



Lauren Gruca

PHOTOJOURNALIST

PERSONAL STATEMENT

When I was first introduced to photography, I would just take photos to take photos. But over the years as I got more experience, I've learned that photography is an art. It's a way to capture a special moment in time. With my photos, I share the experiences with the people in them. I can share their stories in a whole new perspective. I've grown such a passion to capture everyone's little moments and big successes over my high school career.

This year for my second and last year on the *Tabulae* yearbook staff at Lyons Township High School, I wanted to make the most of my year. As a returning senior on staff I was able to apply for an editorial position. I applied and was given the role of the photo editor. With this job came so many new opportunities and many new learning experiences. I not only had the opportunity to teach my skills to other photographers, but I got to learn from them as well. Throughout the year, I went to as many shoots as I could, including sports games, clubs, and many fine arts performances.

While going on shoots I learned the importance of staying focused and making sure I can capture whatever might be coming. You never really know what is going to happen in the future, so you should always be ready with your camera. A lot of my favorite pictures I took this year are reaction and emotion shots. I was always ready with my camera up after someone scored a goal or after someone received a good score. I like these photos, the best because they show more of a story than just a regular action shot.

My personal favorite event, I attended was the IHSA boys soccer state championship game. Before this game I had attended many of my school's soccer games that I had gotten close with both the players and the coaches. When they were headed off to fight for a state championship title, they asked me to come along with them to document it. I was so honored to be asked and trusted with this job. I got to have my own media pass and was able to get on field access. This was such a special experience for me to learn what it's like to be at a big state event.

As a photographer, I feel that a picture is never just a simple frame frozen in time. There will always be a backstory to it. To have the chance to tell someone else's story through my pictures is the greatest part about it. Not only do I love to tell someone's story but I also love for that person or a team to look back on their experience from a different point of view when they see my photos. It's the best feeling when you hear someone say "Wow! This is so cool!" to a photo you took of their game. For them they got to live it but with photography they are able to get excited and relive those special moments when looking back on them.

Photography has been an important part of my life. It's my main passion and I hope to continue it in the future at Penn State University. I love that with a camera in my hands I can document an experience that I feel should be seen from my own perspective. It's just as special as living it to look back on the scene that I have captured.

Reflection:

Soccer has always been one of my favorite sports to photograph. This game was filled with so much suspense that got both the student section and players themselves so energetic. I love the reaction in this photo of the player who had just scored a goal to tie up the game in the closing minutes of regular time. I'm proud of my shutter speed in this photo to get his reaction because he was moving so fast and the snow falling made for difficult shooting conditions.

**Caption:**

SHIVERS. Mason Santos '24 celebrates his game-tying goal against Stagg High School in the super sectionals during a Blizzard on Halloween. The team won the game in penalty kicks to advance to the semi-finals state championship game.

Reflection:

Going on sports shoots you never know what you're going to capture. What I love about this photo is that it's a one-time moment. It shows the player's excitement and energy after scoring a goal. I'm proud of the angle I was standing at because it shows that the player is truly just celebrating for himself and not an audience, sometimes in sports where helmets are worn it's hard to see facial expressions, but you can see this player's excitement clearly.

**Caption:**

TRIUMPH IN THE NET. Sean Cherry '24 celebrates scoring a goal against rival team Hinsdale Central during the last few minutes of the game. Cherry, who has been a four-year varsity team player, led the Lions to the conference game win.

Reflection:

I love going to any type of sports game on our school's home field. What I love about this picture is the shutter speed. I was able to make sure my lighting wasn't too aggressive while also making sure I could capture the fast movements of the game. Shooting during the day, especially when it's sunny, always gives the best lighting and I can always find the right place of where I want to be to get the photo.

**Caption:**

FAST AS I CAN. Peyton Johnson '27 cradles as she sprints to the goal from a player on the Glenbrook South lacrosse team. This is Johnson's first year playing high school lacrosse and she holds a place on the varsity team. Her pink bow represents the cause of the game as the girls lacrosse team sold baked goods to raise money for Lurie Children's Hospital.

Reflection:

I wanted to capture the behind the scenes of gymnastics. Everyone sees the cool flip or trick the gymnast does but no one sees how they react to seeing their scores. It's an impactful moment for not only the player but also for me taking the photo to feel how excited they were and how happy they were for their teammates.

**Caption:**

HUGS ALL AROUND. Emily Bertucci '25 hugs her teammates in excitement when she sees her final score given for her beam routine. Bertucci received a 9.35 which led her to receive first place at regionals.

Reflection:

When going to sports shoots, I don't limit myself to just my school's team. This photo was taken right after the opposing school had won a baseball game. I wanted to capture the team's excitement and emotion shown because it's always fun to step out of your goal to just shoot your own team and I could see both sides of a game.

**Caption:**

BRING IT IN. Seniors Jimmy Janicki '24 and Jude Warwick '24 embrace to celebrate a conference win over Lyons Township High School. The Downers Grove North Trojans ended their season first in conference with a 16-2 record.