

Friend: Elaine Schwager Is an Inspiration

By Michelle Frazier

Elaine is many things to me; she is a best friend, a role model, someone whom I feel if I can be half of what she is, I will do okay in life. I met her about seven years ago and immediately we had a mutual understanding of sorts. I respected her for what I could quite easily see, her knowledge, strength of character, and caring nature. Luckily, she decided to keep me around. I had the opportunity to play two sports with Elaine as my head coach and mentor, coach alongside her after graduation as a colleague, and develop a strong love and friendship with her as a miracle and inspiration in my life.

Elaine is a tremendous athlete, and excels not only quite naturally in this area, but her drive and work ethic have made her beyond elite at athletic endeavors. She has numerous successes in her life in this area, including being inducted into her high school's hall of fame, various awards at Boston University, including Defensive Player of the Year for softball each year she attended, and for a while she was a two-sport division one athlete. She is also an excellent skier, and has completed the Boston Marathon in a time that most first timers could only dream of seeing.

In her role as a coach she is something to see. She not only teaches fundamentals and skills, but she interweaves character lessons and leadership qualities that young people need. Winning is something Elaine loves, (piece of advice, don't play a board game with her), but as a coach the standards of respect and discipline that she holds her teams to are to be admired. My team often laughs recalling a time when Elaine made us all take the train home from a game after we didn't play and carry ourselves with the

pride and desire she wanted us to have. She literally gave us our meal money and said, “This will pay for your ride, and you’re not coming on the bus.” As you can imagine, we were a sight on the train, and having to answer people’s questions was not fun. This type of lesson and accountability speaks volumes for what Elaine exemplifies to her players, and I have a million similar stories. She doesn’t just help train good athletes, she helps train good people. Elaine holds herself to the same ideals that she holds her students to, and she is well respected in her field.

As the owner of a business she is fair, honest, and hardworking. She works diligently, and often her family and friends have to remind her to relax and do something for herself.

I had the opportunity to be by her side through much of the process of opening her own business, and it was an amazing process to watch. I watched her develop relationships with people she had just met, and create an environment where people want to be.

Elaine is positive and looks for the best in even the worst situations. I have countless examples of Elaine taking completely awful events, and spinning them around to see the good behind the seemingly impossible. She lives her life in a way few do, and she often says how thankful she is for each day.

After finding out she had scleroderma, Elaine had a rough end to our season. The next season she had “Today” printed on the back of our shirts, because, as she put it, “That’s what we are worried about, what we can do today to be better.” It was not only her mantra for her new outlook; it was something we all had the opportunity to share.

Scleroderma has been quite a ride for Elaine and all those in her life. This rare disease that no one had even heard of brought a different sort of reality to all of us. The emotions it has stirred run the gamut. It brings frustration, anger, and pain, but also the appreciation for life and opportunities that are easy to forget. The amazing thing is that even when things change and something happens that seems like a set back with the disease, Elaine picks herself up. She has an inner strength and resilience. She helps to pick us up as well. I know it doesn't seem right, but I can't explain how difficult it is to love somebody so much and not be able to change what they are going through when it is something like this. I can't tell you how many times she has told me it will all be okay.

I am glad that Elaine is becoming more involved with the Foundation, and that people are recognizing what an inspiration and role model she can be for others who suffer from scleroderma. I look forward to offering any other help I can for this project, be it pictures, stories, or more specific stories about Elaine. You have truly picked a remarkable person to profile, and I am sure you will enjoy any time you have the opportunity to spend with her. I would love to read the end result.

Best Regards,

Michelle