**COVID-19**

Early in the morning, on a Thursday in March, I was getting ready for school. As I was in my kitchen waiting on my sister, my Mom comes downstairs and gives me the news. My high school was shut down for the rest of the week because of an E-Coli outbreak in the water. Excited and confused, I returned to my room and thought about what to do next. I soon got a text from a group chat full of other high schoolers who I would meet at a local park to play some basketball. They asked if anyone wanted to play, which most did. We then met up there and played for a few hours. After a while, we wanted some water, and one of my friends had a case of water bottles in the back of his car. Everyone sat around the court hanging out and drinking some water. Another friend says “Have you guys heard about the Coronavirus?” To which we all said no. He went on to say that the school might shut down for two weeks because of it and that he hopes his DECA field trip is canceled. We all laughed it off and dismissed it, and started playing again. Little did we know the Wednesday before the E-Coli outbreak was our last day at school.

Covid-19 is a bad thing, but it may have changed my life for the better. I want to be a football coach. I love to teach, and I love football for all of the things it has given me. I love the strategy, the emotion, and the family aspect of a football team. I had a student assistant job lined up with East Carolina’s football team prior to the quarantine and thought I knew so much about the game. But with all the restrictions, I knew that college football would have to wait. I was in limbo. I did not know what to do. I spent my days watching movies, playing Xbox, and working out. Until one day I was running while my old high school team was practicing. My coach knew what I wanted to do with my life, and how much I love the game. So, he offered me a spot on the coaching staff. I immediately said yes. It might be the best decision I have ever made. I choose to do online school from my house the whole year to stay and coach for the team. After a slow start to my career in the summer, I started to come into my own, and learn so much every day. Even today I am learning more and more about coaching. Even though I am still a rookie, I would laugh at myself a year ago. I knew nothing. I now coach my own position group on varsity. The kids know me and like me, and I can be of use to them and to my other coaches, who have become some of my closest friends. I mean, I see them six days a week! As this is being written, April 18, 2021, We are preparing for our second-round playoff game. It is almost a miracle we have made it here. With all the rules and restrictions, there was a time where I and the team thought there would be no season. We lifted weights outside in masks and constantly reminded the players to stand six feet apart. Once we got into the season, we wore masks under our helmets. We still do. There are no more team meals before games. No bus rides to away games. Two games have been canceled because of Covid-19 cases at other schools. This season has been different and a challenge, but I have embraced it and could not be happier. I am 19 years old, doing what I love to do each and every day, and I could not be more thankful.

Things were not so easy at the start, but I am an eternal optimist. I kept the faith, even when there felt like none sometimes. I kept my head up. I kept thinking positive. I kept working. This taught me that even when things look like they had no bright side, there is one. You just have to keep looking. You cannot give up. Because if you work hard and do your best every day, you will succeed. You will find the light in the darkness. It is there, I promise you.