

Madeline Adams
Runner Up

On October 28th, 2016, my legs failed me. It was on that day I developed a deep appreciation for my sport, community and health. Every single day after this blazing hot fall day in North Carolina that I am able to put one foot in front of the other, I am grateful.

I never would have imagined being painfully close to the finish line, but unable to put an ounce of weight on my legs. I fell and got back up several times. I wasn't ready to give up. I couldn't comprehend why this was happening to me. Despite experiencing my fair share of injuries, I have never felt more helpless and unable to do what I love. But, I knew I was too close to stop trying because my team needed me that day.

It was in this moment that two selfless girls were brought into my life.

Despite the high-intensity environment of an ACC Championships, two girls from different teams were able to show me what sport is all about. Evie Tate from Clemson was the first angel to see me collapsed on the ground. She attempted to sling me over her shoulder and walk me to the finish line, but I was simply a sack of potatoes that couldn't stand up. Rachel Pease was the second angel to assist after noticing Evie's struggling efforts. Together, the two of them carried me and my dead legs across the ACC finish line- sacrificing their race, but ensuring I was able to complete mine.

In an interview following ACC's, I reflected on October 28th with these words:

"It's those small moments and small things that we will remember over just winning a meet, placing high, or running a PR because that will happen over and over again. But, the moments where we help each other, boost the community, and show that sports aren't just cutthroat are way more important."

The days following the race were full of interviews, phone calls and Skype chats. I didn't expect my failure to receive so much attention. However, it really wasn't about my failure- it was about the two girls who helped me. Without even being asked, they had the instinct to help a complete stranger and sacrifice their race.

Once I was released from the hospital and realized I would be just fine, this really started to sink in. Their level of sportsmanship made me realize the strength of running community. Their level of sportsmanship was so unmatched that they both received the ACC and NCAA Sportsmanship Award of the Year. Their level of sportsmanship was so profound, I developed an appreciation for running like I had never had before.

Admittedly, my confidence has been slightly rocked since this incident. However, the overwhelming support of the running community and the acknowledgement of the girls' selflessness have been amazing. I realized there is so much more to running than competing. So much good resulted from Evie and Rachel's ability to put competition in back seat and

compassion in the front seat. After internalizing how their actions made me feel, I knew I had to return the favor. Now with my teammates, I am constantly looking out for that struggling freshman or teammate who is having a bad workout. I know it is my job to make sure no one on my team feels alone. I know it is my job to instill confidence in the girls that will come after me and develop an environment of unwavering support.

Please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-893ebRZC6Q> for the full story of the event.