

## Personal Essay

Stroke, Stroke, Breath. The rhythmic repetition of these motions play over and over in my head like a broken record. Stroke, stroke, breath. My lungs burn and water sloshes around my ears, but I keep going. Day after day, I would jump into the Dimond pool and repetitively copy these movements, these feelings over and over. Peace always came to me when all noise evaded my ears, all except the sound of water rushing past my ears and the one repetitive thought: Stroke, stroke, breath. The two hours I spent in the pool were usually the most intense but rejuvenating hours of my day. That was until June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011. I was twelve years old. That fateful day, I flipped over the handlebars of my bike and broke both of my arms. The crash to the hard-cold ground was the exact moment my life would never be the same, as my world faded to darkness.

I awoke in the hospital, with bandages covering my arms to my elbows and my mother sitting beside me. While I was in the hospital, all shred of repetition and familiarity flew away. Not only was swimming taken away from me, but my dreams of success in the sport were also dashed. After I was discharged from what seemed like years in hospital, I sulked around my house, with my arms wrapped in stiff plaster. I could do nothing for myself. I loathed the plaster and its representation of my failures and mistakes. After a month of this depressing attitude, I visited the doctor to check up on my injuries. During the appointment, he suggested casts that can be submerged in water. My heart soared and I took up the offer.

Within two weeks, I faced the Dimond Pool, changed and broken. As Coach Cindy shouted the warm-up set I gazed at the glittering water, terrified of approaching the pool that was once so peaceful. After a deep breath, I jumped and was submerged in the depths. It was different than before. I could feel the water against my skin and could feel my casts weighing me down. But one thing remained: the sound of rushing water filled my ears. I vowed that I would never abandon the sport that made me whole. After swimming with cast on both of my arms, and competing with my casts on as well, I felt a sense of power. Swimming not only made me a hardworking person, to this day it reminds me of my trials and the obstacles I have overcome. It makes me realize how strong I am. It has made me a person who will never give up no matter what life throws at me. So, I will keep dedicating myself to the repetitive, mind-numbing motions that helped me conquer adversity. Swimming gives me an avenue to conquer strife in my life one stroke at a time