

Darius Pound 'Flyin Ryan' Personal Essay

This scholarship would make it possible for me to pursue my dreams and go college and play football, as these are things I wanted my whole life. I've committed to college and been selected for the football team, but I lack the funds to attend, and my mom can't assist financially.

I grew up with an older brother, dad, and mom. I have played football since I was 5 years old, my dad always has a huge support system for me. He helped me train, workout, and even coached me in football. He also always encouraged me and gave me words of wisdom through every obstacle (good and bad) in life. This last year was the hardest of my life, and it did not end well.

In February of 2024, my dad suddenly became ill. He was an athletic, healthy 45-year-old man and suddenly life changed. He started dialysis after having a tumor and was on the list for a kidney. In September of that year, a mild surgery became life threatening, as a mistake almost killed him. He was not the same since; he was in the hospital for weeks at a time and lost over 100 pounds. He was not able to come to any of my football games in that season of 2024 and it was hard for both of us, because I was a senior. Everything I had worked for, everything he had taught me, was going to come out this season. However, the mental and emotional stress I had watching my father become increasingly ill affected me more than I thought. My mind was not clear; his health was always in the back of my head. I unfortunately lost my starting position and although it was hard for me, I took it as a learning experience. I helped the underclassmen improve their football skills. I figured that since I will be graduating, that I could at least help those who would be staying on the team. My father was never disappointed in me; he instead encouraged me and praised me for being a team asset and helping them succeed. He told me constantly that my push and drive in practice was making my team-mates better and I held on to that all season long. Although I lost my starting position and faced criticism, I managed to transform the situation into a constructive experience. I continued to give everything I had in practice and in games. Although my dad was never able to see me play this year, he was able to come to senior night and walk out with me. That photo will always be near and dear to my heart (especially now as I look back). I went on college visits, and received football offers. My father was in the hospital and could not go with me to the college visits, but always showed pride and enthusiasm as I told him about each visit. The day I committed to college to play football, my mom called me from the hospital room where she was with my dad, and I was able to speak to him. He was so proud of me and told me it made his entire day better. My words to him were 'dad, "I'm going to be a bear.' This is the best thing because my dad was a Chicago Bears fan. I wanted nothing more for him to see me as a "Bear." Unfortunately, two weeks after that phone call my dad passed away. (Feb.25, 2025).

In my core value statements, I included phrases my dad used to tell me. I still hold those words in my heart now. My parents have always been my biggest mentors and heroes and have

helped me grow into the young man I am now. My mom has been sick for as long as I can remember, but she never has a negative attitude. She is facing another brain surgery now, and even after losing my dad (her HS sweetheart), she is still finding ways to stay positive and even uplift my brother and me during this time.

Football has always felt normal to me and helped me to let out emotions I otherwise could not express. It opened doors to me, I found lifelong friends, and mentors in coaches. It even helped me find a career goal, as I want to be a teacher and a coach. I want to help and inspire others, like I have been. I have experienced various situations in life that did not proceed as planned or could have been better. I could have so easily given up. I almost decided not to play football in college, because I had a rough senior season. However, seeing the strength of my dad as he went through so much change in so little time and looking back at the strength my mom always had, I decided to do this! I am excited to see what the future holds for me. Good or bad, I know that I have the confidence to overcome because I had great mentors.