

My daughter was not the best player on the team, but she was good. Solid at the plate. Nice glove in the field. Other parents talked about how she hustled and how she started all the chants – “A cheerleader in the dugout,” one parent told me. I just smiled. While she had great spirit and a positive attitude, my daughter never wanted to be a cheerleader. All she talked about was softball. She worked hard at it, all through Little League, and improved so much. I figured with all her effort, and better than average skills, she’d make the All-Star team. She didn’t. We were both crushed – me more than her.

The list of All-Stars was posted at the concession stand before our game. While she sat in the dugout, clearly upset, I walked around and found as many managers who voted for the All-Stars as I could. I gave them, and some Board members, and our Player Agent, a piece of my mind. I shared my strong opinions, my anger, my disappointment – loudly. People watched. I know my daughter noticed. I said some things I shouldn’t have – things that ended up ruining relationships.

I yelled for my daughter to get out of the dugout, and that we were going home. The look on her face was even worse than when she found out she didn’t make the All-Star team. She clearly wanted to play that evening’s game and was definitely embarrassed by my actions. A friend of mine came up to me, told me to go home, and that she’d bring my daughter back after the game. “Let her play,” she said to me, as she walked me to my car. “You’re making this worse!” Looking back, I knew I was, but at the moment, to me, nothing was worse than my daughter not making that tournament team.

Plenty of people thought my daughter should have made the team and everyone knew about my outbursts, so I’m sure the remaining Little League practices, games, and social gatherings were difficult for her. But, she seemed to handle it okay. I couldn’t let it go, though. I emailed and called Board members and managers. I even called our District Administrator. I knew nothing was going to get her on the team, but I wanted others to know how cheated I felt. Every time I thought I was over it, I just pictured that All-Star team together, and my daughter sitting at home. Then, my blood would boil again.

The first All-Star game came. My daughter wanted to go. I wanted no part of it. A neighbor dropped her off at the game. An hour or so later, I got a text from one of my friends. It was a video of my daughter sitting in the first row of the bleachers, behind the dugout, starting all the chants, and cheerleading as if she was on the team. I cried.

I apologized to her when she got home. The next day, I apologized to every person in the league I took out my frustration on. Some understood, some didn’t. My actions simply weren’t worth it. I lost friends over it, and our whole family’s softball life became more estranged from the other families. It’s a sad thing when a pre-teen daughter shows more maturity than her mother.