



### On A State Team: What Being A Raider Means To Me

As a sophomore entering Sarasota Military Academy, I was completely and utterly lost. I had no idea what I was doing, where I was going, or who I was amongst the hundreds of creased, green uniforms walking about campus. I wanted to become a part of something larger than myself, which is probably why I joined the Raider team.

The Raider team was well-known through out the school as being the most difficult extracurricular activity Sarasota Military Academy had to offer. The people on this team were strong, well-liked, in leadership positions, and most of all, had a connection to their teammates. These were all things that I wanted to attain! I immediately joined, frightened and unknowing of what the future had in store for me as a Raider. I never thought I would get on a state team – I just wanted to be a part of something great and make a difference in my school.

Everything that my peers had said about Raiders turned out to be true. It was difficult physically and mentally! I had never completed a push up in my life, so imagine my surprise as over three months I was able to do over 70 push ups within two minutes! I had never imagined I could become so strong. My sit ups didn't amount to much, and my run time was average, so I never thought I could gain any prestige in the group, but enjoyed how much I was personally gaining. I learned all about land navigation and first aid, not fully understanding how many incredible life skills I was gaining in the process.

Not only did I gain strength, but I gained friendships as well. Immediately after joining the Raider team, I met nearly half of the school, and most everyone in a leadership position was a part of this team. I learned how to lead by example, organize tasks, follow orders, and most of all, how to be a great friend. The friendships I made my first year on Raiders have followed me until this very day, and I hope never to lose them either. I gained a connection to my team, and we became more than a team: we were a family. I learned communication because I could tell when my team mates were upset, hurt, angry, and was able to talk things out. We all worked together to become successful as a team by giving up more of ourselves for others, and learning sacrifice and love for our

friends.

After learning and gaining so much by joining the Raider team, the only other thing that would make me happy was to find a spot on the Female Raider team. At first, I was placed on the mixed team, for which I was thankful, but wanted to “become the best”. I worked hard, inside and outside, of school and much to my surprise, I was finally able to join the Female Raider team! For the first time in Sarasota Military Academy history, the Female team not only took first place in both districts and states, but swept the competition and took first place in every single event!

The rest, as they say, is history. I have been on the Female Raider team for three years now, and each year I have honed in my skills as a communicator, leader, teammate, and friend. I have worked my way up through the ranks to become a grey beret, and have enjoyed leading and learning from so many different individuals. Being on the Raider team has meant overcoming obstacles, defeating difficulties, and solving situations strategically. I will never forget my experience as a Raider, and will continue to remember it as I move onto college and a future job career. The memories I carry with me from camp-outs, practices, and competitions have been the highest point in my high school career, and I can’t imagine my life without being a part of something as fantastic as the Raider team.