

A pair of pals named Joseph

Christian Brothers High salutatorian and friend finish among top 10 grads.

By Edgar Sanchez
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Joseph Lipper gave a memorable speech as he graduated from Christian Brothers High School last week.

As salutatorian for the class of 2008, Lipper reflected on the past four years - listing some of his favorite teachers and unforgettable moments from his time at Christian Brothers.

His only regret, Lipper confessed a day before the ceremony, was his inability to mention a special classmate to his audience - one who truly stood out.

That would be his best friend and fellow member of the Christian Brothers class of 2008, Joseph LaBriola, 18.

"If I could change the rules, he would be mentioned in my speech ... because our friendship has withstood the test of time," Lipper, also 18, said in an interview.

"But they actually tell us we're not supposed to mention students by name" in commencement speeches, he added, referring to school administrators in charge of the graduation program at Memorial Auditorium.

Lipper said he was told that "other students may feel left out" when one pupil is cited by name.

If anyone follows the rules, it's the "two Joes" - Joseph Lipper and Joseph LaBriola, who met at age 5 while members of the Sacramento Stingrays, a recreational swim team in the Greenhaven Cabana Club.

They attended different schools until their arrival at Christian Brothers four years ago.

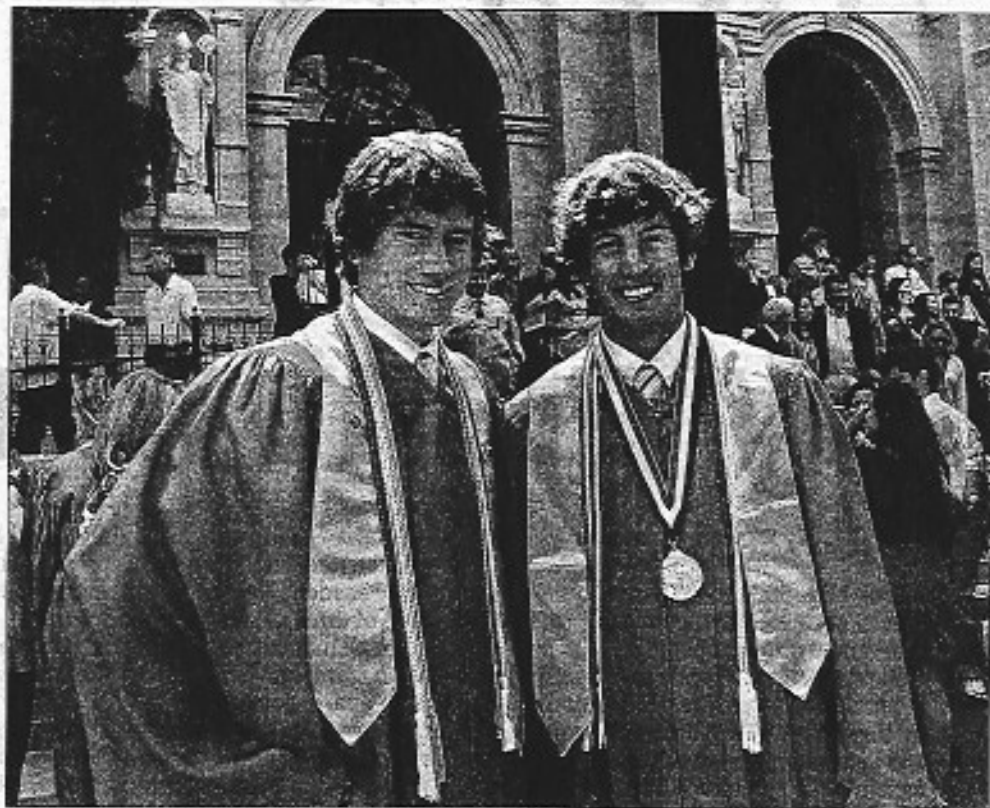
By then, they were already best friends - and high academic achievers.

For the past two years, both were on the Christian Brothers varsity water polo and swim teams.

Both finished among the top 10 students in this year's 260-member graduating class.

Along the way - because they both are named Joe and have the same last initial - they have often been confused by teachers and fellow students.

It was worth it, both said.



Christian Brothers High School

Joseph LaBriola, left, and Joseph Lipper met at age 5 and have been best friends ever since.

LaBriola applied to Christian Brothers after Lipper informed him that it would be his high school.

With his excellent test scores, LaBriola was admitted to the prestigious private school.

Being at the same campus with a best friend made the high school experience the best, both young men said.

"Joe is one of the nicest people I know," LaBriola said. "I couldn't ask for much more in a friend.

"We share a lot of common interests," he added. "We're pretty equal competitors. We push each other in sports and academically."

Said Lipper: "Joe and I have a connection in almost every part of our lives ... in that we can both seek each other's advice. ... We both are huge sources of motivation for each other."

With their work ethic, both Joes earned their teachers' respect, said Kristen McCarthy, Christian Brothers' director of communications.

"Their teachers say both are incredibly bright, yet incredibly kind," McCarthy said. "They will both go on to make the world a better place."

Both Joes are bound for Southern California.

This fall, Lipper will attend UCLA. He plans to major in economics with a minor in political or environmental science.

LaBriola is headed for Pomona College, where he plans to major in mathematics with a minor in political science or psychology.

The two campuses are not too far away from each other, so the friends plan to visit each other during school breaks.

No matter what, their friendship will endure.

"If we both return to Sacramento for our careers, that would be fantastic," LaBriola said.

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