

As I have sat through countless parent/player meetings at the beginning of the season and then at the year-end banquets, I hear it. Over and over. "Club is a Privilege." "Club is a sacrifice for your parents, thank them." Honestly, those words have never truly resonated with me because club has been my life since I was ten years old. I have had the luxury of playing this game for as long as I can remember, and it has never seemed to be a privilege. It has now become part of my everyday life. My family's life, our routine. Tryouts, practices, tournaments, and then wake up and feel this again the next weekend until I get up and realize it is the last time that I will put on my #3 jersey. You can never expect what you will feel until that moment has come, and for me and my other teammates this moment has fallen two months too short.

Not until this virus hit, did I realize what it would feel like to have that privilege taken away. Never will I pass a volleyball again to my setter with the goal of getting that perfect pass. No more diving saves where the crowd cheers, and no more enthusiastic chants when we get those victories. That feeling, thanks to Eastside Ice, is something I will cherish always. In my life I have always wished for an escape, a place where I can let go and just enjoy myself. Club has been my escape. Meeting my best friend on 17s was never expected but I could never be more grateful. I think I can speak for my fellow seniors when I say we will long for our team goal of beating VFX and NFVB for a national bid this season, as our senior send off to say Eastside Ice is national caliber. This privilege was shut down far too early, and we will never have the chance to rally and see what would have happened. What if? Eastside Ice - our privilege, is gone and that final sacrifice was our team, throwing in the towel before we were ready. I remember us coming into the huddle at the end of the last practice before the Bid Qualifier, acknowledging the fact that our season is now going for a month longer. I, as a senior, have never wanted anything else than to go to nationals with my best friends and incredible teammates. Although it would have been a hard tournament, the faith I have in my team is beyond strong and I knew for a fact this was just going to be another victory that I've had with people I have played beside for two years.

Eastside Ice means so much more to me than victories, although my stash of medals proves otherwise. Yes, winning is great, and the only way to measure success for some people, but to me, success is so much more. Eastside Ice has taught me the value of friendship. Wanting to keep pushing through for my friends and teammates. When I tore my meniscus and ACL, I went through a very tough time thinking my career was going to fall two years short. But after changing my mindset, I vowed to continue to work at it and get back in the game I love. In those two years, I have met new people and coaches that have inspired me in every aspect of life. Pain is temporary and I realized that after a long six months of recovery. The thing that inspires me the most are my teammates, so I knew I had to be strong for them.

Eastside Ice has taught me strength. Mental strength when I thought I would crumble when faced with an opponent on the opposing team who hurt me in more ways that I can say. The mental edge to face my demons in the form of a prior high school coach, who told me I was worthless. Told me I wasn't good enough. Told me I needed to accept my flaws and move on - and all for school politics. Eastside Ice has given me the reason to keep going. The reason to fight, the reason to keep showing those people that I can do it.

Eastside Ice has given me value. I walk into practice and I know my value. I know my

place, and I know I deserve to be there. Not because of politics, or because of who I am, but because I am worth it. Thanks to all of my amazing coaches for believing in me when I couldn't even believe in myself. This journey that I have taken has been incredible and I cannot be happier to end my career with having Coach Tom and Megan through it all. They pushed me to be the best player I could be even with all the struggles and attitude I threw at them. Having them for the past two years was the biggest gift to me and I do not know what I would have done without Coach Tom's pep talks while spinning on his knee and Megan's constant supply of laughter lighting the mood whenever the team needed it the most. To others, they may be their coach, but to me, I found a lifelong family to carry with me forever. Tom and Megan, I will continue to make you proud in my future.

Lastly, Eastside means family. Everything about the club is family. My last six years, I have been given an extended family – parents on my teams who hug me when the match is over, grandparents of players that are our biggest fans cheering louder than my parents, and siblings who high five when I walk by. This is the reason why I love this club.

What will I take from the memories, the victories, the medals, the friends that have been made during my tenure at Eastside Ice? Just that, club is a privilege. Enjoy it while you can. Cherish those grueling practices. Celebrate those victories. Go to the team bondings and stay active on group chats. Because one day, before you know it, it's gone. I would give anything to play one more match with my girls. Just one. And to all my fellow teammates, thank taking this journey with me, and to all the players coming back next year, take every minute like it's your last and never give up. During these last six years, Eastside Ice has grown in numbers, but also by heart, and passion. My heart is full and I am proud to say I am an Alumni of Eastside Ice and thank you for making me the strong person I am today.