



Sebring Softball

Nominated by: Tammy Pack (Parent)

Let me begin by saying that all parents are proud of their children. I too proud of my child's accomplishments however, what I am most proud of is the way she handled the battle she was given. Haley Pack was born with birth defects. By the time she was eight years old, she was unable to walk without excruciating pain. We took her to All Children's Hospital for treatment. She was diagnosed with Tarsal Coalition which is the fusing of the bones in your foot. They did surgery and redesigned the foot mechanics. All went well and she was back playing the sport she loved, softball.

She began pitching lessons and her pitching coach researched for hours trying to develop ways that she could be successful at pitching while working around her disability. You see, the foot has a limited range of motion. For many years she practiced and practiced, even though she rarely got to see the mound. She was only eight when she began to play travel softball and since there were no kids her age, she played with the older girls. She quickly realized she had to play at there level or sit the bench.

Then came high school. New coach her freshman year. Haley is sooo excited to play. She would finally get to play school softball with her older travel ball teammates. The problem with this scenario was that the team was filled with senior players. Every position she could play was taken. As a last desperate attempt at a Varsity player she said "I can pitch". The coach didn't know Haley but let her throw batting practice in the pre-season. With everyone thinking coach is crazy, he let Haley start the season home opener. She did incredible and coach really started to rely on her pitching abilities.

Unfortunately, this constant pitching was taking it's toll on her foot. The pain over the next few years became unbearable. She would stand on that mound with tears in her eyes and falling to her knees. But her love of the game and pitching would get her back up to throw the next strike. I remember cheering her from the sidelines "just one more strike and your done" "you can do it". It was hard to watch. My heart and the hearts of the other parent and grandparents would

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just be broken. Here was a child that was pushing even when the pain was so great. She wanted to lead her team. They had so come to rely on her.

She began her junior year season with twelve strikeouts in the first game. By the seventh inning the tears were streaming down her clay covered face. Not only were they tears of pain, they were tears of disappointment. She was beginning to accept that she was no longer going to be able to follow her dreams of being a college pitcher. She couldn't do it anymore the pain was too great.

I finally found a doctor who found the source of Haley's pain. She had a condition called Avascular Necrosis. This means that one of the bones in Haley's foot died. The condition is very painful. The doctor removed the bone and said that it was broken into three pieces and had been stabbing her for years. The week after surgery, she was practicing pitching by propping up on a bucket. Talk about dedication. Most would take the time off and try to heal. Not Haley. She did everything she could to help even when she couldn't be on the mound. Trying to help the other girls perfect pitches and calling the pitches from the dugout during the games. I think that a champion isn't always the best player. The champion is the player who gives the most heart. The most desire and drive. I am amazed at the love of the game that drives my child to push herself beyond the limits. Over the years, the physical and emotional journey has been tough on her, but she is a true champion.

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