

## **Zoe Russell, SquashBusters U15 Age Division**

An adversity is any obstacle or detriment that keeps you from achieving your goal. It can be a person, place, or thing, even an idea or mindset. It can be formed deliberately or just happen by chance. Adversity is pretty stubborn; it doesn't stop just because you're frustrated or exasperated. It is something that must be overcome, otherwise it will forever stay in your way, and your goal will remain elusive.

Imagine down a normal street, the wind is piercing and there is fresh snow on the ground. For most kids this is an everyday experience during the winter, and they think nothing of it. But when I was younger this was a nightmare. Asthma was my nightmare, the waking dream that dominated my life and withheld my dreams. Winter was its favorite season. It often took a long time just to walk that snow covered street because my mother and I would have to stop frequently so that I could breathe or use my asthma pump. The cold, dry, air made my body susceptible to catching colds, filling my already constricted lungs with mucus, and making it even more difficult to breathe than before. I thought that my asthma was a permanent fixture thing, that I would be burdened with it forever. My mother, however, changed that belief.

I never thought much of physical activity when I was younger; it was something people did. I didn't know why they did it, but I knew I wanted no part of it. The solution my mother suggested was exactly the thing I'd been subconsciously avoiding my whole life. But after living with asthma for a while, I was ready to try anything. The gist of the plan was, although technically you cannot cure asthma, you can overcome it, or as I put it, grow out of it. My first day on the William Monroe Trotter SCORES soccer team was awkward, confusing, and most definitely ridiculous. What in the world did I know about soccer, or any other sport for that matter? Why did the kids on this team run SOO much?! And WHY does that coach keep blowing his whistle at me? Doesn't he know I'm asthmatic?? I was under the impression that because I had asthma I would be "babied", but I quickly learned otherwise. It was very difficult at first; everyone else was better than me, faster than me, and thought quicker on the field. I tired easily and after games and in the cool autumn evenings I often got horrible cramps in the back of my legs, my muscles contracting and tightening in response to the sudden amount of activity. I was determined to kick asthma to the curb. The harder I worked, the more results were reigned in. After two years on the team I could run and participate without even thinking about my asthma or those stupid pumps; a fact that amazed me every time I walked out onto the field.

Throughout the process of overpowering my severe asthma, I learned quite a few things. One of my most important lessons was learning to hold myself responsible. In the beginning, my asthma was not only adamant, but determined to remain an obstruction in my life, or so I thought. Now that I look back I realize I played a huge role in its resistance by being indolent. I couldn't really have known this back then; I was young and unaware of the occurrences inside my own body, caused by unhealthy habits. Now I have matured and know that physical activity is important. In fact, I love sports now, especially squash.

As a kid, my asthma really was an adversity. It kept me from doing normal stuff, and just generally made life more difficult. In conclusion, asthma was my adversity, obstacle, and my detriment. It was both a thing inside of me and a mindset because I thought I would have to learn to deal with it. Once I realized this was not true, I was determined to overcome it. When I did, I was not only able to reach my goal, but set and exceed many others.