us and what is best for us than him. I am basically telling you my whole life story at this point to show you that I was in the same boat as you. The only difference is that I waited until the last minute to make my final decision and you're making yours early. I am not saying that I do not support your early decision cause I do; I just think you should have spoken to Mr. Dormer before because I know his expert advice definitely helped me with my decision, especially since he knows what kind of coach it takes to make you the best athlete that you can potentially be. Quite honestly, who wouldn't want to be the best at what they do? Speaking from experience, I think it would be beneficial if you wait until you see all your options before making such an important decision.

Notre Dame has the perfect separation between academics and athletics, which is exactly what I remember you telling me you wanted in a college. Now can you see why I think ND is the perfect school for you? In terms of academics, coming to ND would be beneficial to your interest in business, which does not shock me since both your parents have degrees in business. I only mention this because that definitely played a big role in you deciding where you wanted to go. According to *Bloomberg's Businessweek*, ND has the best undergraduate business school in the country ("Business"). Although Dartmouth does not have an undergraduate business school, they do have, on the other hand, one of the best graduate business schools according to *U.S News and World Reports* ("Dartmouth"). Wouldn't it be much easier if you came to ND for undergrad and Dartmouth for graduate school? If I were you, I know I definitely would want to. You would have the best of both world, and that is without even any mentioning of track yet.

Being part of the track and field team at ND, more specifically the jumps team, has made my college experience as great as it is. [The jumps team includes long, triple, and high jumpers, pole-vaulters, decathletes and heptathletes] Being part of a group of people who share the same passion as you is just something that I know both we did not feel at Xavier. At Xavier, most kids just joined the track team to get out of gym class for a semester or two, but it's the complete opposite here, or at any college for that fact. Things are taken more seriously, and you actually have to show up for practice. Remember my "practice" habits at Xavier? Exactly, I didn't have any, but that all changed when I got here. Track is now a priority, especially since practice is from Monday to Saturday. In the first two months, we did not do any sort of technical work for jumping. It was straight running everyday for six straight days. I'm not even going to lie, it was tortuous after a while, but it is definitely paying off now. I already told you that I set a three second personal record in the 400meter race a few days before fall break. I guarantee that no one

would have bet on that ever happening and neither would I, but it did. That just shows how much the track program here has helped me improve. You even told me when you saw me a few weeks ago that it seemed like I got much faster, and I could be saying the same thing about you next year if you decide that ND is the place for you.

It would be wrong of me to say that you wouldn't get better if you decided to go to another school besides ND, but I honestly believe that you would be more successful here than at Dartmouth because of both great coaching and academic services. Coming in as a decathlete would be a huge advantage for you because Coach Garnham is a specialist in the decathlon. In his three years as the jumps coach here, he has had at least one decathlete qualify for the NCAA championships ("Garnham"). Not that this helps or anything, but he's also had girl heptathletes qualify for NCAA Championships. Coming in as good as you are, I don't think that it would be hard for him to turn you into an NCAA qualifier. We both know that's just the first step to making those Olympic dreams come true. Before you forget about the academic aspect that there is to ND, I want to point out that the team received an Academic All-American team honor for having a team average higher than 3.00 ("Notre Dame"). I thought I would mention this before you had any doubts about how track may interfere with work or homework time. The athletic department here makes it part of their mission to make sure that their athletes are doing their best both in and out of the classroom. At the team's orientation meeting in September, our head coach Joe Piane made sure that we know that track is our second priority here at Notre Dame (Piane). Our first, as he kept reiterating, is school. He explained to us that our first place of success should be in the classroom because track can only take you so far. On the other hand, a degree from Notre Dame only opens new doors of opportunity for us.

Deciding to come to ND was the best decision I think I ever made, but that decision did not come without some advice. I know you probably got excited when you visited Dartmouth, and I don't blame you for that because it happened to me. I was set on UVA, but I decided to go another route, and that's without even having an official visit. I came here not knowing what to expect, but all I can tell you is that Mr. Dormer was right when he told me I would like it here. I think you should consider talking to Mr. Dormer about this because he can make life much easier for you if you do. Even if you decide not to, I am just a phone call away if you want to know more ND or just want to stay in my dorm on a visit because this would really be a great place to spend your next four years.

Sincerely,

Keith

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