



Compassionate Northern Burlington coach comforts injured opposing fan

May 16, 2024

The Northern Burlington softball team was playing a normal game at Burlington Township on May 6 when something out of the ordinary happened.

A Northern Burlington batter hit a hard foul ball down the third base line, barely missing the third base coach. Unfortunately, the ball continued on, to an area where two young spectators were playing. It struck one of them in the face.

That's when Marissa Bush, an assistant from Northern Burlington who was coaching first base, sprang into action.

"The ball struck the little girl in the face, and with no hesitation I ran from first base," she said. "On the way, I noticed Burlington Township's dugout had an ice bucket. I filled a bag up with ice and ran over to the little girl. When I got there, she was very upset and had blood on her face. I applied ice right away and my overall goal was to just keep her calm. I stayed with her until the trainer arrived."

Marissa's quick-thinking actions not only had a calming effect, they also impressed Dr. John Taylor, the athletic director at Burlington Township. Many people were upset, including the older sister of the injured girl, who plays for Burlington Township.

"The BT trainer was at our baseball field, but the Northern Burlington coach ran over to the injured girl, gave her ice, and started reassuring her with statements like, 'You're okay,' 'You look amazing,' and so on," Taylor said. "She not only helped calm the injured student down, but also reassured the older sister. Our trainer got there shortly thereafter, but the Northern Burlington coach really went out of her way to provide some comfort. The tears from the little girl, who was probably feeling pain and very scared, quickly went away."

"When this occurred, it was a natural instinct to help," said Bush, who is a Health and Physical Education teacher at Northern Burlington. "When you see something like that happen, it takes the breath out of everyone, but I did not want any of the players to be upset or anyone to worry. It doesn't matter what side of the field you're on or what jersey you're wearing. If something happens, just help. The entire reason I teach/coach is to make a positive impact and inspire others to make a difference on and off the field. In ten years, no one there is going to remember the score of the game but hopefully they will remember that if something happens off the field, to not hesitate, take action and help in any way possible. Hopefully they learned that."

The best thing of all was that the young girl was okay.

"The Northern Burlington coach definitely provided comfort," Taylor said. "The Burlington Township athletic trainer got to the field soon after, and assessed the little girl for injuries. Thankfully she was fine, and just





needed ice for some swelling. If the coach had not hopped into action so quickly, I feel like the little girl would have had a more difficult time with the experience.”

Not only was she okay, she also went home with a game ball courtesy of the visiting team.

“After the game was over, I wanted to check on her to make sure she was okay and also tell her how brave she was,” Bush said. “So, I wrote on a ball with a marker ‘Toughest Player of The Game.’”

Bush’s actions also impressed Dan Uszaki, the AD at Northern Burlington.

“Coach Bush’s response was nothing short of exemplary,” he said. “Despite her position coaching first base, she wasted no time in rushing to the aid of the injured child. Her quick thinking and decisive action ensured that the situation was managed effectively even before the athletic trainer arrived on site. In those crucial moments, Coach Bush demonstrated not only her dedication to the game, but more importantly, her commitment to the well being of those around her.”

What truly touched Uszaki was the presentation of the game ball.

“That heartwarming act encapsulates the essence of high school sports,” he said. “A community coming together to celebrate resilience, empathy, and the spirit of camaraderie. In times of adversity, it is the actions of individuals like Coach Marissa Bush and the collective spirit of our team that remind us of the true values inherent in sports. Beyond the wins and losses, it is moments like these that define the character of our athletes and coaches, reinforcing the importance of compassion, sportsmanship, and care both on and off the field.”

“I want to not only coach my girls but also be a role model for them,” Bush said. “I hope by taking action they notice that if someone is ever in need of help, that they don’t hesitate. Hopefully this will inspire more people to spring into action no matter the situation or who it is. You don’t need to know the person or be a teammate. Showing acts of kindness and helping others when they need it should happen more often.”