Dear Xenia High School Student-Athletes,

It is an honor to have been asked to write this letter to you describing the keys of success, as an athlete and more importantly, as a person. Since I was a young girl, I wanted to leave my mark on the world. I hoped that my story would encourage and show others that they can be successful at whatever they put their mind to, no matter what their circumstances are. While I do not have an exact formula, I hope that my story helps and inspires you.

Before I share what has helped me, I want to share a little bit about myself. My parents divorced when I was young and we lived with my grandparents after that. I went to Simon Kenton Elementary School, Warner Junior High School, graduated from Xenia High School in 1982 and Heidelberg University in 1986. While I was in school, I was a good student, but I was not a *great* student. I have been married for 32 years and I am the mother of three wonderful sons. I am a clinical data analyst at University Hospitals in Cleveland, Ohio. As an athlete, I am a 5-time track All American, 1985 NCAA Division III National High Jump Champion, and I earned many high school and collegiate academic and athletic awards. A few of my records still remain unbroken today! Now, am I perfect? Not even close. Has my road to success been easy? Not at all, but what I learned as an athlete has continued to help and guide me throughout life. Like I mentioned, I am the mother of three boys, and I always told them that I would be “real” with them and that they could always be “real” with me, so this is my attempt at being real with you.

Before I continue on about athletics, I must first talk about academics. Without earning good grades, there would be no participating in athletics. In elementary school, I did not start off reading very well. I was behind most other kids as far as reading was concerned, so much in fact, that I was placed in a reading class that helped the children who could not read well. Talk about feeling embarrassed and ashamed!! Despite feeling embarrassed and ashamed, I ***worked hard*** to read at a higher level, eventually I was removed from the reading class because I read so much better. Although I didn’t start off reading well, through **hard work**, I became a very good reader and a better student too. I now really enjoy reading and I am very thankful for that experience because I learned that ***hard work really does pay off.*** A special thank you to the Xenia school system, because the teachers I had back then did not just let me fall behind, they pushed me to be a better reader and student.

Another experience with academics that really helped me to become more successful comes from wantingto go to college. From the time I was a little kid, I talked about going to college and earning a college degree. I watched other family members go to college and I wanted to go too. I was **determined** to earn a college degree. When I arrived at Heidelberg University, I thought that I could still be a socialite, play 3 collegiate sports, major in biology, and have a work-study job. Let’s just say I got a *rude* awakening. During my first semester of college, my GPA was **1.99**. When I got my grades, my heart sank and it was in that moment, I realized that I had to rearrange my priorities. After much thought and consideration, I decided to give up basketball to focus on volleyball and track. I become less of a socialite (meaning fewer parties!) and instead focused more on studying. I rearranged my priorities. What I learned is that in order to reach your goals, you may have to give up things that you like, you may have to stop hanging with certain people and you may have to make sacrifices in order to reach your goals and to get where you want to go. ***Have the courage to do what needs to be done, set your goals, and make them a priority!*** It may not always be fun, but it will help you be successful.

Alright, now on to athletics. I grew up participating in organized sports, because my mom believed that by keeping my sister and I busy with athletics, it would “keep us out of trouble”. This is a principal that I held onto and adopted with my own family! However, my athletic career did not start off so great. In 5th grade, I tried out for the school basketball team because I thought I was already a good athlete and could help the team. To make a long story short, I got cut and did not make the team. I knew I was a good athlete and I proved that I could play during the tryouts, so when I did not make the team, I was so disappointed and mad. Even worse was going home and telling my mom that I did not make the team. My mom, along with several other family members, were all good athletes and by not making the team, I felt like I failed and that I disappointed my family. At that moment, **I vowed that I would not give up and that I would never ever be cut** **from another athletic team**. That summer I played basketball all day, every day. I worked on shooting, dribbling, and defending; I played against the boys in the neighborhood; and when no one else was playing, I would work on my fundamental skills by myself. **That next year, I made the team**. This experience helped me not only to become a better basketball player, but it taught me to be **determined, hard-working, and dedicated.** I learned that if I wanted to be a successful athlete, I always had to **work hard, be dedicated, and be determined**.

Another thing I learned about being successful is that it is important to have **a positive attitude while being truthful to/with yourself**. I found that having a positive attitude and being truthful to and with myself has served me well in life. I always try to look at the glass half full no matter what. Even in hard situations, I try to find the good instead of dwelling on the bad. At the end of January 2020, I was called into my director’s office. I had just successfully finished a project early and I thought I was being called in about a promotion. Instead, I was advised that my job was being eliminated. What!!!! I was shocked and in disbelief. As the HR rep and my director talked, I could barely comprehend what was going on. They asked me if I had any questions and then told me I could go home. Never in my life had I dealt with this kind of situation before. I admit that I was upset and sulked during my hour-long ride home; however, once I got home, the lessons I learned as an athlete kicked in. W**ith a positive attitude, determination and hard work, I acknowledged the situation, my job was being eliminated and I needed to find a new job…fast!** I sat down, wrote out a plan for getting a new job and immediately started working on the tasks in my plan. My goal was to secure a new job by the time my current job would be eliminated. I was **positive** that I could find a new job and I **took action.** Iended up with a new job even before my old job was eliminated. Without the **positive attitude and action**, I would not have been able to find another job so quickly.

I hope that sharing my stories has allowed you to see that you can be successful no matter where you come from or what comes your way. **Life is full of twists and turns but hard work, dedication, determination, and a positive attitude will carry you a long way.**

If I can ever be of assistance to you, please feel free to reach out to me.

*Best wishes!*

*Monica Scott-Short*

*XHS Class of 1982*