

FIRST PLACE RECIPIENT

What Wasn't Mine to Tell

Rayna Khunkhun MISSION VIEJO HIGH SCHOOL

The energy shifted. All of the noise from the packed stadium drowned out as we saw him go down. What was supposed to be the most anticipated and long-awaited game of the season took a turn for the worse. Suddenly, my job as a student athletic trainer for the football team became a lot more serious. As soon as the paramedics came sprinting onto the field, it dawned on me. For the first time, it hit me that this was more than just plays on the field. Now, there were real people, real injuries, and real consequences on the line. I realized that I was in a position where people might look to me for information, and that's exactly what happened.

As soon as he got taken away to the hospital, the coaches wasted no time to get the game back going again. It was pouring down rain and I trekked across the sideline to fill up a new rack when I saw his girlfriend run down from the stands and approach me, asking if he was okay. I was conflicted. On one hand, I wanted to tell her what had happened, or at the very least, tell her that he was going to be okay. At the same time, I remembered that I had to treat him as a patient and not a classmate. Being in the sports medicine and athletic training program comes with the responsibility of keeping our student-athletes' medical information private. Even with this in mind, I was still torn. I so badly just wanted to comfort her by telling her what I knew, but deep down, I knew I couldn't compromise the ethics of the program. As difficult as it was, I quickly told her that I couldn't say anything in order to protect him and his privacy. She cried and begged and said, "You can't even tell me if he'll be okay?" I simply looked at her and quietly shook my head and told her updates will be given to close family and friends as soon as we are authorized to give them.

That exact moment changed the way I truly understood ethics. Before becoming a student athletic trainer and being put in a high-stress situation, I always thought that ethics was the difference between right and wrong. I realize now that it is far more complex than a black-and-white concept. I now understand that ethics can sometimes mean choosing between two options that both seem reasonable; one protecting someone's privacy and the other helping someone. Most importantly, I learned that I am not only caring for athletes and protecting them physically, but also protecting their privacy and being someone they can trust. That night alone taught me a lesson that I will forever carry with me; sometimes the most ethical thing that I can do is to protect the information that I have been trusted with, not share it.