

I first met Fischer two and a half years ago. It was the first day of tryouts and Fischer was just another incoming 9th grader running around on Griffin Field. About twenty minutes into that first day though, Fischer came in hard on a tackle, on a senior captain no less, and cleated her. I ran over and my captain was on the ground holding her foot in pain. I asked Fisch what happened and he said, "sorry" then he showed us the bottom of one of his cleats that was covered in shiny metal studs (for non-soccer people—these are not necessarily legal equipment). My captain got up and limped off, she was fine, and Fisch said. "I'll go change this one," he said pointing at his shoe, "Change both" I said, "The other one's fine," Fisch said "That's the one I show the refs." I thought to myself "Who is this kid?"

One week later when I called him to tell him he had made the varsity team as a freshman, he just said "Really?" "Yes" I said "Really?" said Fischer "Yes" "OK, coach, I'll give this team everything I have."

Fischer loved soccer, loved to play and have a ball at his foot—a soccer-head, he played with passion, all-in, all the time. He only scored one goal in his two seasons --he was a defender—but when he scored it he jumped in the air and did this little turn—pure joy—even though we were already winning 6-0. Fisch was a defender, our defender, he loved protecting our team and he always gave it everything he had.

When I think about what I love about Fischer I think about how he was someone who transcended categories. There was never I am only a C2 player, I can't do this, I can't play on this team. He went out and played and he beat out upperclassmen and higher-level players because he didn't think he was just some C2 kid.

He started his freshmen year mostly on the bench, but halfway through the season when a senior defender decided to show up late for one of our most important games of the season, Fisch found out

at the coin flip that he was starting and marking one of the top senior forwards in the state. He played brilliantly, shut her down, Fisch and the Defense got us a shut out and we won. Fearless. Fisch didn't think I'm just C2, just a freshman, just a substitute. Categories like those didn't matter to Fisch—he transcended them. Whether it was soccer, his name, his gender, or who he could love and how much he could love them. Fischer transcended categories where many of us just accept them.

I've been angry at Fischer this week. Angry that he did this. Angry that someone might feel some/any responsibility for what happened. Angry that I won't be able to see him running on that field next year. Angry he won't be able to see what this team can accomplish over the next two years. Angry we won't see all the other things he would have transcended in his life. Angry I won't one day be able to introduce him to my daughters so they can know you can choose what kind of human you want to be.

Fischer came to see me three weeks ago. He gave me a list of goals he had for himself and for our team next season. I read the goals, they were big, and I asked if he felt he could accomplish them. "Yes," he said, "I believe in our team." Then he didn't leave. "I also think I want to be an outside midfielder." Fisch's idea of who he could be was growing. He was moving up the field, not just defending or protecting, he was just getting to a place where he could create—play the game in a new way.

And, that's why I forgive Fisch because if his goals, and all his dreams weren't enough, if all this love and support --and he knew you all loved him— if all this wasn't enough – then his mental illness must have been so so severe that I can't begin to understand. Fisch could transcend so much in his life, but he couldn't transcend that.

Fisch was just a kid. Just a sweet beautiful kid who loved to play soccer.

After our team lost in the playoffs this season and the season was over, we sat down in a circle on the field. Everyone was crying, players tried to take off their shoes and socks and no one was saying anything. The last game of the season is always a shock. You go

from spending every day with your teammates, through highs and lows, summer to fall, everything that a season brings, and then suddenly it's over in a moment, it's all gone, and you're in shock. No one said anything, captains didn't speak up, seniors didn't speak up, no one spoke up, people just cried.

Fisch was the first one to talk. He looked around at his team—at all of you—and he said,

“We all love each other so much. We care about each other so much. We're a family.”

I know if he were here today, when all of us were quiet and didn't know what to say or how to feel, Fisch would be the first to speak up again, and he would tell us the same thing.