

# Massachusetts Letters About Literature Honors, | 2011 Level I

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Dear Matt Tavares,

My name is Camden Vassallo, but you can call me Andy Oyler. Your book, *Mudball*, the truly amazing story of Andy Oyler, taught me to overcome my own self-doubt through hard work and a positive attitude.

It all started when I was in the second grade. All of my friends played touch football at recess. I loved the game and desperately wanted to play, but no one on my team would pass the ball to me or let me be the quarterback. No one on the other team's defense even thought about covering me. Clearly, no one saw me as a talent or a threat. I felt invisible, like Andy's "mudball" lost in the puddle. Just like Andy, I "was the shortest player on" my team, and I wondered, "maybe it's time for me to quit".

But Andy didn't quit and neither did I. I was on the field every recess until one day, a teammate finally tossed me the ball. Determined to be seen, I grabbed the ball and ran, as if being chased by a stampede of charging rhinos, toward the end zone. Just as Andy raced around the bases to score the winning run, I scored my first touchdown! I felt as if Maloney and Yeager were on the sidelines cheering me on just as they supported Andy. I was out of my slump!

From that day on, I believed I could do anything. In fourth grade, I joined an out of school football club. My team was playing an undefeated team. It was cold and rainy and I thought of Andy and his cold hands trembling as he held the bat. Even if Slugger McCreery doubted me like he doubted Andy, I now believed in myself! I felt like a giant on the field. Others noticed me, trusted me, passed me the ball, and some even feared me. Inspired by Andy, I thought positive thoughts, ran my fastest, threw my hardest, and had the most fun I could. We won the game!

Because Andy Oyler did not listen to the heckling fans, he became the shortest player in the league to hit the shortest homerun in baseball history. Because of *Mudball*, I did not give up when no one believed in me. Not only did I become a threat and a talent on the football field, but I also learned never to doubt myself in anything I do.

Sincerely,

*Camden*

**Camden Vassallo, Grade 6  
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