

Devin Mateo: Triceratops



Devin Mateo: 20years old. Picture taken a few minutes before I began my interview with him

*Lion—the lion is considered to be king of the jungle. Its rather large shoulders and muscular legs do no justice to his mighty roar. Hands in hair, hair in hands; his fingers run swiftly in and out of his mass of hair. It is not his mane of hair, nor is it his steady eye that captures the essence of a lion. Rather one could say it is his awfully large heart. “I hate making people feel bad”, Devin, exclaimed in response to my question. The sincerity in his voice gave proof to the words; voice steady and strong.*

To define one in simple words can be tricky. What makes a lion the king of the jungle? Is it his mighty roar, fierce eyes, swift run? It is easy to look at this beast and piece by piece take him apart until he is left with a pile of what once resembled a mighty king. In pieces and parts he is just music, sports, scared, or funny, but together as one whole I could only find three words that give justice to this man: Devin Gabriel Mateo. Together these three words make him—him. Each additional detail that he divulged to

me gave me insight to who he is. Scared and unsure he painted me a picture of what it meant to live up to those three words

“What are you most afraid of?” a common response might be, losing someone I love, or not being successful, or even spiders, but no: “Mountain Lions, oh and serial killers.” That most certainly caught me off guard, and I think he could sense that because a huge grin spread across his face. That’s what truly conveyed the inner lion. He had an ability to sneak up on me without even the slightest notion of warning. Expecting one thing. Giving me another.

*Penguin— The penguin is known for its cute and friendly appearance.* Penguins make me laugh. Not because they can tell funny jokes, but because they seem so awkwardly content that I cannot help but laugh. Half way through my interview, Mateo graced me with one of his favorite jokes: “OK so two Atoms are walking down the street. The first Atom says to the second one: Dude I lost an electron. The other says back, are you sure? Yes I’m POSITIVE.” Mateo doesn’t need a cheesy joke to get him chuckles and giggles. It is him that made me laugh. I found myself easily distracted from jotting down what he was saying. Instead I allowed myself to listen to the joke, but not the words he used to tell it. I followed the excitement in his voice and the frantic hand gestures. His enthusiasm and contentment became so contagious that I could not help but—laugh.

Have you ever looked at a penguin, always dressed in its finest, black suit, white shirt, bowtie, and wondered what was under it all? If maybe its put together appearance is a shield? Well under Mateo’s suit of charm, wit, and jade eyes, lies an uncertainty. An uncertainty of who he is and if it’s good enough. Watching him “undress” himself, emotionally of course, seemed to contrast the perceptions I had come to develop over the

last 40-minutes. The fact that he is a jock, and a musician, and funny seems to be evidence to his confidence, but no. Under the black and white suit stood truth. A truth that said, “ I am afraid of people not liking me. Like I have to put on an act, force myself to be funny and outgoing.” There I had it, flat out on the table, a fear bigger than mountain lions and serial killers. A fear that if looking into his eyes I would probably never be able to find on my own.

*Gorilla—a fierce brute that’s strength is respected throughout the animal kingdom.* Any person that enjoys beating another person with a stick is barbaric, but since it’s all in fun and games we will let it slide. Lacrosse is something that Mateo found through his love of sports and admiration of big brother. Mateo explained that he was always into sports, but when he saw that his big brother played lacrosse he became interested in the sport as well. Mateo is a starting player on the Cal Poly Lacrosse team. I watched my first game ever with great amusement. Such skill is involved. The night before the game we stood across from each other on the narrow cement outside his apartment. “I’m going to throw the ball to you with my net and you catch it with yours,” he said. It took me a good 10 plus tries to catch the ball and keep it in my net. The small white ball is just inches bigger than a golf ball. It is flung from one player to the next. Each player is given his own net, which is the only contact the ball is allowed. It seems it would be extremely exciting to catch the ball inside your net, but as soon as the ball is caught a player from the other team comes and beats the excitement right out of you. A broken wrist, bruised arms, and heavy workouts leave this brute not with bitterness and scars, but instead ready for more. Although Mateo enjoys lacrosse, it is not his favorite. It is his ultimate love for sports that keeps him all “juiced up.”



**Devin Mateo on left. He is on the sidelines taking a breather during an intense lacrosse game**

His love for sports has driven him to study Kinesiology. Rocking back and forth, forth and back, he thinks out loud, “I want to be a physician’s assistant. They make bank.” His remark is quickly followed with laughter and a “you’re not going to actually write that, right?” “I can’t make any promises,” I said. It’s important to do what will make you happy and content in life, he explains further. Mateo started as a business major his freshmen year, but soon decided to change directions and follow his instincts. *Bird—an animal that is given the ultimate freedom and control—wings.* “We spend most of our lives trying to get control. We develop our speech, and motor skills, and way of thinking—and then we drink to lose control.” Music is something that we have complete control over no matter where, or what we are on, Mateo continues to explain, “its not something that should be forced it just happens.” Music has found a permanent home in Mateo’s life. From piano, to drums, to guitar, to an occasional song, he finds comfort.

The feeling of allowing the music to be his wings and carry him is an experience he never wants to let go of. It is in his hand movements that I hear the words he can't seem to find to explain what music means to him. They push through his hair, and sway around in the air as if they are looking for the lost words. They succeed—I understand. Hesitant to interrupt his train of thought—I ventured to ask why he occasionally sang. “I can sing, but I don't like to. My voice cracks, and it sounds like I am going through puberty”, here we are again at a crossroads of outward confidence and inward need for approval.

More literally speaking, Mateo will be flying to South America in the end of summer to study abroad. Chile is where he will be doing his studies. With just a suitcase and him, he will embark on an experience that is steered by courage and independence. Do you know any Spanish, I asked Mateo? “No not really.” It's hard to tell if he is speaking the truth or if he is being modest once again?

*—Appearing to be Large and intimidating on the outside, on the inside this animal is just a harmless vegetarian.* I could say that Devin Mateo is just another average guy who is trying to survive college in one functioning piece, but in fact Devin Mateo is much larger than that. He embodies heart, quirkiness, fierceness, and insecurity, a deadly combination. He has fear but instead of letting it hold him back, he uses it to push him forward. Although Devin Gabriel Mateo may seem unapproachable due to his overwhelmingly large resume of characteristics, underneath is a harmless, caring, and modest guy. “Devin if you were to pick ONE animal to be what would you choose?” His response, “ a lion...no a penguin...wait no a gorilla...hmm no a bird...no no I got it a: *Triceratops.*

