



Playing for a Purpose

Spring sport teams dedicate their seasons to deceased senior Tyler Rathbun

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Junior AnnaMarie Oakley feels the grass under her feet as she takes the field. She gazes down to her cleats and sees the number 14. It reminds her of who she is playing for, and why she is playing this soccer season.

When news broke of senior Tyler Rathbun's death, student athletes like Oakley at East relied on athletics to be an outlet to release their feelings and a coping method for their loss.

Similar to girls' and boys' basketball, multiple spring sports are dedicating their respective season to Rathbun. The boys' lacrosse team wears blue helmet stickers that have a simple TR on them. Track has a TR as a part of their jersey, in the form of a patch on the right side of the chest. A TR was added over the heart of the boys' tennis uniform. All the girls on the soccer team have different words scribbled on their cleats. In addition to the cleats, the team's slogan this year is "Buck Up," a phrase that Rathbun said often.

"A lot of us had thought about ['Buck Up'] being our slogan," Oakley said. "The returning varsity got together one night and came up with a bunch of different slogans but nothing really seemed to fit as well as 'Buck Up.' I think it just has a good meaning and it will just really help us throughout our season."

Like soccer, track has several athletes who were close to Rath-

bun. Seniors Carter Olander and Mitch Kaskie had both played soccer with him on the varsity squad for the past two years. Olander brought the idea to track coach Brie Meschke about incorporating some sort of patch tributing Rathbun on to the uniform.

"[The patch] is not just for us, it's for everyone," Olander said. "The other schools will see it and they'll know, and they are respectful about it."

The on-field representations are not only for just opposing teams or fans to see, but to senior lacrosse player Connor McGannon, they are small reminders that can provide an extra boost while on the field.

"You know how fragile life can be, and [Tyler] was always one to play as hard as he could," McGannon said. "All he wanted to do was win and he played for his teammates every time. So I think that is just what [the sticker] reminds me of."

McGannon, who also played basketball this winter, explained that the lacrosse season is similar to the basketball season, but basketball season had a different meaning to him.

"I think [the lacrosse season] is the same, because either way, I want to win," McGannon said. "But I think basketball was more of a emotional representation of him because for the next month and a half or so, it was so hard to under-

stand."

Senior tennis player Will Cray also played soccer with Rathbun this past season. Rathbun played tennis his freshman and sophomore years, and Cray misses his presence not only as a friend, but also as a teammate.

"The thing I'd most remember him for was during practices, he would always joke around and make it more fun for everyone," Cray said. "It definitely adds a more serious and a more meaningful aspect to the season, because we want to represent him the best we can."

From tennis and soccer, to lacrosse and track, there is one consistency. They are playing for Tyler Rathbun.

"I'm playing for Ty, but I'm also playing for my teammates," senior lacrosse player Ben Sight said. "I knew from the soccer field, he gave it 110 percent every game. Whether he won or lost, you know he brought his best game."

Not only are the athletes playing for Rathbun this season, but they would like to keep his legacy ingrained at East for years to come.

"I think it is mainly just keeping his name around, because in my mind he was the best athlete to come through our school in a while," Cray said. "Regardless of the sport, we want to keep his name around because of his athleticism, and because of the person that he was."



►photo by **AnnaMarie Oakley**

TY TRIBUTES



Left: "We thought it would be a great idea to put TR on the front and 14 on the back. Tyler did play tennis, and we definitely miss his presence."- **Senior Will Cray**



Left: "Everyday before a game when I put on my shoes, I'll see the RIPTR on my cleats, and I'll know that's why I'm playing. I always think about him before every game."- **Senior Addison Steiner**



Left: "It's a constant reminder because in life you have to take every advantage of everything you have, because you might not have another chance to do it. So you have to play your heart out or play to the best of your ability."- **Senior Pat Simmons**