

Tiffany Forrest

- Speech from Langford Fastball Opening Ceremonies

My favorite time of the year is the spring. Not just because I love this game but it allows me to feel a connection to someone that was very close to me that I lost 15 years ago. When I lace up my spikes, smell the leather of my mitt and hear the crack of the bat, it's at this time that I feel closest to my sister, Tiffany Forrest. I am Tiffany's oldest brother Brad Forrest. This is my brother Ryan and also here today are my parents Grant and Gwen.

For those not aware, Tiffany was a very talented ballplayer who played PeeWee and Bantam in this league in the early 90's. It was right here, on this field, at the age of 13 she often hunched behind this plate and gunned down potential basestealers from her knees. She had an absolute cannon!! And boy could she hit as she ripped balls all over this field.

In 1995 Tiffany joined the Bantam A Surrey Storm (one of the better teams in the Province). Every weekend of that summer my parents took her to the mainland to play for this club. Her abilities landed her a spot on Team BC where in one of those games she hit 3 homeruns at Softball City. I was in awe at her success and proudly considered her a phenom. What other 22 year old guy would admit to taking hitting advice from his little sister? But I did! Shortly thereafter Tiffany travelled to tournaments in San Diego and Colorado with the Midget National Team. Despite being by far the youngest player, she was their starting catcher and cleanup hitter. It seemed at the time Tiffany 'the athlete' couldn't do anything wrong.

Although Tiffany rarely made an error on the ball field, she made a mistake one night that cost her everything. She was a teenager - 16 - and like many teenagers failed to understand that poor decisions can often lead to tough consequences. Like many teens she believed she was invincible and could not be harmed. "Bad things won't happen to me", I'm sure she would have thought. She was wrong. On a winter night in 1996 she made a choice to get into a car with friends, after they had been drinking in celebration of her 17th birthday. This was the last mistake my sister ever made as she died due to injuries after the car she was riding in lost control and crashed. Drinking and driving cost my little sister her life.

It still deeply pains my family not to know what Tiffany would have accomplished if she had not made that crucial error. Would she have represented Softball Canada at the Summer Olympics in Sydney in 2000 or in Athens in 2004? Where would she have gone to University and what sport and career would she have chosen to excel in? Would she have kids like many of her friends do today? Some of you are here! Given her character, chances are she probably would have also been here today as a coach for some of you.

I believe that this can still occur? Even though she is not physically here, Tiffany can still coach you on and off this softball field. Her error to get into a car with an impaired driver is a mistake which I am sure some of you older athletes have made. I know that you have heard of the risks involved but I realize many of you have this same view, it won't happen to me, similar to what Tiffany believed. Stop! THINK! Understand my families story of Tiffany, and remember it when making the critical choices in your life. Have the courage to be responsible, be a leader and don't take the risk. Call your parents and let them know you are in a bad spot and need help. Your parents love you and would rather you call on them than having to experience this story. Don't let a poor choice cost you everything!

More importantly than Tiffany's remarkable athletic abilities I am even more proud to remember her as a genuinely kind, humble and compassionate person. She displayed this character on the diamond as being a team leader in sportsmanship.

I would like to share a poem written in 1997 by a girl who played ball out of Washington State. It gives some perspective to how opponents viewed her.

VIEW FROM THE OTHER DUGOUT
by Ashlee Herman

On the other side of the field,
In my teams dugout;
We would always come upon,
The Great Surrey Storm.

The first game we were scared,
full of nerves, and you and your team
gave us a beating.
From that moment on we became
Rivals.

You always stuck out in my mind.
You could play any position like a pro.
I can't even remember if you ever had an error.
I know that I'm not the only one
who praised your talents.
But you weren't some stuck up,
I'm good and I know it, type of player.

You always demonstrated the best attitude
and sportsmanship of anyone I have ever met.

The moment I remember best
was when my pitcher threw
a knuckle change only to strike you out.
We were so proud of Krista because
we had always thought that you were Unstoppable.

Instead of going back to the dugout,
throwing helmets and bats,
and having a tantrum about how that wasn't a strike
and why did I swing ,
You simply smiled and pointed out to my pitcher,
and said "Nice Pitch".

All I could do was smile.
From that moment on,
I changed my view of you and your team.

Although we never were close.
I felt as though you let my team and me be apart of you.
I had only talked to you once or twice,
never thinking that it would be the last.

I felt such sadness when I heard
about your accident.
I was looking forward to playing against your team
and talking to you again.
Unfortunately we got cut short.

I'll talk to you in my prayers
and hopefully we can play ball again someday.
Tiffany, from my team the Maddhatter Madness,
And myself we will miss you with all our hearts.

My family would like to sincerely thank the Langford Fastball Executive who have remembered Tiffany's character and honoured her memory with this award over the past 16 seasons. On occasions I have met some of these girls named on this plaque (usually years later) after they approached me to say how proud they were of receiving it. This feels awesome and I hope it continues in the future. It means that the Tiffany Forrest Story and her Spirit for this game is still alive, as it continues to touch families of this community in a very special way.