

Medfield International Student Experiences the Brotherhood of Football



Almost every Monday through Saturday, from August to December, you can find the Medfield High School football team going through a strenuous regimen of practice and conditioning. All of these players are local students, many born and raised in Medfield, save one: Andrew Xu. Standing 5'5" and weighing in around 140 pounds, Xu does not look like your typical high school football player.

Xu is one of 83,000 international high school students to study on F-1 visas in the U.S. in 2014, of which 58% are his Chinese compatriots. On paper he is just another applicant hailing from the city of Shenzhen, one of China's leading economic powerhouses that sends thousands of students abroad every year. On the field however, "Shoe," the moniker given to him by his teammates due to the similarity with his last name, more than played the part – he lived it.

"He was passionate and committed to the football team and saw the whole experience through with the right attitude and demeanor," recounts his coach and Medfield High guidance counselor, Erik Ormberg. He then added, "I wish we had him for all four years." Even though Xu only took the field for a handful of plays the whole season, you'd be hard-pressed to not find #5 at a team practice or social event. On the final day of the season Andrew asked to speak with the team and proceeded to give "...a stirring speech about the brotherhood of football... It clearly meant something to Andrew to be a part of this team."

This commitment did not go unnoticed, and Xu quickly made friends, integrating into the team and school community.

As one of only three international students and entering Medfield High for his senior year, he faced one of the most daunting social challenges of his life — a gauntlet of awkwardness and insecurity that would strike fear into the heart of most adults. However, the invisible barriers of well-established social cliques that cause many of us to cringe when recalling high school memories were no match for Xu's kind and unassuming personality. His advice for overcoming social challenges? "Be outgoing and be nice. Let people know you by telling them what you're thinking instead of making them guess." Wise words from such a young man.