

## EXPOSURE



## A CALLING FROM COMMUNITY

*Beyond the sport: Racine Babb*

Story by [Fresno State](#)

November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Racine Babb was with her teammates at Wahoo's restaurant when she got the call.

"My roommate called me and she's like, 'Where are you?'" Racine says. "Yelling frantically, she said, 'The apartment's on fire.'"

The three-alarm fire occurred in mid-August across the street from Fresno State's campus, south of Shaw at Backer Avenue. Racine is one of several students who was displaced by the apartment fire.

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“When I got there, you could see all the smoke and it was super hard to breathe,” she says. “We could see people still trying to get out of the apartments next to us. They were using a ladder that was in our backyard and we were trying to help people get out.”

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Racine was grateful to see her roommate safe but remained in shock. She recalls firefighters pointing a water hose directly toward her room, but didn’t quite process that everything she owned was in flames.

“Then I just lost it and I cried and was like, ‘Oh my gosh, I literally don’t have anything,’” Racine says.

Racine drove home to her parents’ home in Caruthers that night. Waking up the next morning, she tried to face the day ahead. She attempted to brush her teeth before remembering she lost her toothbrush in the fire.

“Then I thought, ‘Well, at least I can change my clothes.’ And I’m like, ‘Oh my God, I don’t have that either,’” Racine says. “So, I literally drove to [soccer] practice in the stuff that I was wearing that night ... It was difficult.”

A few days later, Racine returned to the apartment to see if she could salvage any of her belongings. All she found among the melted items and soot was her Bible, smelling of smoke and worn from water damage.

“I’m a faithful person,” Racine says. “God just let me know that it was going to go up from there and that I wasn’t alone.”



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## TEAM EFFORT

Racine wasn't alone. After the apartment fire, she says she received overwhelming support from the Fresno State community. The night of the incident, her teammates sent an array of texts letting her know they were there for her. They gave her gifts throughout the week and donated two full boxes of clothes.

Her coaching staff told Racine to take as much time as she needed to recover. The day after the fire, they drove her to Target and bought her essential items.

"Our department is very accommodating when it comes to supporting our student-athletes in emergency situations," says head coach Brian Zwaschka. "Helping Racine get back on her feet in simple ways and just doing whatever we could to reduce her stress in an otherwise bad situation was all we hoped for. Everyone is prepared to rally for each other in this way, small or large — whatever is needed."

Racine and other students who were displaced from the apartment fire received counseling at the Student Health and Counseling Center. They also benefited from Fresno State's Good

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financial emergency or catastrophic event that would otherwise prevent them from continuing their education. Through this fund, Racine and other students were awarded money and relocated to the on-campus dorms.

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“I feel so loved and supported and blessed in a hundred different ways and I'm just so thankful for it. People in the community that don't even know who I am or don't know who we are, they're still willing to give and help,” Racine says.

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→ Did you know? Thanks to donor support, over \$50,000 was awarded through the Good Samaritan Fund to 72 students in 2018-19, of which \$12,135 was paid to keep 15 students from eviction and homelessness.

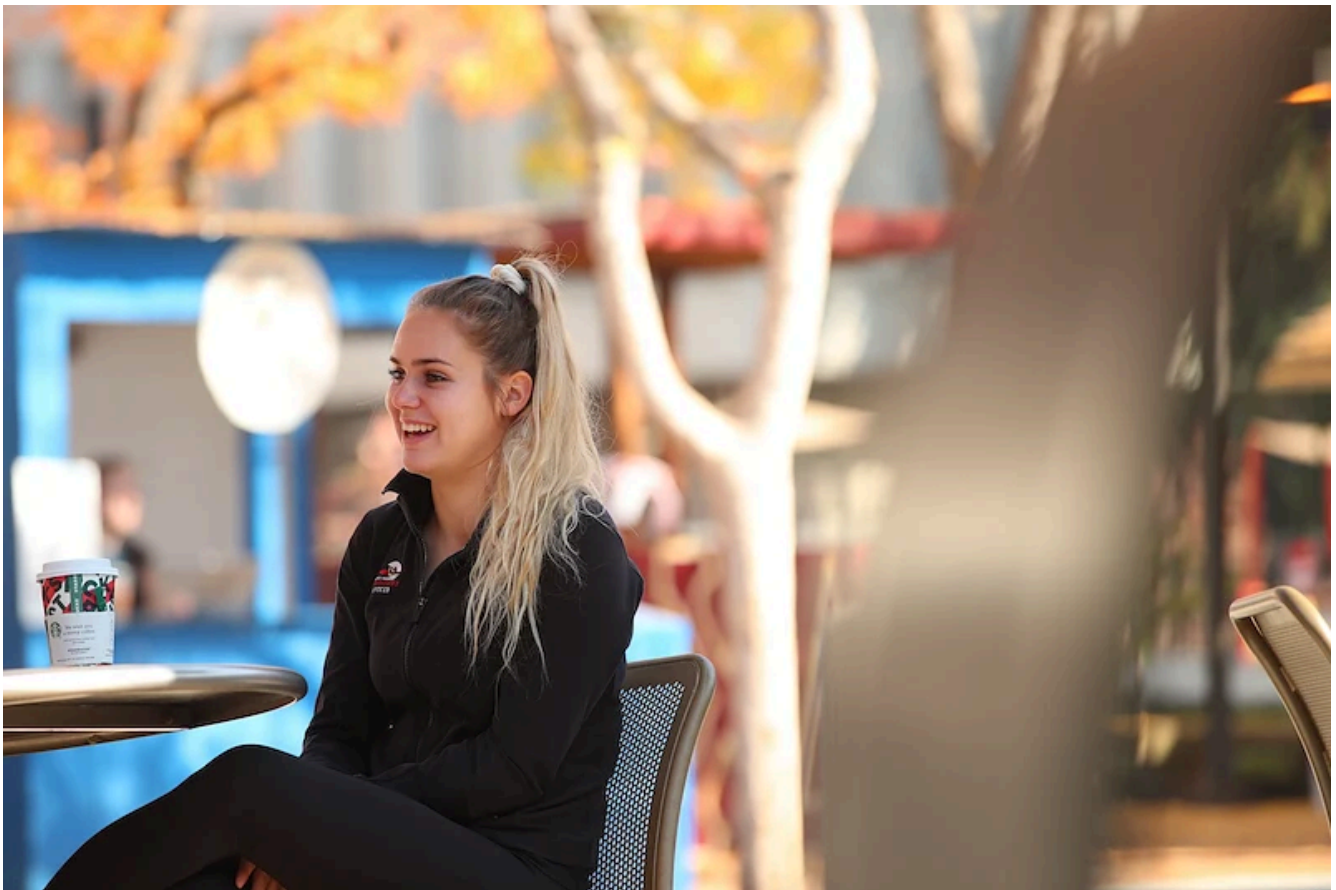
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# LOCAL BULLDOG

Growing up in small-town Caruthers, Racine wanted to be part of the Fresno State community from a young age. She recalls seeing her sister play soccer for Fresno Pacific University — but admits she always secretly wanted the Bulldogs to win. Then, after a game during Racine's senior year of high school, Brian emailed her on behalf of Fresno State.

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“I remember looking at my phone and running through the house screaming because I was so excited,” she says. “I was like, ‘What? No way!’ Because I’ve always wanted to play at Fresno State. I’ve always wanted to be a Bulldog.”

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Brian says Racine is a clever player who supports the entire team.

“Racine brings such great warmth and joy to the team. She is extremely reliable and really strives to be the ultimate teammate. She’s sharp witted and super funny, but also knows when it’s work time, and her humility is admirable,” he says. “We are lucky to have this type of local Bulldog and local Bulldog family as part of our program.”



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→ Did you know? Over 500 student-athletes compete in 21 sports at Fresno State. Bulldog student-athletes, coaches and staff proudly wear the “Green V” to show their pride in representing the San Joaquin Valley.



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## CARING FOR THE VALLEY

When Racine isn't on the soccer field, she's studying to become an elementary school teacher. For three years, she worked with the non-profit organization Care Fresno, where she mentored youth in under-resourced communities.

"She really invests all that she has into these kids," says Carissa Gomez, educational programs and events manager for Care Fresno. "She creates an environment where kids feel safe and are excited to learn."

Racine is earning her multiple subject teaching credential through the Kremen School of Education and Human Development. Her goal is to teach in a Title 1 school in the Valley — a school that has large concentrations of low-income students.

The sense of community and belonging that she has developed at Fresno State makes her want to create that environment for her own students.

"I can be somebody they can talk to or reach out to in times of need," Racine says. "I can be somebody that understands."

With the Bulldog community behind her, Racine says she is grateful to move on after the

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that raised her.

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“I don’t know how to say thank you enough,” she says. “It's so great knowing that I have a community.”

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→ **DID YOU KNOW? THIS PAST YEAR, STUDENT-ATHLETES VOLUNTEERED OVER 4,000 HOURS AT 460 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS.**



**SUPPORT RACINE AND OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES.**

Footnote: *Photos by Cary Edmondson, Story by Esra Hashem — University Brand Strategy and Marketing; Contributed Photos by Racine Babb and Keith Kountz*

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