

# “I Wish I Had Known Alexis Briski”

By Montana Sprague, Carmel Stingers Softball



Montana

The first time I ever heard of Alexis Briski was about a month ago. My softball team, the Carmel Stingers, was scheduled to play in a tournament in Seaside, but then we got invited to play in a different tournament that was going to be dedicated to a girl who had just died of bone cancer. When I went to bed that night, I kept asking Papa questions that he didn't know, but he said he would find out. What was the girl's name? How old was she? What position did she play? Was she in a lot of pain? Did she have any brothers or sisters?

The next day, Papa showed me the website he had found. The girl's name was Alexis, and when I saw her picture she looked familiar, but I'm not sure. She was 11 years old and she loved softball, just like me. I have a nine-year-old sister named Anika, and so did she, but with a different spelling (Annika). Then I found out we even had the same pitching coach! I read about everything she went through and how brave she was and

how she came out to pitch one more inning. When I got to the part about how she said goodbye to her family just before she died, I started to cry.

A couple of days later, I asked my coach if it would be okay if I made armbands for everyone on the team to wear, and he said it was a great idea. So I wrote to Alexis' Papa to see if it would be okay with him and also to make sure that #3 was the right uniform number. Then the next day, I asked Mama if we could make them for everyone in the tournament, but she said that might not be easy since it would be around 300 and the tournament was only a couple of weeks away and we were in the middle of moving. A couple of days later, I came up with another idea. Maybe I could find a sponsor who makes armbands or wristbands to donate them! And since the idea of the tournament was to raise money for a scholarship to honor Alexis, what if we sold each one for a dollar and added that to the scholarship? Papa said I should check first in case other teams might be doing the same kind of thing, so I wrote to Coach Greg and he said it would be okay. I asked Alexis' Papa, too, and he said that he really appreciated it, but maybe it would be too much work and I should just have fun playing softball. I told him I really wanted to try anyway. So I wrote to some companies that make them and one of them said yes!!! The only problem was whether they could make them in time, but they were going to try!

With only a week to go before the tournament, the wristbands still hadn't come in yet. There was a delay because of a big holiday in China. And then, two days before the tournament, the doorbell rang, and there was the box of wristbands! The next day I got sick and started throwing up and had a temperature of 102.7, but the next day I felt better. Coach Greg said if I wanted to I could just give the wristbands to the snack bar and they would sell them, but my teammates and I really wanted to see if we could do it. But he was right, and Coach Jim let my sister, Anika Hadley, help work the snack bar with Kiana's mother, and they sold about 50 of them. By the end of the second day we had sold 279 of the 300 bracelets, so Papa bought the last ones and gave them to the Briski family as a present, and we gave the scholarship money to Coach Greg.

There's something else that happened that's really amazing. I have a friend named [Autumn Albers](#), and she's like the most incredible person I know. She's more than just a friend - she's like my big sister and my hero. She's only five feet three inches tall, but to me she's ten feet tall and has a heart that's even bigger. She works with families of cancer patients and goes to other countries to do volunteer work and she loves animals and she's an Academic All-American at Stanford and she teaches me about softball and life. She even gave me a present that her mother gave her when she was little. Anyway, when I told her about Alexis, she told her teammates about the tournament, and I couldn't believe it. The Stanford softball team came to watch and meet the players and give autographs!!!!!! I couldn't believe it! I know I already said that, but I think I'm still in shock!

This was the first tournament that our team didn't make it to the Championship Game. The truth is, we made a lot of errors. But it's okay. On the two-hour drive home (we stopped at In-N-Out Burger), Papa asked me if I remembered any of the scores of games we played last month or the month before, and I couldn't remember any. Then he asked me how long I thought I would remember this tournament.

He's right. I think that for the rest of my life I will remember Alexis Briski even though we never actually met. I couldn't sleep last night because I kept remembering different parts of the weekend, like seeing the poster of Alexis, then meeting the Briski family in person. I remember how Mr. and Mrs. Briski hugged me and thanked me, and how my Papa would hug me and tell me he didn't think he could be as brave as they are. I keep thinking about Annika and Matthew and Emily. And I'll never forget how all the teams were trying to beat each other, but at the same time working very hard together. The kids and the parents and the coaches were so nice to everyone. What I think I will remember most, though, is just how lucky I am.