

## **My Reason Why - By Tucker Chase (11<sup>th</sup> grade, Hanalani School)**

Cross-country is not just a sport for me it's a lifestyle. As cliché as the saying is, it is true Cross-country has taught me several different values that have transformed me into the person I am today. The reason why I run cross-country is because the sport allows me to push my body and mind past the limits that others set for me. When I reflect on my seven years of running I remember three different memories that show three different aspects of my life that running has effected: Exceeding expectations through self determination, the value to being part of a team, and creating joy in the lives of others through team accomplishments.

My first day of cross-country practice in seventh grade in Italy was one of those memories. Before this I had not been able to run a full mile without stopping. I did not know about running shoes, running forms, stretches, conditioning, and most importantly I did not know that running was going to be so difficult. Throughout the first practice, I felt like I was going to die but after the practice the captain and coach called me over to the side and told me I had the potential and the determination to go far. This is when I realized I wanted it... I want to run.

The second memory that had tremendous effect on me and made me realize how important support from teammates and coaches can be is when I went through a hip injury. My freshman year in Japan, I had an MRI, which discovered four large cysts in my hips resulting in being banned from any physical activities for eight months. This was heart breaking because I discovered this on the first day of practice for the season, and it meant that I would not be allowed to do my favorite sport with my teammates. Even though I was not able to run, I still had the chance to be a part of my team as the team's manager, which proved to be a huge blessing because I learned so much. In the beginning, I thought it would be hard to watch everyone run and not be able to, but the experience gave me a deeper appreciation for the ability to run. And my amazing team's support and encouragement helped me have the perseverance to bounce back after I had healed.

The last, but most important, memory I have from cross-country was when I was in tenth grade and had just moved to my new school in Hawaii. My new school, Hanalani Schools, did not have a large team but we had just enough runners and determination to become the first cross country team from our school to ever qualify to compete as a team at the state championships. When all five qualified at the qualifying meet and the fifth runner passed the finish line, it was such a memorable day because we had not just qualified for ourselves, but for our school and our fellow teammates. Leading up to the qualifying meet, the whole school showed their support with teachers, administrators, and students cheering us on. Hanalani Schools was one of the smallest schools at the state championship meet but we definitely had the largest spirit and pride. These three memories play an important role in why I run, what I love about the sport, and how it has transformed me into the person I am today.