

Lights

[Business](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The rain came down hard and the bright lights didn't make it much better.

I was completely beaten by the forward, I scrambled to regain my composure and chased after him. My hair was slicked back from all the rain, my jersey was stuck to my body like someone had just dipped it into super glue, my cleats felt heavy like bricks (Imagery), as I began to sprint, trying to catch up to the opponent. Once I thought I was close enough I hit the ground hard, both feet first hoping I would win the ball. That's when it happened. I have a routine on my game days, I've done the same thing for about two years every time I have a game.

It begins by waking up early. A Saturday morning might sound like a day to sleep in, but not when you have one of the biggest games of your life that night. I wake up at 8:30 and jump into the shower. A cold, short shower is the type I prefer on game days. Then I jump into the kitchen and make a bagel and grab a glass of orange juice. After that, I like to go for a nice and easy jog.

Nothing stressful on me or my body, just something to get my body ready for the day. I then make a cold protein shake and relax and watch my favorite soccer team play. On Saturday game days I always go and get a sub from Jersey Mike's for lunch. Then I either hangout with friends or just relax for a bit. Once it's time to leave, I prepare all of my things and begin the long drive. The drive is when I like to get in the zone, the 30 minute drive to Schaumburg from my house is filled with music and mental preparation.

Upon arrival we wait for our entire team to show up before we walk onto the field. We attempt to look organized and intimidating, though it probably

doesn't work. We all find a seat on the bench and begin to put our cleats on. One of my pregame rituals is that I always tie my shoes once, wait a minute and then retie them both. I do it every time before I play my games.

I have always done it this way, and I don't plan to stop doing it in the future; it works for me. We then begin our warm up and that's when it starts. The day was gloomy but it didn't seem that bad, although once we started to warm up, a light drizzle began. As we finished warmups, we lined up in front of the referees. They gave us the usual talk, be competitive and fair-blah-blah. We had all heard it hundreds of times before.

They then proceeded to call out our names and numbers. One by one, I patiently waited until my name was called. " Number 27", the speakers boomed. I took my place on the other side of the referee. Once everyone's name was called we took our positions. The stadium was electric.

As the shrilling sound of the referee's whistle starts the game, you have to block it all out. All the faces in stands become blurry, all the cheers and yells become nothing but sounds that you can't make out. I begin to focus on the game and not the crowd. The game was intense from the start. It was full of high speed and high quality soccer, which includes plenty of fouls.

I received a yellow card in the 6th minute of the game. It was a dirty tackle but nothing more, none of the fouls were personal. By halftime each team must have had at least 6 yellow cards. The rain was coming down hard by the start of the second half, nothing light, it was full on pouring out. I could barely see across the field but this game wasn't going to be stopped by anything other than the final whistle.

The whistle blew and the second half was off to a start. A few minutes in my team received a penalty. Our best shooter stepped up and the stadium was silent. I remember the butterflies in my stomach as he made his run up to the ball. Before I even saw the ball go in the net, I heard the stadium boom, the fans went crazy.

The parents had even gotten so into the game that a fight broke out between them. We were up by one goal and had to keep the lead. All of us being experienced players knew how to delay the game as much as possible. I was shielding the ball on the sideline to waste time and one of their players came in hard and kicked it out of bounds. I was fine with it because the ball had rolled away through some of the parents standing around the field.

I took my time getting to the ball, a slow walk. On my way back the opposing team's parents weren't happy about so they were yelling at me and then the referee to give me a yellow card. I had done this before and as long as I played it right I wouldn't get a card. I stepped up to the line for a throw in and took my time, delayed my throw as much as possible. While I was throwing the ball I could hear the dads, grown men, yelling, "Hurry the f*** up you little b****" (Vernacular). It was nothing new for me, it happens all the time and it's even worse between players.

We get in each other's faces and say things that aren't very school appropriate. Racial and homophobic slurs are tossed around without thinking twice about it. F-bombs are the most common word heard on the field. It's all a mental challenge, keeping your cool while still agitating the opponent. The game was almost over and we could almost taste the victory.

That's when it happened(short sentences). A one on one, me and one of the best forwards in the midwest. I was completely beaten by the forward, I scrambled to regain my composure and chased after him. My hair was slicked back from all the rain, my jersey was stuck to my body like someone had just dipped it into super glue, my cleats felt heavy like bricks, as I began to sprint, trying to catch up to the opponent. Once I thought I was close enough I hit the ground hard, both feet first hoping I would win the ball.

I won the ball and the tackle was technically clean but I got the player hard. He was on the ground holding his ankle in pain. The opposing team's parents went wild, cursing at the referee to give me a red, but he knew it was clean. After trainers had come out, they had determined that his ankle was broken. At the time I didn't think much of it, it was a part of the game and sometimes people get hurt. While celebrating later that day with my team all I could think about is how I had broken the ankle of one of the best soccer players in the midwest.