

Welcome, family, friends, faculty, and Class of 2022. It is a great honor to have the opportunity to speak before each one of you. I begin with a story from four years ago; one of my first vivid memories as a Quakertown Community High School student. I hope a lot of you can relate. It was the first high school football game in August 2018. Appropriately dressed in my Hawaiian shirt, my small 4'11 freshmen frame, entered Alumni Stadium, terrified to climb to the back of the bleachers. I walked past the seniors in utter terror, filled with fear of getting booed or maybe even having popcorn thrown at me. Although I enjoyed each game and came out unscathed, all I longed for was my turn in the front of the stands. It was like elementary school all over again, kindergarten students just waiting for the day 5th grade began and we could finally sit in the back of the bus.

Look at us now - Class of 2022. But how did we get here?

- Was it Mr. Sandler's infamous Talent Show performances
- Mr. Boquist's daily sports announcements (*I think I'm a Villanova fan now*)
- How about Coach Banas's notorious pep rally speeches, or Mr. Burch's love for Shakespeare (*hence the reason he is the most quotable teacher*)

Now- I would be remiss if I didn't share endless gratitude for the people who got us to this day. Maybe it is a grandparent, your parents, siblings, a friend, or maybe it is a teacher. For me, personally, I wouldn't be standing here without my parents' endless support and unconditional love. I want you all to do something. Who is that person or group of people for you? Take a moment and find them, maybe there up in the stands or sitting right here on the field. Let's give them a big wave to thank them.

Do you see where we're sitting, Class of 2022? Not only did we make it to the bottom of the stands, we all made it onto the field, **TOGETHER!** No doubt, it has been a tough few years for all of us, and everyone has endured different challenges. But, as I look at all of the smiling faces before me, I see strength and resilience. I see a class of self-assured students prepared for what comes next. Getting to the back of the bus or forging our way to the front of the stands wasn't always the easiest journey. YET I say- Thank goodness for the surprises and the detours! Sometimes the universe hears our plans but sends us down a different road, and because of the path of the past two and a half years, we head into a future equipped to navigate any obstacle in our way.

- Our classroom doors were temporarily closed, yet we enhanced our computer literacy.
- Our stages may have been temporarily vacant, so we performed our music outside.
- Our fields may have been shut down, but we still found a way to play and stay healthy with our teammates...

We learned to be thankful for the little things and find opportunities in negative situations. I'm eternally grateful to be a member of the class of 2022. We are a class of glass half full, NEVER glass half empty. As Mr. Handel says, "ALL GRIT- NO QUIT!"

As we enter the next chapter of our lives some of us will be going off to college, entering the workplace, beginning training for a Trade, or going to the military. Wherever we go next, we are entering the world as young adults. *So basically, we're in the back of the stands or the front of the bus again.* We will be surrounded by people who have years more experience in their craft or trade. I don't know about you, but I plan to pack my Hawaiian t-shirt as a reminder of all the memories shared and the lessons learned at Quakertown Community High School. Although we may be at the back of the stands again, we stand a little taller, a lot stronger, and infinitely more prepared for this next chapter in our life. Congratulations Class of 2022!!

See you in the stands as a PROUD ALUMNI on November 24th for the Thanksgiving Day Game.

Go Panthers!