



Mandi Schwartz, Coach for a Day, Provides a Lesson for a Lifetime

Kent Valley Ice Centre, Kent, WA – KVHA News for 7 February, 2011 – The following was provided by Jeff Alonzo, Head Coach of the Kent Valley PeeWee Tornadoes, and is reprinted with his permission. We are pleased to be able to share his message with KVHA members. Jeff's story includes a link to another story about the courageous Mandi Schwartz. We invite you to visit the link to read "the rest of the story."

On the morning of December 11, 2010, the Kent Valley PeeWee Rec Tornadoes faced the Western Washington Female Hockey Association (WWFHA) Phoenix in Kent. Prior to the game, Coach Patrick of the Phoenix team was pacing the hallways (as he always does because he can't go in the all girls locker room before and after games). He approached me to tell me the brief story about Mandi Schwartz. He asked if we were ok with her presence on the bench and allowing her to act as an interim coach for the Phoenix.

The story shared by Coach Patrick was brief as we all know how crazy it is prior to game time, but I could tell that this was something special to him, the players, and parents of the Phoenix Team. I had no objections to the request and went on with my normal pre-game activities.

During the game, the Tornadoes fought hard, but came up short and lost the contest 3-0. We had lost our prior meeting with Phoenix earlier in the season 6-1, so we were pretty proud of our ability to make a game out of it this time. Little did we know the magnitude of emotions experienced on the winning bench less than 20 feet from ours.

Coach Patrick was kind enough to share this article (link below) written about the game and the story within the game.

Take a moment and think to yourself what you were doing the morning of Saturday December 11, 2010. Most of us who live the life of a youth hockey parent, volunteer, supporter would probably think of it as a normal, uneventful Saturday in the middle of a busy hockey season.

Not to the Phoenix Team. This was a day dedicated to their teammate, their friend, their loved one, Mandi Schwartz.

A quick aside, I received Coach Patrick's e-mail while vacationing with my family in Hawaii (I know, what coach/parent acts so selfishly by taking a family vacation during hockey season).

I read this as I sat poolside watching my Wife and three boys playing in the pool. The article was so moving that I had to walk away to gather my emotions. From that moment on, my family vacation had a new perspective. For me, it's too easy to forget the simple things in life we take for granted.

I'm saddened for the obvious reasons after reading the article and I'm moved by the incredible impact this story has had on me personally. I reflect back on that chilly Saturday morning and how uneventful the brief words uttered "Nice game" were during the customary post-game handshake.

Coach Patrick is right! The life of a hockey player is not about the score on the scoreboard or our place in the standings. Rather, it's about the life lessons this wonderful sport provides each of us and our families to experience every day.

I may not remember looking into Mandi's eyes as I walked through the hand shake line that Saturday December 11, 2011, but I'll never forget her story.

Her message to her team that day simplifies one of the lessons I want for my boys to always remember:

"Try your best and don't worry about the score".

Mandi Schwartz

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Schwartz family.

Regards,

Jeff Alonzo

Below is the link to the Mandi Schwartz article:

<http://lisa-olson.fanhouse.com/2011/01/30/despite-plight-mandi-schwartz-inspires/>

KVHA News Contact: Lew Sellers, Director of Communications
Kent Valley Hockey Association
6015 So. 240th Street
Kent, WA. 98032
(206) 914-9619 Cellular
Lew@KentValleyIceCentre.com