

One of the challenges I faced growing up was dealing with my weight. During my early years, I was a skinny, energetic kid who spent each summer swimming on the neighborhood swim team. As I entered 5th grade, however, I became incredibly focused on competing in an online real-time strategy game, StarCraft II. I played as much as I could, losing sleep in the process and doing barely any physical activity.

I didn't realize that my health was suffering until I showed up for swim team the summer after 5th Grade. I heard people commenting on my weight but I didn't see it immediately myself because it had happened gradually. I did notice, however, that my swim times were slower than they had been in the past. I continued on the summer swim team in the following years but my confidence waned.

Entering 7th grade, I was one of the best StarCraft II players in North America and was competing with top players from around the world. By then, I was mature enough to see that my all-consuming interest in the game was having a serious negative impact on my life. I started evaluating my long-term life goals and realized that something had to change. I recognized that I could apply the same discipline that allowed me to succeed in StarCraft II into developing healthier life habits.

I gave up playing StarCraft II and started living a healthier lifestyle. I started running, lifting weights, eating healthier food, and regulating my sleep schedule. My discipline and work ethic paid off and I started feeling healthier. Despite that, I went into the summer before starting high school believing that it was going to be my last year on the swim team. Shockingly, at the first swim meet, I saw a drastic time improvement in every race. With practice, I started winning races again.

That summer taught me that hard work and discipline, applied consistently to any challenge, could provide positive results. In my freshman year, I joined the high school water polo team and later on, the swim team. Training on the teams was far harder than anything I had ever experienced before. Though I swam every summer, many of my teammates had been playing water polo or swimming competitively year-round since they were very young. I was determined to keep up with the rest of the team despite my inexperience. Although I was never the fastest or strongest person in the pool, with hard work and consistency, I improved substantially. As I moved into my sophomore and junior years, I encouraged and supported students like myself who had joined the team without previous experience.

My coaches and teammates noticed the influence I had on the newer members of the team as well as my work ethic. At the end of the last school year, I was selected to be one of the captains of both the water polo and swim teams for this year. I believe that the work ethic and discipline I cultivated over the years allowed me to go from being an overweight kid who was picked on to becoming a team leader of both sports. I am convinced that these lessons will serve me well in the military.