

Speech by Rohan Srivastava, PHS Class of 2018
Corey Reich Tennis Center Kick-Off Event
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Good evening. My name is Rohan Srivastava, and tonight I have the absolute privilege of sharing a few words about Corey Reich, whom I've known for almost seven years now. Corey coached me for four seasons on the Piedmont men's varsity tennis team, and I just feel like I grow closer and closer to him with each passing year.

Now, when I was asked to speak tonight, I was thrilled at the opportunity to gush about Corey. But my excitement quickly turned to foreboding when I realized how impossible a task it would be to capture who Corey is and do justice to everything that he means to the Piedmont tennis community in just a few minutes. So, I delegated the task. I contacted everyone I know who has had Corey as a coach at some point or another and asked them to provide one word that best describes Corey. As expected, I received a bottomless barrel of praise.

As a coach and as a person, Corey exemplifies what it means to be empathetic, resilient, knowledgeable, optimistic, generous, dedicated, humorous, and loving. But by and large, the three most common themes that came up in the responses were: inspiring, passionate, and light-hearted. With one caveat: one player responded to me and she said flatly, "No. I refuse to give one word. The shortest description I could possibly give is 6 words: 'My favorite person in the world.'" And it certainly is pretty hard to disagree with that.

Back to the themes: inspiring, passionate, and light-hearted. First of all, I recognize that these are some really broad words.

- Inspiring could mean raising over eight million dollars for ALS research and winning a Young Alumni Achievement Award from Middlebury College.

- Light-hearted could mean pulling off color-coordinated polka dot apparel like it's no big deal.
- Passionate could mean showing up to nearly every Oakland A's home game all season long. And to be honest, everyone here already knows that Corey is all of these things and more.

What you may not be as aware of is specifically how these qualities manifest themselves in our presence on the tennis court. Tonight, I think of myself really as an ambassador for Piedmont tennis, and so to that end, I want to relay three short anecdotes that current and former players were kind enough to share with me.

This first one is from a former player on the women's side, and it illustrates light-heartedness. She writes: "I remember one time during practice I was messing around and trying to practice trick shots like hitting tweeners. I saw Corey coming up to me, and I thought that he was going to yell at me for fooling around and wasting practice time. Instead, the next thing I knew, Corey was giving me tweener tips and teaching me other trick shots that I'd never even thought of. I love that Corey is serious when he needs to be but can be fun and goofy as well."

This second one, regarding "passionate," is from a current player on the boys' team. He recalls: "During the NCS semifinals against Head Royce two years ago, I remember that one of our doubles teams was playing poorly and without much effort. Corey rolled up very quickly and yelled at them through the fence, 'I want this more than you do!'"

So that leaves inspiring. Now I could harp on about how Corey inspires all of us every day with his upbeat attitude and warmth of spirit even in the face of incredible personal adversity since being diagnosed with ALS eleven years ago, but instead, I'm going to go a bit more of an unconventional route. I want to talk about a time that Corey...inspired fear...in the heart of the opposition. So ok, here we go—from the memory of a current boys' player: "It was

my freshman year, and we were playing a team through the tunnel. They had cheated us on many occasions throughout the match, but after it was over, I saw Corey confront one of the other team's kids and just let him have it for cheating. I saw the kid's face afterwards, and you could tell that Corey had instilled some sort of fear into him. I think Corey scared the cheating out of him because when we played again the following year, the kid displayed excellent sportsmanship and there were no issues.”

As you can start to see, it is impossible to overstate the extent of Corey's impact on us as players because it boils down so many little things—also among them: his uplifting fist bumps, his incredibly astute memory, his endearing smile. All of these small Corey moments not only persist in our minds, but they also have accumulated to contribute toward a long track record of success. In his twenty-one seasons as a tennis coach, Corey has amassed ten North Coast Section championships, all before turning thirty-three years old. Independent of any circumstances, if you just look at his coaching record, he's pretty much the Sean McVay of Piedmont.

And even though it's perhaps not quite as memorable as those other stories, I would be remiss not to share my personal favorite Corey moment, which took place last spring when I was a captain on the boys' tennis team. Our team had just experienced an unexpected midseason loss, and all of a sudden the team dynamic just became way out of sorts. Players started turning on each other, blaming one another for the loss, attacking each other's commitment to the team—and a surprising majority of the team was complicit in this behavior to some extent. To make matters worse, I was out of town for the weekend and therefore felt even less in control of the situation. Although I generally thought of myself as a capable captain, in this instance I was just totally overwhelmed and had no idea what to do. But I did know to call Corey. Corey could have dismissed it as teenage drama or offered a cursory word

of encouragement like many coaches might have done, but instead he spent forty-five minutes on the phone with me trying to understand exactly what was going on and exactly how he could help me feel better about managing the incident. By the end of that phone call, I just felt so relieved and at ease not only because the situation was under control but also because I knew then that Corey would go out of his way to support me and my teammates even in our less-than-proudest moments.

Ultimately, that's what I think Corey does best—with his passion for the game and his light-hearted sincerity, he inspires us to grow and develop into the best versions of ourselves. And that—even more so than the fact that he's the most decorated coach in Piedmont sports history—that is why there is truly no name more fitting for this project than the Corey Reich Tennis Center.

On behalf of the entire Piedmont tennis community, I want to thank Sarah Lillevand, Piedmont's Recreation Director, the City of Piedmont, and PRFO for planning and designing this court renovation. I want to thank all of the volunteers for being here tonight and for helping to make this project a reality. And most importantly, I want to thank Corey for playing a formative role in my life and in the lives of generations of young Piedmont tennis players. I hope that all of you will join me in thanking Corey tonight by helping to fundraise and spreading the word about the spectacular new Corey Reich Tennis Center. Thank you.