

CHRISTINECHANG**Boggling
Broadcast**

Drowning in corruption

Not long ago, impassioned fans like me across America engaged themselves in the vicarious thrills of a young speedo-clad man. He had a knack for traveling quite rapidly through great vats of chlorinated water, and he was known for winning large golden disks. Through magazines and YouTube and televised broadcasts, this celebrated athlete drew global attention last summer as the tips of his fingers reached toward record-breaker status.

This man was Michael Phelps, arguably one of the most phenomenal, inspiring, and determined athletes in all of U.S. history.

Phelps was the ultimate success story. A series of poignant interviews with his mother last year revealed startling details of Phelps' challenging and seemingly hopeless childhood with ADHD. Yet through the patience and persistence he gained in those difficult years, Phelps emerged not as someone who would "never be able to focus on anything," but as a mature role model whom thousands looked up to. After his victory in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Phelps pledged to donate \$1 million towards creating a foundation that would encourage every swimmer to pursue his passion. And with this charisma, this compassion, this candid aspiration, Phelps earned the unfailing support of people around the world.

But then, we saw something else. Something many of us did not expect or want to see. A recently released photo of Phelps smoking marijuana from a bong crushed the honorable reputation that I so admired before. Only half a year ago Phelps had secured a spot near the top of my list of dedicated figures. But now, he's left me with the decision of either taking him off that list, or moving him down. Way down.

Since the beginning of 2009, there have been reports of Phelps gambling, "chugging booze," and partying recklessly. He has carelessly exposed a completely different side of himself, a side of himself that leaves us wondering if he's the same man we saw proudly representing our country at the Olympics. This is what I call cheating: cheating on the faith and respect of fans around the globe. It has ruined his image and depreciated his potential to guide and influence so many swimmers who need the encouragement of an experienced instructor. After all, how many people will look up to a renowned athlete who has lost his integrity and cheated the public, regardless of how fast he can swim?

Fortunately, this kind of corruption rarely occurs at MVHS. But that's because we are so morally pampered in high school that any form of cheating is eliminated to the greatest extent. In Literature, we are required to run every single essay through the ever-popular turnitin.com to prevent plagiarizing. In Chemistry we are given nicely laminated "anti-cheat sheets" to cover up our tests and block off wandering eyes. But once we leave MVHS and make our way into colleges and careers, there won't be any teachers kindly reminding us to look up at the ceiling, not our neighbor's paper, during a test. The temptation to cheat will be everywhere and unlike in high school, there's no second chances.

May it be three years or three months until you're out of high school, remember: when your morals are tested, recall the fool Michael Phelps made of himself for a mere few moments of unethical pleasure. Please don't do the same.