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Personal Essay

My life is built upon two parts: as a tennis player and comedy performer. These two things appear to be irrelevant to each other, but now they are connected with each other and shape my current big dream: making comedy movies in Japan that appeal to both Japanese and American tastes.

Comedy has always been the basis of my life. I love to make people laugh more than anything. It all started when I participated in the high school graduation ceremony as the performer. When the presenter called my name and I showed up on the stage in front of 500 people, what I felt was not fear at all. It was pure excitement. Every time big laughter filled the auditorium, I felt like I was on the top of the world. Ever since this experience, I have kept performing comedy to people in high school. I even participated in National Comedy Competition to prove myself the ability to make people laugh outside classroom. I'm still proud of the result that I went up to the semi-final as a new face.

Not only as a performer on the stage but also as a director, I have engaged in creating comedy movies. When I first made a film in ethic class, I was overwhelmed by the infinite possibility of the film because I could convey my comedy in the way I couldn't express as a performer on the stage. In addition, an American comedy show changed my perspective of comedy. The tipping point was when I saw *The Office*, a 30-minute-American TV show. Just a single episode made a strong impact on me because I had never seen such a TV show that realistically depicted our lives. Everything about this TV show was new to me: their camerawork, each character's strong personality, and uncanny atmosphere that tickles people's funny bone. Japanese movies had none of them. This was the reason that I decided to quit Keio University and go to the United States because I was convinced that in this country,

there would be so many keys to make Japanese movies and TV shows more interesting.

Another part of my life, as a tennis player, was not going easy. It had been nothing but painful for ten years because I couldn't win any title until the last year of my high school. In general, the longer you play, the better you will get. Unfortunately, that didn't happen to me. Come to think of it, it was not "unfortunate" but "natural" that I couldn't get a title because I obviously didn't make any effort. I was such a quitter who ran away from anything painful and hard. When I realized this, I changed myself. I decided to believe in the power of making the effort for the first time in ten years. I established two things to do every single day: waking up every morning at five a.m. to clean the entrance of my house, and doing the additional training menu that I made just for myself. I literally did all of those things every day regardless of how bad my condition was. In my very last game as a tennis player, I finally won the high school championship in men's singles. I remember the moment I received the trophy. Even though it was made of cheap plastic, it did feel heavy. It is all because I won valuable lesson along with result itself: Great achievement comes with great pain. Now I welcome all the hardship that will come to me in the future.

Without any of these experiences, I wouldn't even write this personal statement. Without comedy, I would have spent my whole life in Japan going with the flow with no purpose. Without experience as a tennis player, I was too scared to jump into this new country and pursue this dream. Now I know these two parts of my life will shape the new part: as a director of comedy movies.