

Destined for greatness | Junior steps out of brother's shoes, realizes own goals



By | Grace Conley

Grace where do you want to go to college?" "Well, I already know where I'm going. I am going to Duke University to play lacrosse."

Yup. I was that kid.

It was 7th grade, and I was running the mile for gym class when my best friend Alex suddenly asked the question all high school juniors and seniors dread. But 7th grade me had an immediate answer because I already knew.

Well, 7th grade me couldn't have been more wrong.

I can tell you right now I am not going to Duke, and I am not playing lacrosse. But 7th grade me would beg to differ. 7th grade me thought I was a God-destined for greatness.

In order to fully understand why 7th grade me was so cocky, I have to give a little back story.

I was 7 years old when my 16-year-old brother Nick dragged

me out to the backyard, duct-taped pillows all around me, handed me a lacrosse stick and said, "Get in the goal, I need to someone to shoot on."

That's when it all started.

Everyday I was the "goalie" for my older brother who would later go on to play lacrosse at OU.

My brother had talked my other brother Matthew, to come out and join us. Eventually I got the chance to get real action and play some defense on them.

We were the Conley Crew playing LAX together. By age 9, I was playing for an official crew on my first lacrosse team. I figured the bruises I got from my brothers' 90mph shots would be well worth it once I got to play in college.

At first I didn't have much interest in the sport, I thought my Nick was just punishing me, but once Matthew started playing, I thought it was the coolest sport ever. Matthew was my role model growing up. I always looked up to him (literally, he is 6'3").

I would order the same food he did even if I didn't like it. At home, I would follow him around and tried to do everything he did, even attempting "Halo."

Sometimes when a friend came over, I would end up ditching her and her Barbies to go play with my brother. One Halloween he dressed up as Luke Skywalker, so naturally I was Obi Wan Kenobi.

bi. We even had matching shirts, which he was not happy about. My brother was my version of a superhero and I would do anything to be like him.

When I hit 7th grade, Matthew was a freshman at St. Mark's and started his three-year search for the right college.

Matthew came out of the womb looking like a Blue Devil. My dad went to Duke, our uncle was Duke law, and my older sister would end up going med school there, so being a Blue Devil had always been his dream. And because it was his, it was mine, too.

Going into high school, I kept that dream. I will go to Duke and play lacrosse. No problem. Easy peasy. IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. I mean come on, I was a God-destined for greatness, right?

Freshman year hit me like a brick. I struggled academically and found my all-star-athlete status had expired in middle school. I went from playing the entire game to sitting on the bench.

My dream started to fade. For two years, that's all I worried about. I thought I was a failure. I knew halfway through sophomore year there was no way I was getting into Duke. And when I made swing lacrosse, my fear was confirmed.

My dream was gone and there was nothing I could do. I had tried everything, but failed.

But Matthew did the opposite.

I walked in the door from a long day when I heard the news, Matthew had gotten into Duke, and at that moment I hated him.

I hated him for taking my dream. I hated him because he was better. I hated him because he accomplished something I knew I couldn't accomplish. It was unfair. How could this happen? Why does Matthew get to go and I don't? I wanted to go just as badly, but I couldn't because I wasn't destined for greatness, he was.

Three months ago we dropped Matthew off at Duke. As I was walking down the campus streets, it hit me.

This whole time I had focused on a dream that wasn't mine. Lacrosse was Nick's dream. Not mine. Duke was Matthew's dream, my sister's dream, my Dad's dream. But not mine.

I didn't fail because there was nothing to fail at.

For the past two years I have pushed myself in an attempt to achieve a goal I didn't really want.

Now I sit here and I don't know what my dream is, and I don't know where I want to go to college, and I don't know if I will play lacrosse. But I know now that I can't give up, and that 7th grade me was right.

I am God-destined for greatness. My greatness just hasn't happened yet.