



THOMAS'S CLAPHAM

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Class of 2016

I joined Reception at Thomas's Clapham aged 4, in 2007. I progressed through the school until the end of Year 8, when I was Head of Lawrence House and Captain of the First XI Football team. By this time, it was obvious that sport was going to shape my future: outside school all my spare time was spent training with professional football academies.

It seemed that my ambitions in sport would be best served by a London day school. The day school process at Thomas's culminated for me in offers of scholarships from all the schools I applied to (Alleyns, Dulwich College, Whitgift and Emmanuel). I chose Whitgift School for its promised academic and sporting excellence. Whitgift made good on its promise: I left with top-marked A-Levels in Economics, Maths and Geography, was Captain of the First XI again and made the Independent Schools Football Association (ISFA) regional squad.

College sport in America is the standard route into the professional game, and it is commensurately well funded. University in America offered me the chance to study and to play Football, each at an elite level. That's why I am now in my third year at Furman University in South Carolina, studying

for a Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences and playing NCAA Division 1 'soccer'. It is intense: I train twice a day and have to fit an enormous amount of academic work around that. But the campus is stunning (it's in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains), the sun shines for ten months a year and I've already co-authored a published research paper!

I have very many fond memories from my nine years at Thomas's. The 'D-set', as those of us applying to London day senior schools were known, will always be close to my heart for its daily cocktail of struggle and laughs. I am still in touch with several D-setters. But, inevitably, my favourite memory has to do with Football: Thomas's Clapham's first ever victory in the annual derby against Thomas's Battersea, at Trinity Fields!

I feel enormous gratitude to many staff at Thomas's Clapham. There's no room here to name them all, but Gary Evans, Phil Ward, Julie Velasco and Shane Lockhart deserve special mention. They were beacons of kindness, support and integrity, and they believed in me. I learned from them to trust in my own abilities and to pursue my ambitions, however daring!