

Hello, my name is Andres Nuñez and I am a senior at South Salem High School. I recently requested a blue card to play football at South and was denied because of the number of high school credits I earned last year. I am hoping that after reading my letter, you will consider me for a hardship waiver of the half credit that I am short after the OSAA changed its athletic eligibility requirements on August 1, 2015.

My freshman year at South I was trying to fit in and make new friends and decided to join the football team. I quickly met a lot of new friends and really enjoyed playing football and representing my school.

Things were going really well for me until halfway through the year when out of the blue my parents told me they were divorcing. I had never heard them fight, so this was a complete shock to me and tore my world apart. I really began to struggle.

Soon my mom had a boyfriend and my dad had a girlfriend. They would fight all the time and take things out on me. I was sent back and forth to live with them and struggled to find stability, consistency and some sense of a family. I knew my parents loved me, but they were now caught up in their new relationships and I was caught somewhere in between. My older sister saw how their divorce was affecting me and said when she got her own place I could live with her.

I soon began hanging around the wrong kids and started skipping school and not doing my school work. My parents speak and understand very little English, so when the school would talk with my parents I would translate and filter what was being said to keep me from getting into too much trouble. South dropped me from their enrollment midway through my sophomore year and after a bit of time my parents re-enrolled me at South. I started doing better, but still wasn't doing what was expected of me.

Because of my poor choices, I was not eligible to play football my sophomore and junior year. While watching my friends and former teammates play from the sidelines my junior year, I thought about how much I missed being part of the team and wondered where my life was heading. It was then that I knew I had to turn my life around quickly if I wanted to graduate with my friends and play football my senior year – the last chance we would have to play together again.

I turned to my sister, who told me about a place in Bend, Oregon, called the Oregon Youth Challenge Program (OYCP) that provides opportunities of personal growth, self-improvement and academic achievement for Oregon high school students who are no longer attending or are failing in school.

On January 15, 2015, I enrolled in OYCP. My God Father, Laurence Rivera, was my OYCP mentor and was very supportive of me. He lived in Salem and would come visit me frequently. His love and support meant a lot to me.

OYCP really challenged me mentally, physically and academically. I was homesick and quickly began to reflect on the choices I made that had brought me there. I corresponded with my family and friends who would offer words of advice and encouragement. My friends (most of who were former teammates) would tell me to stay positive, work hard and when I felt like giving up, think about the upcoming football season and how proud my family would be to see me on the field on Senior Day when we heard my name called over the loud speaker! Their support helped me

to keep going. Now when my OYCP friends who are still in the program tell me they are thinking of dropping out, I encourage them to keep fighting. The harder the battle, the sweeter the victory! They are now looking up to me as a role model and it is a wonderful feeling.

I worked very hard at OYCP to better myself and while there I became an A B student and earned enough credits to enroll at South for my senior year and play football with my friends! I learned what it meant to be accountable and will continue this path through life.

When I graduated from OYCP, I began working at my God Father's business and have focused on getting ready for football by attending summer workouts and camps. My family is proud of the changes I have made and have purchased items that I will need to play like cleats, undergarments and a mouth guard.

By July 31st, I had earned enough credits to be an OSAA eligible athlete through my OYCP graduation and my work credits (520 hours). I am on track to graduate with my class in June and will attend Chemeketa Community College and later transfer to Oregon State University. I will be the first male in my family to graduate from college. My father attended college for two years in Mexico, but had to drop out when his parents became ill and he needed to work to support his family. My sister, who has helped guide me through my difficult years, will soon be receiving her Bachelor degree.

After completing football workouts and conditioning over the summer, I was ready to go; it was finally time to get my blue card and I could hardly wait! My teammates insisted we go together to get our cards and we could barely contain our excitement. It truly was one of the best moments of my life! That was, until I was denied. I was told the OSAA eligibility rules had changed just a few days prior and I was now half a credit short from being eligible to play football. I was embarrassed and devastated. It quickly became one of the worst days of my life.

It took a couple of days for me to accept my situation and I really struggled with how a rule could be set for one school year and then just before the next school year it was changed without my knowledge and with no way to meet the new rule in time to play football. The goal post was moved on me during the game. I thought about my options and found an on-line history class through Salem Keizer School District that offers the half credit I need, but I wouldn't complete the course before the season starts in less than two weeks. So, I am asking you for an eligibility waiver for half a credit.

I hope you can see that I have taken full responsibility for the poor choices I have made and that I have turned my life around. I am now a positive role model for my peers and have found confidence and pride in myself. I owe a lot of this to my teammates, who mean the world to me and have impacted my life in ways I can never explain. Please don't take this away from me.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, I can be reached at (971) 716-3519. I look forward to hearing from you very soon. Go Saxons!!

Sincerely,

Andres Nuñez