

Paige Moyneur

### What Being Tall Means to Me

People think being tall means confidence and always being able to reach the top shelf, but for me it's always been a mix of discomfort and uncertainty about where I fit in. I've spent much of my life wondering what it means to take up more space than I feel I deserve. Always being the tallest in group photos, getting asked questions about my height, and feeling hyper-aware around boys who were shorter than me. As I've grown older, I have found purpose in my height and also realized that my height doesn't define me-it simply shapes the way I've learned about myself.

As a child, I didn't notice my height much. I was too busy playing games, running around at recess, and laughing with my friends to realize I towered over them. But as I continued to grow, both physically and mentally, it complicated the way I saw myself. In eighth grade I wrote that one of my goals for the year was to "talk less", not realizing how much that reflected the pressure I felt to shrink myself to compensate for how much physical space I took up. Looking back, I realize how conditioned I was- and sometimes still am- to tone down my personality because of my height. Struggling with this concept left me questioning what I am "allowed" to do, especially when surrounded by shorter friends.

Sports became the place where I began to shift my mindset. I've been an athlete for as long as I can remember, beginning with T-ball and dance and making my way through soccer, basketball, swim, tennis, gymnastics, and volleyball. At first, I wasn't aggressive or competitive because I was scared to come across as "too much" or not "girly enough." Once I began breaking down the limits I had set for myself, I learned to appreciate my body for what it can do, not just how it looks. My height and strength became assets that helped me succeed rather than traits that set me back. The long legs I once wished I could hide suddenly became the thing that helped me jump higher, run faster, and compete at the highest level. The shoe size that embarrassed me became a symbol of the stability and power my body provides for me. Being a tall female athlete has completely reframed how I view my body and, more importantly, treat it.

Mentally, my height has shaped me into someone who notices the people who feel out of place, because I know what it's like to stand out in ways you didn't choose. My confidence still waivers occasionally- when I'm in a group and suddenly realize how much bigger I am, or when I catch myself comparing how much more I've eaten than others. In these moments, I remind myself to stand tall, because my worth is not tied to the things that make me different. To me,

being tall is choosing to take up space even when it feels uncomfortable, being unapologetically yourself, and creating a space where others feel safe to do the same. Helping younger girls in sports appreciate their bodies gives me hope that the next generations will grow up in a more empowering environment.

In the future I plan to go into healthcare, continuing to represent people of all heights and sizes in both athletic and non-athletic spaces. My experience as a tall female athlete gives me a unique perspective- one that will help me support others, challenge beliefs, and shape more inclusive environments for everybody. It's been a long journey to love my height, but now that I have the chance to look around, the weather up here is actually pretty nice.