

Jenna Belknap
CIF Spirit of Sport Speech

All of my life, I have lived by a simple motto: never, never, never give up. This motto was challenged during my junior year where I dealt with a friend with an addiction to drugs and alcohol. But using my skills as a peer counselor, my empathy, and good sense as a friend, I was able to help this friend through their recovery and felt like I had truly been tested. I was wrong. On February 25, 2010 my spirit, faith, strength, and life mantra were to be tested at a level that most people will hopefully never experience. Chelsea King, a teammate, friend, fellow peer counselor, and mentor, was raped and murdered while on her daily run. I have worked hard to keep Chelsea's light alive by forming a club on my high school campus, speaking at the signing of Chelsea's Law which prescribes harsher punishments for sexual offenders, and serving as head student ambassador at the first inaugural Finish Chelsea's Run 5K.

Many people look at the events in my junior year as a tragedy, but I look at it as the biggest learning experience in my life. I learned that life isn't what you expect it to be and that I should look at each day as a gift, that's why they call it the present. But most importantly I learned that I should always live by my mantra, and never, never, never give up, especially on myself. I was able to turn my despair around and be accepted to UCLA, the college of my dreams, be recognized by the San Diego NBC affiliate as inspirational student of the month, and be named KUSI's citizen athlete of the week. So to me, sportsmanship means so much more than just being a member on a team. It means never giving up as you make it to the top of that last hill in cross country, as you slide tackle to win that 50/50 ball in soccer, or push pass the pain as you try to out-kick your opponent in track. It's giving 100% all the time. Also, it doesn't matter if you are the last sub to come off the bench, or the leading goal-scorer on your team, how the team does is much more important than how you individually perform. I am obviously proud of how I have done personally throughout my high school career, but accomplishing goals as a team is a much more rewarding experience. Sportsmanship is also having honest rivalry and courteous relations among the competition. I was recently asked in an interview what honest rivalry means. To me, it means that whether you win or lose, it is important to remember that both teams have tried their best and to respect the hard work they have done, are doing, and will do.

I would like to thank the CIF board for this award. I am truly honored to be labeled as an athlete of character. I would also like to thank the San Diego CIF board for facilitating all of the athletic events I have participated in throughout all of high school. My coaches in cross country, soccer, and track have inspired me to play and run better every single day. I would especially like to thank my soccer coach Jen Lalor-Nielson for giving me the chance to prove myself as a leader both on and off the field. Also, I would like to thank Coach Whitfield for writing numerous letters of recommendations for me; you are the best and I'm looking forward to going to UCLA games with you next year! I would also like to thank my teammates for these past four years of memories I will never forget. And lastly my family. You have been my rock when I needed someone to lean on and my buoy when I needed to stay afloat. Thank you for never giving up on me and proving to me that if I put my mind to it, I can accomplish anything.