



LIVING HIS LEGACY

Senior strives on field to honor fallen Marine father

WONDERFUL WORLD: (above) Catching an out of zone ball, **Savannah Babich**, grad, remembers all the fun times. "Wando softball means the world to me. The entire team was like a huge family and I met most of my friends through the program," Babich said; photo by b. schwinne

AWESOME ATTEMPTS: (far above) With the bat in her hand, **Ava Crawford**, 12, attempts to bunt. "Opposed to full swinging, I am just trying to lightly touch the ball. This is used to advance the base runners," Crawford said; photo by l. daniher

She steps up to bat and finds tranquility as her dad's metal dog tags brush against her chest. After living through the trauma of losing a parent, **Bella Mann**, 12, has learned compassion and perseverance to help her excel in softball.

"He is my peace and my comfort," Mann said. "He died protecting our country so he is a safe place for me and it helps me if I feel anxious or stressed about a game."

With the never-ending support from her mother and younger brothers, Mann has been encouraged by her family's tradition of showing love and cheering from the sidelines.

"My mom and brothers are very flexible when it comes to my games," Mann said. "They cheer me on from the sidelines nearly every game."

Although Mann's father, a Marine, passed away in an accident while serving in Afghanistan when she was young, she has been able to imagine his presence through stories told by her mother, **Shannon Mann-Alvarenga**. These recollections help Mann envision her father's strength and willpower.

"We tried to have him come to life through stories told by the people who knew Jason," Mann-Alvarenga said.

After hearing countless stories about her father's character, Mann started to embody the same admirable traits. Mann is known to be diligent, kind-hearted, and a team player.

"Teamwork is important to Bella and that is something she has heard through stories that her dad had for others, too," Mann-Alvarenga said. "She carries on the legacy of being dedicated and caring."

Mann and her mother strongly believe in

showing kindness. Often at games, they provide the opposing softball team with Gatorade to show good sportsmanship.

"We do these random acts of kindness to make it seem as if Jason is a part of us," Mann-Alvarenga said.

When times are challenging, Mann strengthens herself with her mother's and her faith's help. She does not let the adversity in her life dampen her spirits or commitment to the game.

"She has already gone through such an emotional and traumatic event, it has made her a more caring individual," Mann-Alvarenga said.

"She is dedicated to making herself physically and mentally stronger every day."

Mann's determination and caring heart has uplifted those around her. Mann's teammate and close friend, **Allie Jepson**, 11, has noticed Mann's bright outlook on life has changed the teams in ways outside of the game.

"Bella brings positive energy to the team and she is a big light for everyone on the team," Jepson said.

Like her father, Mann is loved for her uplifting mindset. She has been able to empathize with those in need and provide support in any way she can.

"Bella's personality is one of the biggest things everyone loves about her," Jepson said. "She is always lifting other people and she is never selfish."

Although her father passed away, Mann continues to live his legacy. By keeping him in mind, she has brought kindness to the team and impacted the lives of many.

"Remembering who I am playing for by honoring God and my dad is important to me," Mann said. "I am honoring them every time I play."

**Story by Liv Craine
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STRONG MINDS

JV softball players analyze the importance of mental health in softball



Since it's her first year on the team **London Ackermann**, 9, clarifies the importance of mental health in softball. "You need an open mentality for softball so if you fail you have to get right back up and try again to make up for your error, you also can not let a strike out psych you out," Ackermann said.



Balancing physical and mental health, **Makena Garrett**, 9, focuses on her well being. "Softball is a game of failure. Having a strong mentality is extremely important in softball because you have to be focused 24/7. You have to let go of errors and not get mad at yourself because it will carry into the next play," Garret said.