

# ESOL VOICES: Student Spotlight

Waris Nazuk Mer

Waris is an ESOL refugee student from Afghanistan. He came to the United States with his wife in 2014. In Afghanistan, Waris worked as operations manager for a transportation company that was the primary contractor for the US military. He currently works and attends school full-time, and he plans to earn a degree in Business at MCC. In this narrative, Waris writes about how he was robbed of what should have been a wonderful childhood memory.



Afghanistan

## My First Soccer Match

As a 9 year-old third grader in Afghanistan, I was a happy child, and I never thought about life problems such as war, politics, and economics. I was interested in playing soccer and watching soccer games. I was busy with my homework and helping my mum with the house chores, and I was especially waiting for my cousins to come and visit us because they had a soccer ball, and we would play soccer while they were at our house.

In that time in my country, we had only one day off from school in a week which was each Friday, and kids were so excited for their day off from school. One day my older brother told me, "I want to take you to a soccer game next Friday at the stadium, but I want you to keep helping mum, and listen to mum, dad, and everyone else at home for whatever they want you to do."

I was so happy for his promise to

me to go watch a soccer game in Kabul stadium, and I told him, "Yes I am helping mum with house chores, and I will keep helping everyone else at home and do my homework, too." I promised him that I would keep my behavior like it was, and it was a genuine promise. All week, I was continuing my daily chores, going to school in the morning, and helping mum as usual, and I was waiting impatiently for Friday.

On Friday morning when I woke up, it was a sunny day and the weather was nice and warm, and the sky was so clear. I took a shower and I ate breakfast with my dad.

At the time my dad asked, "What made you wake up early? It is Friday, and you don't have school today."

I answered him, "Dad, you know I am going to watch the soccer game today."

My dad said, "The game is only this afternoon."

We finished our breakfast and I was waiting impatiently for my brother to go to the stadium. Finally my brother woke up, and he ate breakfast, and I asked him, "Brother what time we are going to stadium today?"

He answered me "Brother we are going to stadium at 12:00 pm today, and we going to get there by my bike, okay."

I told him "Okay."

Later, after my brother bought groceries for my mother at the bazaar, it was time to go. My brother asked me, "You ready to go?"

I answered excitedly, "Yes, I have been ready from this morning. Let's go!"

My brother made me a seat on the front of his bike, and we moved toward the stadium. The Kabul stadium was one hour from our house by bike, and it was a long trip

for me because on our way to the stadium my brother stopped many times to fix my seat, so I could be comfortable on his bike.

Finally we made it to Kabul stadium, and my brother parked his bike somewhere far from the entrance, so we walked 15 minutes to get to the A entrance of Kabul stadium. He bought two tickets for us. When we entered the stadium, there were a lot of people inside, and my brother pointed to the other side of the stadium and said, "You know we have to walk there if you are not tired."

I said, "No I am not tired. Let's go." I felt so excited. We kept walking to our final destination, and everything was new for me and there were lots of people. After 30 minutes walking to other side of the stadium, my brother said, "Hey, there are two seats empty. Run fast please, so we can get them."

Before the players emerged on the field all the people were starting to make different shouts, and I was so afraid of those noises that came from all around the stadium to my ears. Later on, the players emerged on the field from both sides of the field, and people were making lots of noises, and I asked my brother,

"Why are they so loud? I can't handle it."

He said, "Wait! Just few more minutes it will be quiet, okay."

I said, "Okay." Meanwhile I blocked both of my ears with my palms, so I couldn't hear them anymore, but it didn't help me a lot.

The first team players had red sports uniforms, and the other side had white, and the white team was my favorite team. They started the match, and before the first half time, my team beat their opponent team by two goals, and the red team players were panting, and they were trying to avoid more goals from my team. The match continued. It was almost half time.

Suddenly, I saw two cars come inside the field, and they stopped the game. They announced something; I didn't know what they said. It was so noisy at that time.

I asked my brother, "Who are they? Why did they stop the game?"

He responded "Brother, they are Taliban, and I don't want you to look at the field for a few minutes please."

I accepted his request, and I didn't look for a while. I was so scared of them. However, I couldn't control my eyes, and my tiny little

heart was beating much faster than usual because I was scared of them, so I looked up. When I looked at the field, I saw one of them took the hand of a man from their car, and made him stand in the middle of the field.

Another one came out of his car with a gun, and ran closer to the man, and he put the gun to his head. I heard the gun shot, and I saw the man fall down on the field.

I started crying.

My brother hugged me, and he said "Stop crying. We are going home. We are not going to stay here anymore, okay."

I tried many times to not cry, but I couldn't stop.

He told me, "Let's go to the bazaar. I am going to buy you a soccer ball. Then we are going home."

We went to the bazaar, and he bought me a soccer ball, but I was crying, and I couldn't stop crying. Then we reached home. Before we entered the house, he told me that I had to forget what I saw in the field that day.

My brother wanted me to forget what I saw on that day, but I will never forget that day. It will be unforgettable for the rest of my life.

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*ESOL Voices a collection of stories written by ESOL students at Monroe Community College. This semester, we are highlighting students from Middle Eastern & Asian countries. Look for a new story in the Tribune each month. We hope you will find these stories interesting and inspiring.*

*Katie Leite & Pamela Fornieri, ESOL Program, May 2015*

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