

At the start of the fourth quarter of the New Jersey Group IV South Sectional Championship, I looked up into the stands, which were packed with Cherry Hill East Basketball fans. A few hundred students made the hour-long trek to Atlantic City to flood the away team student section. By the looks on their faces, you would not have guessed that our team was down by more than 10 points. When the final buzzer sounded, a twinge of disappointment fell over me. Sure, I documented the game to the best of my ability, but as I fan *I wished for a happier ending.*

4 short days later, Governor Phil Murphy announced the indefinite closing of all NJ Schools.

Instantly, my heart sank. *This was supposed to be the best year of my life.* Even still, I remained optimistic that we would return to school just ~~two weeks later. one month later. two months later.~~

And then in late April, reality hit: not only would I never sit for another in-person high-school class again, but that basketball game would be the final event that I would cover as a part of Eastside. Instinctively I began to reflect on my time as a high-school photojournalist.

I've been fortunate to build relationships with the athletes, performers, and leaders of my school through my photography. Taking the time to put the camera down before a game or portrait allowed me to gain insight that I otherwise would have missed. As a visual storyteller, I have the power to provide a unique dimension to the story. Taking pictures from an isolated perspective often does not allow for the full landscape of the story to be communicated. Throughout the year I transitioned from being driven by the image to being driven by an emotional connection. The barrier that often surrounds people when they have a camera pointed in their face is slowly broken down when you listen to what they have to say.

Another important aspect of photojournalism is perspective: it can shape the mood and message of an image. From the first soccer game in September, I began to notice how perspective was impacting my images. I have always loved being close to the action, but as the year progressed I began to notice the world outside of the action. During a game, there are fans and spectators. During a performance, there is the stage crew. These groups of people carry a huge emotional weight of their own despite their place outside of the spotlight. In that last basketball game of the year, I spent a whole quarter documenting fans that had traveled an hour away to cheer on their team. Those fans told part of a story that would not have been complete through solely focusing on the action.

Ralph Waldo Emerson famously said, "Life is about the journey, not the destination". The class of 2020 certainly has a unique destination, but I firmly believe that the unique journey that I had has prepared me for my future endeavors. Perhaps the most important lesson I've learned this year is to not rush the journey, because you never know when it will be over, and there is always more to learn. So, As I look back on my final days as a part of Eastside, I am content knowing that I took advantage of every game and event that I had in front of me. I made my own happy ending.



HAND IN HAND

Members of the 2020 Black History Show Cast perform the closing act. The 2020 Show was titled “Our Music, Our Story” and was performed at Cherry Hill High School West on February 8, 2020.

Since this image’s publication in February 2020, it has taken on a completely new meaning for me. The young girl represents a new generation of Americans standing up to fight the systematic racism that plagues America. The joining hands represent the unity between them and the allies that stand behind them. The symbolism in this image -- not just to the audience of this show, but to America as a whole -- is really powerful to me.



BLAST OFF

Sophomore Nick Pezzella dives into the pool while gearing up for the 2019 Cherry Bowl Swimming Championships at Willowdale Swim Club on July 25, 2019. Pezzella, while only in his first year of the 15-18 age group, is still a strong contender for the 100m Breaststroke title.

The start is regarded by sprinters as the most crucial part of their race. Many races are won and lost at the start. While many pictures of the start are taken from the side, this picture brings a unique perspective to the start. The image also shows the subject as a massive force to be reckoned with.



HALFTIME SHADOWS

Head Coach Mike Melograna details a game plan for the Cherry Hill East Boys' Soccer Team during halftime in their game against cross-town rival Bishop Eustace High School on Sept. 10, 2019. The Cougars had jumped to a 2-0 lead by this point, establishing their dominance early.

When Coach Mel forms a huddle with his players I usually like to get into the huddle with a wide-angle lens to show the team up close. When I stepped back, however, I saw the long shadows of the players on the ground and was still able to see Coach Mel's face. The shadows made the players seem a lot bigger, almost like monsters. The picture really represents the team's dominance in that game. The shadows make this picture for me.



SPLASH OF GLORY

Anthony Moon celebrates his win in the 100m Breaststroke at the 2019 Tri-County Swimming Championships on Aug. 4, 2019. Moon was a finalist each year in the event -- he finished in the top three each year for the past three years. After looking up at the scoreboard and seeing a "1" next to his name, Moon threw up his fist as splashes of water surrounded him.

The frozen droplets of water resulting from Anthony Moon's splash and his fist in the air show the essence of his emotion following his win. The contrast in the scene also accentuates Moon as a dominant force and tells the story of his win perfectly.



JUMP!

Cherry Hill East sophomore Luke Luhers (16) jumps over an Eastern defender to take a header during East's 1-0 win over Eastern High School on Oct. 10, 2019.

The contrast in this image communicates the full story of the game. Not only does the difference in color illustrate two opposing teams, but the clear differences in intensity show Cherry Hill East's dominating focus and control of the game. While header shots alone are a physical feat of athleticism, I believe that the added element of an opposing player cowering as Luke takes the shot illustrates the team's win perfectly.