



# Jaelee Anices

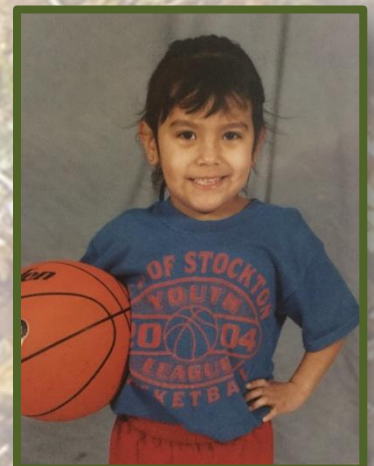


## Lincoln HS

Being a part of barons was one of the best things that happened in my basketball career. I was so nervous when I walked into the gym for the first time, but my team made me feel so welcomed! Everyone came up to me and hugged me as if they knew me already. They always offered for me to do things or stay overnight. They treated me as if we were family. They showed me that it wasn't just about winning, but it's about giving your all and playing as a team. We wanted to win, but we wanted to win as a team. And if we lost, we lost as team. That's what I call one, my family! I am super proud to call myself a Baron.

After the games the coaches would go over and tell us what we did wrong so we could fix it for the next game. I can't believe we grew so close in a short amount of time. I wish I could have played with them years ago. I'm looking forward to barons camp and finishing my last season with them. I can't thank my coaches enough for showing me that you can have fun in basketball.

Being an incoming senior for the barons, I want to set an example for the younger girls. Just remember it's not how tall you are or how quick you are it's about heart. Just remember to have fun!







# Katelyn Bates

## Christian Brothers HS



*Dr. Seuss once wrote, "Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened." Our time as Barons has come to an end but rather than be sad, I am proud and amazed with how far we have come. I can truly say the past five years of being a Baron have been years well spent. This organization has provided me with an incredible opportunity to create everlasting friendships and memories while growing as a person through the game of basketball. I am so blessed to have had the privilege to be a part of the Barons family.*

*Five years ago, on February 9, 2010, we had our very first team practice at Sutter Middle School. I remember one of the main coaching points Joel and Janie shared with us: team building was a process and we would grow and become better because of the bond that would be formed. Once that relationship took shape we would be successful. Since that first practice, we have had thirteen players come and go along with the addition of a coach. Although we have had many changes, our team has shared a unique bond that classifies us as family. One of my favorite characteristics about this team is our ability to adapt effortlessly.*

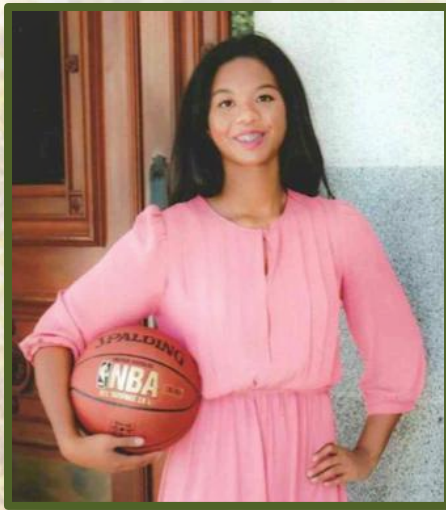
*When we became full-fledged Barons, I was ecstatic and enthusiastic for our real journey to begin. However, after two years of playing and the move to a school without any of my teammates, I began to feel detached and unexcited about the sport. I was involved in many outside activities that took me in other directions. I came to the conclusion that basketball was not as high a priority as it once was. One day, while talking with a fellow student and senior Baron, Ben McFadden, he asked me how my Baron's experience was going. I was honest and shared with him that I no longer had the same passion for the game that I once had. Ben shared with me that Barons was not about just playing basketball; it was about being a part of something greater than oneself; learning to become a better person while creating an everlasting bond through the game of basketball. He convinced me to stay with the organization because of the values and teachings Barons had to offer and was confident it would be something I would thank him for. Four years later, Ben was right. The little things my coaches made time for: sharing meals, driving us around, hanging out in between games, made me realize how Barons was more than just a basketball club. The personal time my coaches spent with me has left a lasting impression. I am grateful I stayed. I would like to thank every single person who has been a member of this team for the memories of a lifetime.*

*As our final season approaches, I realize how truly special this journey has been. However, none of this would have been possible without many special people. I would like to thank all of the members of our team for providing me with a second family and for allowing me to feel valued not only as a player, but as a person. Thank you for being the best friends a girl could ever ask for. I would like to thank our incredible coaches, Joel Kunisaki, Rene Lee, and Janie Hironaka for your countless hours of dedication on and off the court. Your support, faith, and mentoring has been an inspiration and has made each of us better players as well as better people. Thank you to Rodney Kunisaki for providing all of us with a positive learning environment and for being an exemplary role model. Thank you to all of the parents. I am very fortunate to have felt personally supported by each of you. Finally, a special thank you to my parents for all of the time and faith you have placed in me and all of my aspirations. It means the world to me to have such genuinely loving people as parents. I am forever grateful for your endless support.*

*Good luck to all of the participants in this tournament and I hope your basketball experience will be filled with great memories and exciting opportunities. We are Barons who play fast for each other.*







# Natalie Capangpangan

## Inderkum HS

#4

*I started my journey as a Sacramento Baron during my sophomore year, and my only regret is not joining the Barons Organization sooner. I have always been rather shy when it came to meeting other kids, but right from the get-go, the girls welcomed me with open arms. Being part of this team has allowed me to gain more than just teammates, but they became my family. I know that I am always able to tell these girls anything and everything.*

*The weekend tournaments were always something I would look forward to. It would mean I would get to spend at least two whole days with the girls I love the most. Some of my favorite memories being with these girls include Baron's Camp, our trips to LA, and staying up all night playing Kemps. It didn't matter where we would go or what we would do, we would always have a colossal time with one another. And that's what made our team special; we would always find something to do no matter what.*

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank our coaches, Joel, Janie and Rene, for being such great coaches. Not only are they great coaches, they too are just like family. With their help, we learned more than just basketball plays, but also life lessons that make us better as a person. I won't forget all the basketball practices we had, all the games we would play, and those food trips we would go on in between games. Our coaches are unlike any other, they know how to have a good time.*

*I would also like to thank my mom, and to all the parents. Thank you for all that you have done with all your love and support. From all the long car drives to tournaments, to all the times we went out to eat, you have always given your 100% the least I could do is do the same. One of memories I will cherish the most is hearing my mom scream from the sidelines during games, and I would think to myself, "Yup, that's my mom." A simple "thank you" is not equivalent to all the sacrifices you have made for me, to get me to where I am today.*

*Lastly, I would like to thank the Barons Organization. This organization is unlike any other as they put huge emphasis on integrity and good sportsmanship. They teach us how to be better basketball players, but also how to become better people. Since I have joined Barons I have been able to meet more friends outside my team, and I am grateful for every single one of them. A single page is simply not enough to express my gratitude to the people who made an impact on my life, but I suppose that this is a start.*

*I am lucky to be part of such a wonderful family and that's just what basketball is. It is more than just a team, but a family that just keeps going on more adventures. I'm so sad to see things have to end so quickly, but I am confident that we will make this final year a memorable one. No matter how far our paths may lead us after our Senior year, I will cherish the memories that we created together as you girls will always be considered my sisters. Love you, forever and always.*







# Niki Fujimoto

## Kennedy HS

#10

*I started my Baron journey as one of the original girls on the first team we got together. Throughout the years our team has gone through a lot of players, losing and gaining new girls almost every year. Although my journey is not what I expected growing up, I wouldn't change it for the world. The friendships I've made and lessons I've learned has shaped me into the person I am today. This team started as a group of friends trying to play competitive basketball, but it turned into a family going on adventures and having a blast together.*

*My first acknowledgement goes to my girls, my sisters. We've been through everything together and I'd like to thank each and every one of you for being the best teammates, friends, and sisters to me I don't know what I would do without you guys. The thing I will remember most about this team is the endless card games we would play, always trying to learn new ones so we never got bored. I loved our adventures and it doesn't end here because there's still so much stuff we wanted to do together but didn't get to do yet. I love you girls, thanks for being the absolute best.*

*Next I would like to thank my coaches, the best I've ever had. Joel, Janie, and Mama Re-Re you guys are like older siblings to me. Thank you for driving me everywhere when I was younger, keeping me grounded while having fun at the same time, and always supporting me through whatever I do. You guys are unlike any other coaches I've seen; you do so much for us and are always making sure we have a good time. I will never forget our good times together, thanks for always being there for me.*

*I would also like to thank my family; mom, dad, and Bri for all of their love and support throughout my Baron's journey. Thank you Mama Kristi for being the team manager and always doing all the behind the scenes work as well as finding great places to eat. Thank you Papa John for driving up and back to all of my tournaments and for videotaping all our games as well as taking pictures at Baron's camp. Bri, thanks for showing me how fun it is to be a Baron and teaching me the Baron values and Baron's chant as a kid so I would know once I became one. I know you all invested a lot of time and hard work into the Baron's organization so thank you for helping me make my journey a great one.*

*Last but not least I'd like to thank Merv, Rod, Coach Richie, and the Baron's organization for all it has done for me and the many other kids who've come through the organization. You guys have worked very hard in order to make this organization the best it can be and I know you all have invested a lot of time and effort into us so thank you all so much. The Baron's organization has taught me more than just the fundamentals of basketball, but the 10 Baron values and countless life lessons. Thank you to all who are involved with the Baron's you guys have made my journey the best it can be and I cannot thank you enough. I will miss everyone and my journey dearly, but I can honestly say it was unforgettable. Thank you Barons I love you guys.*







# Jackie Ocampo

## Christian Brothers HS

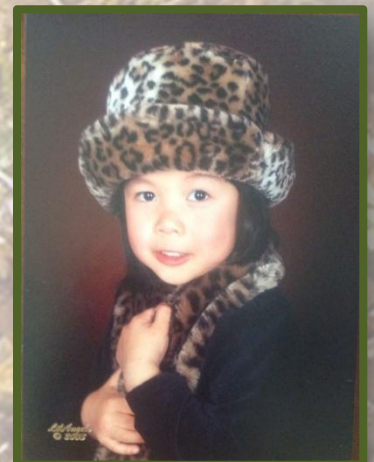
#15

*A dream came true when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and became part of Lady Barons 2016. Moving up to Lady Barons 2016 was not an issue even though I was one grade lower because we all respected each other. I wouldn't want it any other way.*

*First, I would like to thank my parents for all the love and support that they have given me for all these years. They were always there to support me and my Barons team for all our tournament games whether it was here in Sacramento or out of town games. Memories of my dad, our #2 cheerleader (Kevin Wong will always be #1), screaming "more fried rice baby" every time I made a shot made me so embarrassed. Our team, including coaches, always had a say and laugh on my Dad's actions. Cherished moments from Baron's Camp will also have a place in my heart. It gives you the opportunity to get to know and interact with other players and coaches from different grade levels of the Barons Family. The camp that groups one on each grade level is pretty competitive but friendly. It not only features about basketball but also water activities, art activities, bowling, and inspirational speeches; great yummy food/desserts prepared by wonderful parents; team and individual awards at the end of the camp.*

*Secondly, thank you to my coaches, Joel, Rene, and Janie for all the time spent on our practices, travels, tournament games. You guys are truly the MVPs of the team. Remembering Joel's half court shots, Rene's crazy behind the back shots, and Janie's three point shooting will always put a smile on my face. Also, to the Baron's organization, Mr. Rodney and Julie Kunisaki, thank you for the support you have given to our team cheering us on our games; Barons Camp; Crab feed; Pizza at Giovanni's.*

*Lastly, thank you to my teammates, for our time together. The many games we played together, travels, laughs, fights, frustrations; state fairs; movies; bowling; chats; card games will all be remembered in a very special way. Of course who can forget the pot lucks we have at the Fujimoto's, and the many restaurants we went to. Good luck to each one of you in college and the future. We will always "play fast for each other." Love my squad LB2K16! Jackie O. #15*





# Lauren Rabena

#11

## Lincoln HS



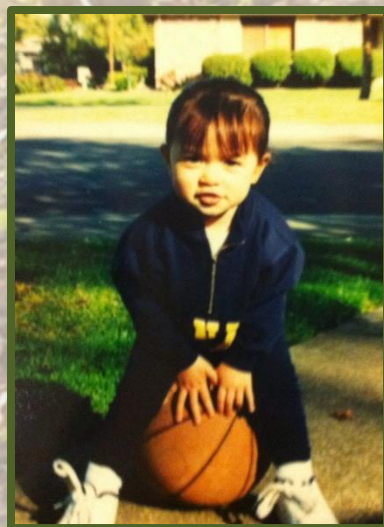
*I have been extremely blessed to be a part of the Barons Organization. Looking back, I can still remember my first time meeting my new teammates at the Barons Crab Feed, they welcomed me with open arms and from then on I knew that I was going*

*to create such great memories with them as we spent more time together. Since then, I have learned so much about my teammates and how kindhearted, smart, respectful, and funny they all truly are. Once I joined the Barons, I realized that it's not just about basketball, it's also about having fun while playing as a team and experiencing new things together as a family.*

*Of all the games I have played as a Baron, it has never been just about winning or losing, but more about getting better as a team and having fun while doing so. Our team has definitely went through our rough patch of injuries and ups and downs, but we have always managed to work through all of our problems as a family. I am so grateful to have such good teammates that have had my back no matter what. From the first day that I joined Barons I knew that from then on I could go to my teammates for support, advice, or anything else that I needed.*

*Being an incoming senior, I want my last year of playing Barons to be the most memorable one yet. I could not ask for a better group of girls to be playing with and even though it is my last year, I know that my relationship with my teammates will last for the rest of my life. After my very first Barons practice, I have wished every day since then that I had started playing Barons a long time ago with the rest of the girls.*

*I'd like to thank Coach Joel for being so welcoming when I joined the Barons, and for putting so much time into teaching all of us more about basketball. I know all of us girls can be a lot to handle a times but you never give up on us and always push us to be the best we can be. I'd also like to thank Rene and Janie for helping out with coaching and for making such funny memories with the team. I am truly thankful that I have been given the chance to represent the Barons Organization. Lastly, I want to thank my parents for their hard work and giving me the opportunity to be a part of the Barons family.*







# Courtney Virgil

## Pleasant Grove HS

#23

*It truly is a privilege to be a part of the Sacramento Barons Organization. From eighth grade until now, my senior year, I have created memories that I will never forget.*

*In the very beginning, I didn't know how special this journey would be. To be completely honest, I didn't even know that much about basketball in general back then, but it all started with an unexpected invitation to play with the 2016 girls team during my seventh grade year. I remember being pretty nervous because I had never played on any relatively competitive team before and although I did know who the girls were, that was pretty much it; I knew their names and faces. Being very shy didn't help my nerves either. Since then our team has gone through ups and downs, hard losses and electrifying wins, losses of players and gains of new players, and a multitude of injuries. All of these experiences have ultimately made our team so much closer on and off the court, taught us to adjust, and invited opportunities for us to learn about all of the Baron's values; whether we knew it then or not.*

*I had mentioned earlier that I didn't know much about basketball when I first came into the Barons organization. While this is definitely true, there was so much more to learn than how to dribble with your off hand or shoot properly. Even after someone has mastered these things there's even more to it than seeing the court or even having chemistry with your team. When you become a Baron it becomes so much more than that. It becomes about family, leadership, sportsmanship, integrity, humility and all the other Baron's values. Our team has gone through times related to all of these words. A big part of experiencing these values is Baron's camp.*

*And Baron's camp never fails to be a great time. Listening to speakers, basketball, mind games, bowling, and so much more. It has definitely become something to look forward to at the end of summer. After this year I hope to be able to come back because it's something I'm not ready to give up. While it is a lot of fun and games Baron's camp also teaches us so much. I'm so thankful for all the help and effort put into the organization by the many coaches, parents, and players. Without everyone it definitely would not be as much fun as it is.*

*Now that I'm moving into my last year as a Baron, I want to try to enjoy and appreciate every last minute. Even writing this essay, it was nice to reflect on these past years. Everyone has heard it a thousand times before, might as well say it again: this time went by so fast, but the good news is that it was a great time.*





# Kelsey Wong

## McClatchy HS

#3



Well, today is the day. The day I actually realize that the cliché statement, “Time flies by” is very real. It seems like yesterday when I first received my Lady Knights Jersey with the number “30” rather than the number “3” that I wanted. I remember meeting my new teammates at our first practice. I already knew all of them from church basketball; however, I did not know that the team I was standing with that day would be different from the one I stand with today.

Our Barons team contrasts from many of the other Barons teams. We didn’t have the same teammates year after year ever since sixth grade. Instead, half of our team is different from the original one that we started out with;

however, I wouldn’t trade the team I have today for any other one. Although our team has experienced many changes throughout the years, we have managed to form unbreakable bonds of friendship. I can honestly call everyone on the team my sister. I share endless memories with all of them and know that they got my back. I’ll never forget all the amazing times we’ve shared together; such as crazy car rides to tournaments, staying up late at the hotels, our hilarious group chat, and laughing not just with each other, but also at each other. Barons has not only blessed me with the best set of sisters, but has also molded me into the person I am today.

Prior to becoming a Baron, I was the shy girl who just observed and smiled. I didn’t want to be the person to step up and be the leader of anything. However, Barons has helped me break out of my shell and become more confident, courageous, and mature. I am now not afraid to step up and fulfill the leadership role that I was once afraid to take on. Barons Camp has also helped me realize that the opinions and judgements of other should not prevent me from doing something silly and weird. I’m able to express myself and not be concerned about the opinions of others. I’ve learned to just go all out and have fun. Lastly, Barons has taught me that hard work allows an individual to achieve anything they desire. Whether it’s staying up an extra hour studying or practicing basketball, I know that I have to endure the pains of working hard so that I can succeed in achieving any goal.

When it is time to speak after the third game in a tournament, Joel would tell whoever is talking for our team, “Thank the organization for inviting us, thank the other team for a good game, and thank the parents.” I would like to thank the whole Barons organization for inviting me into such a great family of friends, teammates, and coaches. I have formed multiple bonds of friendships and developed essential characteristics because of the Barons organization. All of the selfless acts and dedication that the coaches put into the organization and Barons Camp is simply inspiring—the least I can say is thank you. I would also like to thank my teammates (sisters) for making my Barons experience unforgettable. We have shared moments of sheer happiness, endless laughter, and even tears of sadness that has only made us a family. I love each and every one of you guys. Thank you to my parents for all of the support and sacrifices they have made so that I can enjoy my experience as a Baron. Dad, thank you for always providing ice cold water, taking me to practices and tournaments, and always pushing me to be the best player and person that I can be. Mom, thank you for cheering me on at my games, organizing everything in my busy life, and making me the person I am today.

In our little speeches after the third game, Joel never told us to say anything about the coaches; however, I would like to dedicate this paragraph to Joel, Janie, and Rene. I would like to thank Joel for all the silly moments he provided our team with his goofiness. Although he likes to play around a lot, he still has his serious side of being an amazing coach who sacrifices a lot of his time for the betterment of our team. I would like to thank Janie for keeping our team focused at practices when we needed to be serious and “Mama ReRe” for being the most fun coach anyone could ask for. My Barons journey would definitely not be as entertaining and enjoyable without any of you.

Playing Barons was an amazing experience for me; and although all great things must come to an end, the memories that I have made will last a lifetime.







# Kristi Wong

## McClatchy HS

#45

Whenever someone asks me what grade I am in, I always feel the urge to say 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I still can't believe I'm a senior. It feels like it was just yesterday when I first came to Barons camp, looking up to all the campers. Looking back at my journey as a Baron, there are many memories in which I will cherish and hold forever.

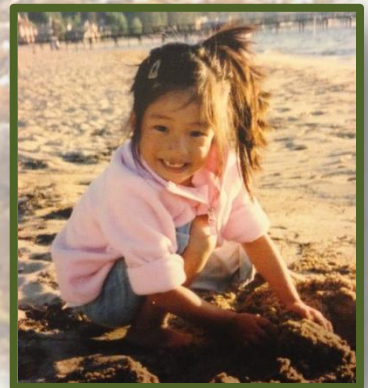
Before my first tournament as a Lady Knight, I remember asking Coach Joel for the number 24 but gave me a jersey with the number 45 instead. I looked at him like he was crazy but

then he told me it was his number when he was a Baron. I still gave him a hard time, always complaining because I wanted 24 but when it came to officially picking a number, I stuck to 45. One tournament I specifically remember was our first Ninjas tourney. After having practice at Sutter, we took two cars to go straight to San Jose. As we were driving side by side, we had a water fight by squirting water on the others in the other car and it became so competitive, we began to throw some left over food in the other car. But the fun didn't stop there. Once we got to the hotel late at night, we wanted to mess with Coach Joel. As he went to check in for everyone, we found a bag of gummy bears and stuck them all over his front windshield. Now looking back, we had so much energy when we were younger but now, all we do is sleep during car rides to tournaments.

Before Barons camp, I was scared because I wouldn't know anyone and I heard we would be on teams with other kids from different age groups. Our first Barons camp was at Sutter Middle School. I was one of those kids who were shy and wouldn't say or do anything. I always searched for my team and stuck with them whenever possible. However throughout the camp, everyone welcomed me and made me feel like I was a part of the Barons family. Because of Barons, I have grown out of my shell and am open to meeting new people. The first year, I never really understood the meaning of the words on the Barons t-shirts. But now that I'm a senior, every word has a deep meaning to me.

One of the many reasons why we are one of the luckiest teams is because we have coaches who tag along in on the fun and make sure we are safe at the same time. Joel, Janie, and Rene are three coaches who complete each other. They always put up with all our nonsense and I'm sure we annoy them at times, but they still never fail to let us down. When we would need a ride to practices and games, they are there. Even after practice, they would sometimes take us out to get ice cream or food. Our team never stayed the same throughout the years, but our coaches are one of the main reasons why we are still here and never gave up on us. I can't thank them enough! I also want to give a big thanks to my #1 supporters, my parents and my brother. They have taken a big chunk of their time in allowing me to take on this experience. Never did they fail to take me to games, practices, and helping at concessions and fundraisers. Not only did they have to support me, but also my twin sister Kelsey. I don't know how they dealt with double the trouble but I'm so glad to call them my parents. I love you! Not only am I thankful for my parents, but also want to thank my twin sister, Kelsey. I don't remember at any point in time did we ever separate during our times as a Baron. If one went to practice, the other did. If one didn't, the other didn't. I'm really lucky to have a best friend by my side for everything that I do. I may not say this all the time, but love you!

I especially want to thank the Kunisaki family and all the other Baron's coaches and families for supporting us at our games and making this a special journey for me. When my parents aren't around, I could always go to them for anything. Lastly, I want to thank my teammates who I call my sisters. We were never the tallest team and I swear we haven't grown since 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but we never let that affect us. We truly bonded these past years and I wouldn't want to have spent my journey with any other team. A little fun fact about our team is that we always carry a deck of cards with us wherever we go, whether it's dinner or the lobby. I am glad to say that I'm a part of the Baron's family and always will be.







# Marissa Yamauchi

## Kennedy HS

#14

If someone were to inform me five years ago about the long, memorable journey that I was about to embark on, I probably would have said, "You're out of your mind". My life at that time was mainly comprised of my family, friends, and academics. Of course, being someone who always manages to find herself trying new things, I fell in love with the game of basketball. Three years later from that moment, I fell in love with a team and organization that would completely alter my outlook on my goals, dreams, and life. So, here's how my Barons journey began...

My freshmen year of high school, I played on Kennedy's JV basketball team where I was asked to play guest play, and little did I know that I would wiggle myself into the Barons organization as a permanent player. I already knew a few of the girls, but coming on to the team, I had no idea what to expect. The girls were all so sweet and nice, and I was excited to create memories over the next years. In the beginning, I was felt really awkward, and nervous because I wasn't close to the girls or the coaches. Two years later, I found myself feeling more comfortable, accepted, and closer to my teammates and coaches. The bond and energy that we created was amazing, and I am very thankful to this organization and my coaches Joel, Janie, and Rene for making it possible. Our team has definitely grown together over the past years, and we continue to grow even off the court. We found ourselves winning more and more as we grew closer. I've loved and cherished playing with this team, and I can't believe that our journey playing basketball together is almost over. Our journey on the court is ending, but our journey off the court is just beginning. I'm so grateful for each and every one of these girls. I've enjoyed spending the last three years and look forward to many more with these amazing girls and coaches that make up my Barons team.

At the last Zebra's tournament, I had gone up for layup where I came down on my left knee, felt a pop, and a large amount of pain after. I ended up tearing my ACL, LCL, and meniscus. It didn't seem real that my Barons season was over for my Junior and Senior year and my volleyball season. I remember being so upset because I would not be on the court playing basketball with my teammates, but I was instantly relieved because I was reminded of how much I was loved by all the support and passion they showed me. Players from other teams also reached out to me, and this is one of the many reasons I am thankful for this organization. I remember getting together with my team and they had made me the cutest little card with the sweetest messages inside. I can't even explain how blessed I felt at that point. Even after my surgery, my team was constantly checking up on me as well as many other people that the organization has allowed me to get to know. I will always have so much love for this team, and cherish my journey as a Baron.

Finally, I'd like to thank all the parents, especially Kristi Omoto, for always supporting us, even if it meant leaving at six in the morning for a tournament! Thank you to this organization for allowing us to achieve our goals, and to be able to create bonds that will last a life time. Lastly, I want to thank my mom for always sacrificing so much for me, and supporting me no matter what. When you're a Baron, it's much more than playing basketball, it's about the memories and connections we create throughout the years. I will always be thankful to play as a Baron, and to share these moments with my Barons family. I wish all the 2016 Barons good luck in the future! We made it!