

Dear Ashley,

My name is Raito Sugimoto and I played for Kitsuna Little League on the 2015 Championship team and now I play on Kitsuna Senior League team. My favorite position on the field is catcher due to I can see all perspectives and I am able lead my team in were they need depending on the batter. My passion is baseball and I live in a baseball rich country that's passionate to be better than Americans at baseball. But living in Tokyo city is challenging due to trying to find education at a high level is hard to find since there are so many kids in such a small area. This is why my dad has made an effort to send me to the Japanese American School where I am learning more and more english and more about American culture.

Just having a father is very hard though because of the challenge of being a single parent and sending me to a private school so I can get the best education possible. My mother died in a car accident by have a pole go through her heart when I was four years old and I was with her at the time but I don't remember any of the tragic event that happened. So this has made the years very hard but my father and I keep pushing on and in Japanese culture single parents are highly judged on how good they are at raising their kid but my father doesn't take that in account. My father is a truck driver and this makes it hard for us to spend time together which results in most nights being with my grandparents normally my mother side due to they live closer to my house.

My father though makes sure he has every weekend off to spend time coaching my baseball team since my dad was a very good high school and college player. This is bonding time for him and I. I really look forward to those times in the week. These things shape me to have a different perspective than most people due to I am a now middle school student with a single parent in Japan which is not common but one of the things that widely shapes my perspective of situations which is normally very different from my teammates. But to me baseball means family because my father is actually there and with me and helping build me as a player. If I had a field it would definitely be like in Williamsport due to it is a something that my dad and I got to do together and him coming to America with me.

Baseball will always be one of those things I will always love and something I look at as bonding and family time. I am now though looking into the high school I want to go to which will be the best baseball team to play for that I got recruited by and the best for education. I would like to stay in Tokyo because I know that will help my dad because it is very difficult to pick up and move but I know he is always willing if it helps me because he wants to give me the best life possible and try to make my life as easy as it is for other kids my age. But I have during the evening being working at a Ramen restaurant which is a couple blocks from my grandparents house to make some extra money for baseball gear because I don't want to have to ask my dad for money to get new gear. I just I wanted to let you know how things are going and what my life is like compared to most other Japanese families.

Thanks,

Raito Sugimoto

Dear Ashley,

My name is Dai Okada and I played for Fuchu Little League on the 2013 Championship team and now I have official ended my high school season and playing baseball at any high level. So I have now moved to playing rugby while I am getting ready to graduate from high school and go to college. But while I played baseball my favorite position on the field was shortstop because of the fact I have always been good at jumping and diving to get the ball and coming up with amazing catches. On all teams that I have played for I have been the leader. I am the one always talking and make sure everyone is having a good time but is also putting their best effort out onto the field every time.

But, I have always had passion for baseball for the fact my father was once a very good baseball player and always wanted me to be the best player. Since I was a very little kid my dad has always took me to baseball games and to meet his old Japanese teammates. So he always wanted me to play baseball never any other sport. In the end it ended up him trying to live his dreams through me which made it very hard as a kid. Since I was on a World Championship team but was unable to go to more championships as I got older I saw my dads want to make me the best player fate and his want to be in my life and care about my dream fade. I ended up feeling for the longest time like a disappointment to my father. But my mother always said he loves you, it is just hard for him to accept that your teammates don't match your passion for the sport that you have and your ability. But I know he just wants you to be the best player you can with the situation you are in and it hurts him that he can't move you to a better high school team so you can have a chance at the professional and college level of baseball.

My mom has not being at a lot of my practices and games like other moms. So that has struggled to build us a good relationship since she owns and runs a ramen restaurant which is very exhausting and stressful for her. Bt luckily her and my father where both able to fly to Williamsport with me to watch me play all the way up to winning the championship, So I think Williamsport held bring my family back together.

Thanks,

Dai Okada

Dear Ashley,

This is Mrs. Tomita I am the mother of Kengo and Shingo the twins that were on the 2015 Kitsuna Little League team who won the World Championship title. Little League is the thing that has built my family by drawing my kids and their fathers relationship closer. My family had struggled with a lot of things before the 2015 Little League World Series. They had both of their grandma's die in the same year before. One of cancer which caused her lungs to fail and causing her to die by not getting enough oxygen and they were unable to get her a lung in time to save her. Then my mother died while free climbing a mountain in northern Japan. This was unexpected so it hit my kids very hard but having little league happen changed their attitude and helped them realize that you have to fight and keeping playing like it is your last because that is what their grandma did on her last climb. So I think little league has worked to always build and bring families together and the community together in something they can all bind through. So I definitely thinking Little League has built and made my kids who they are today. But speak about them now they are both playing baseball on the top high school team that just won the high school championship of Japan. But Shingo has started a volunteering organization who helps cancer patients in the hospital by giving them someone to talk to and do things with if they are able to do certain things. So I think my kids have grown a need to want to help people and show people love that they weren't able to show to their grandparents before they died. It makes me so thankful for everything Little League has done to the people that I know.

Thanks,

Mrs. Tomita