

Hi Softballers of Ireland,

My name is Jenny Patterson (nee Bohan) and I've been playing softball for about 15 years for Oddsox Green. Some of you may know me, some may not. In recent years I've found that I've been playing more and more ball in the UK for a team called H2O, and it was a recent trip to the World Series with the Craickers, while watching the Irish national development squad, that really drove home the fact that I now probably know more softballers across the water than I actually know here in Ireland. So what is she going on about I hear you say!!

Well this lack of knowledge and acquaintance with the new (past 7 years) of Irish softballers and the impending Brian Walshe Cup Competition made me wonder, just how many people who play softball now, know who Brian Walshe was, and what he meant to Irish Softball?. So if you're willing to read on, I'd really like to fill you in on what that cup competition means to the Oddsox, Brian's Family and his softball friends.



Meet Brian Walshe, a great friend and a great advocate of Irish Softball

Brian started playing softball in about 1991. He approached the Oddsox grounds at the ripe age of 15, supported and accompanied by his dad, he asked Bren Farren, then President of a healthy 5 team Oddsox club, could he play ball. He had an interest in Baseball and was delighted to learn that softball was being played in the country. He joined the Oddsox Red team and was positioned as an outfielder and like most of us, he was hooked the moment he took to the field. Bren was a great mentor for Brian and took him under his wing, he advised "field the ball and throw it to second", but this of course didn't appease Brian's curious mind and tenacious hunger for information. Bren said "after each inning I was bombarded with questions as to why the runner didn't run or why the ball went to that base during that particular play". It wasn't long at all before Brian was clued into the strategy of the game and was now honing his skills. Reminiscing about those fun times, Bren said "I was delighted to talk to someone so interested and enthusiastic about the sport of softball". Under Bren's generous tutelage, Brian learned about scoring and statistics, a skill he perfected over the years. Ken Murphy reminded me in recent days how he would come off the field and fill in the stat sheet from memory, we often checked this as a wind up, but there was never one mistake. Brian was a very clever fella!

The next step for Brian and the next challenge he set himself was umpiring. He very soon became the oracle of all knowledge to do with softball rules and was consulted by all and sundry. I could irrefutably state that he was one of the best umpires this country has ever seen.

Brian moved from the Reds to the Green team in 1993 as there was a shortage of pitchers. Bren convinced him that this was a more challenging and indeed more enjoyable position as you were always in the thick of the action. And, as was his standard, Brian and his dogged determination brought him to a new accolade- he became the best pitcher in the country. Speaking to Bren Farren earlier, he excitedly chatted about how Brian was the first to perfect the "Knuckleball" pitch and how it wasn't long before Brian was the first choice starting pitcher with the National team in many a European Championship, namely 1998, 2000 and 2002. I can safely say that he

would probably still be representing his country in some way, if he were still with us today. There is no doubt that he is as proud as punch of his little sister Muireann or 'Squealer' as he called her, as she took up the reign of representing the Walshe's at an international level.



Brian Walshe - Opening pitch- Brunel University, London 1998. Shortstop - Dave Nolan.

Two seasons passed with Brian pitching for the Greens when he took over leadership, although he was the youngest on the team at just 21, but as Bren said, "There was nobody more qualified or enthusiastic to challenge him and he lifted the Green Team to become one of the top teams in the country".





Photos of the Green Teams over the years under Brians Leadership

Brian's involvement within the sport went from strength to strength. He became softball director of what was then the ISA (2001-2002) and was also hugely involved in UCD softball as both a player and coach. He was a great supporter of the intervarsities and helped develop the different legs of the tournaments. Brian had just taken the role of managing the Irish squad in April/May 2003 before he passed away. Ruth Kelly recalled just how much he loved softball "When I first met Brian I was very much under the impression that I would always come second to the Greens/Softball. Thankfully that wasn't the case, but I'd say it was a tie!" Brian absolutely loved softball and valued more the friends he made from it. He was very loyal person to both family and friends, "Brian always felt his friends were a reflection of his personality" Ruth recalls.



In a nutshell Brian was fun, enthusiastic, determined, impatient, silly and honest. He loved softball, cycling, hillwalking, photography, his friends and trips to the chipper to fulfil his great love of eating!!

Brian's death left an enormous hole in a huge number of people's lives, the obvious being family and friends, but the gap in Irish softball was also vast. The softballers of Ireland united in their grief and many a tear was shed when we lined the driveway of Ballinteer church, bats held high.

In respect for Brian, his international number 14 was retired and the Cup tournament was officially named the 'Brian Walshe Cup'. His glove was bronzed and an absolutely stunning trophy came to pass, a lifelong memory of a really great guy and an amazing softballer.

Brian, you are still missed.

With all that said Brian was a competitor and would be eager for a battle to victory at this weekend's tournament... 'Brian's tournament'. So whichever team is triumphant on the day, you now know the story of the man and his glove, symbolic in the trophy you are welcoming into your club.



Brian died on 9th June 2003, he was only 27 years old.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.



BRIAN WALSH 1976 – 2003

Many thanks to Ruth Kelly, Bren Farren, Ken Murphy and Muireann Walshe for sharing many a wonderful memory and some amazing photos of Brian over the years.