

True Grit

Written By Yvonne Profit – April 13, 2010



Elizabeth was the #2 seed in the Harper Ink Tournament, in a draw of 64 junior players in the 18 girls' age division. She was a little rusty the first match because she had been out from injury and a horrible cold for three weeks. The match was incredibly close but she pulled off a win in the first set with a score of 7-5. Ouch! However, by the second set, she was cruising and prevailed 6-0.

Elizabeth's next opponent was a big hitter. It's amazing to me how hard these girls hit the ball! Liz prevailed 6-0, 6-2. Elizabeth's won her next match 6-2, 6-3 against the 7th seed. One thing for sure, as you advance, so does the level of competition. Her next opponent in the semi-finals was a lefty and generated a great deal of pace on the ball. Elizabeth won with a score of 6-2, 7-6. Her mother described her at the end of the match, "My daughter has that fiery Latin temper." I told her anger in losing was a good thing. Junior players have to learn to direct this anger in a positive manner, and try to maintain calmness. I don't think it's a good idea for any player to become comfortable with a loss. It's all designed so she can learn from the losses which will make her better.

Elizabeth advanced to the final and her opponent would be Jana McCord who was unseeded. Jana had an impressive win over the #1 seed earlier in the tournament, prevailing with a score of 6-4, 5-7, 7-6.

Prior to the match, Elizabeth ate lunch and she had eight units of insulin on board after lunch. This meant there was insulin in

her system that would continue to drive her blood sugars down.

I said, "Oh Lord, this is not good. Drink the Sunny Delight® and eat the bagel. This will hopefully counter the low blood sugar."

She did as instructed, but she wasn't hunger because she just ate lunch. She forced it down nonetheless. She did the best she could do. I even cut back on the amount of carbohydrates for her food, to counter this as well to no avail. The second problem was that she walked off the court from her prior match in the mid 300s, she could not remain this high; she needed insulin to lower her blood sugar. It was my intent to give her enough insulin to lower it, and also enough insulin so she would not encounter elevated glucose levels. It's like walking a tight rope. If you lean to far back, you may fall off the wire, if you lean to the right or left, or forward you will fall off too. It's imperative to find the amount of insulin necessary to prevent the highs or the lows when she's is so incredibly active out there on the court. The third problem is she's growing, and she becomes more insulin resistant because of it.

Elizabeth and Jana were both ready to do battle. They traded points, with monster forehands from both worthy opponents. Elizabeth loves her drop shots. Even though at times David and I say, "We hate those things!" Elizabeth smiles and keeps doing them. Jana hit some impossible shots but Elizabeth somehow returned them to the amazement of all observing. Her coach once stated, "You are the slowest tennis player I have ever seen, but you get to everything!" Kind of sound contradictory, but he's right. If you put Elizabeth in a track meet, I guarantee you she will lose. The fastest I have ever seen that girl run was when we were training in Calabasas, and this little dog came out of the garage barking at the girls as they were jogging. Elizabeth shot off like Jesse Owens or shall I say that Jamaican track star named Bolt! Yes, that's more appropriate, she bolted out of their like a lightning bolt! I have never, ever seen her run so fast in her entire life! On another occasion a Pitbull was behind a fence and began to bark at us. I turned to say something to Elizabeth and she had already sprinted to safety and was still running down the street! I said, "Dang, if I could only simulate a Pitbull behind her, she would kick everyone's butt in sprints!" It's something about her in a match she goes all out to return these balls. It's like her life depended upon it. After she finished the point, she literally strutted back to the line to prepare for the next point calmly, collectively, assured she will again repeat this same mission as

though it has been engraved in stone somewhere. Elizabeth won the first set 6-3. The crowd was gathering to watch this match. The comments were they couldn't believe she was only 13! They couldn't believe she was the #2 seed! She's a big girl, but you're so small. Keep telling folks I got a lot of tall women in the family. I'm an aberration! The genetics are tilted for the taller side for my daughters!

Elizabeth was up 5-4, and I could tell something was wrong. I texted David that something was wrong with Elizabeth. He was going crazy with texting me, trying to figure out what was happening. She was drinking the juice, and I had Mary go and buy two more. She was also eating the bagel. She could not close it out. She had match point four times! She came to the net, and the ball literally rolled on the net cord and this time fell on Liz's side. No one could believe it! Especially Elizabeth! Normally, if it rolls on the net cord, it automatically falls on her side, not this time. Jana took a long sigh of relief. Jana would not give up, she knew she was down but not out. It wasn't over until the fat lady sang, and there was no one stepping up of that persuasion to sing anything. Elizabeth tried to play it out. She could have taken a medical time out, but did not. She could have taken a bathroom break to stall for time, but she did not. Jana held on to win the set 7-5. Elizabeth told the referee she needed me to come over, because her blood sugar was low. Sure enough, it had dropped down to 57. She downed five twelve ounce Sunny Delights®, ate a whole bagel, and it still dropped down to 57. I had Mary go buy two more. Elizabeth was so upset because she knew if it hadn't been for the low blood sugar, she would have won that set and ultimately the match. She looked at me with tears wailing in her eyes. I told her, "Please don't cry. You can retire. You don't have to play this out. Your blood sugar isn't coming up fast enough. Every time you eat something you expend the energy on the court."

She responded, "I will not retire. I'll play it out." She placed the towel to her face and cried softly. I dropped my head not knowing what to say to her at this point. Then I said, "Okay, drink this juice, drink as much as you can, and eat some bagel."

She nodded her head in the affirmative. The referee was watching the stopwatch.

He said, "You have five minutes with the medical timeout, but you're down to two minutes."

True Grit

I said, "Okay." Another ref came up and inquired what the problem was and I told him she has Juvenile Diabetes Type I.

He said, "Look, we'll give her a couple more minutes to see if she will be okay."

I smiled and said, "Thank you." I knew she would need considerably longer than a couple more minutes, but it was so incredibly kind of him to offer even that. He was observing the match and was quite impressed with both girls' efforts. He was even more so after discovering Elizabeth was insulin dependent. The crowd was continuing to gather at courtside. People were talking, most didn't realize she was a diabetic, and certainly didn't notice the insulin pump beneath her top. It was time. I ran pass Jana and said, "Awesome match!" She smiled.

Elizabeth and I both knew her blood sugar would not be elevated to where it should be so she could perform to her expectations. She lost the set 6-0 and ultimately the match. She could not run down anything. Her blood sugar after the match was only 38. It's amazing she didn't collapse on the court!

Of course she was devastated and I was crushed, not from the loss, but from her having to deal with Juvenile Diabetes Type I. I was crushed because she has to focus on not only playing her match but dealing with the high or low blood sugars. I was crushed because I could not do anything to help her. I was crushed because I received the denial letter from the insurance company denying her the Continuous Glucose Monitoring system (CGM), which would provide glucose readings every two minutes. The CGM would show trends in respect to the blood sugars going down or up. The insurance company said it would do nothing to help her. It wasn't that my records weren't impeccable, they admitted they were. They admitted the level of care Elizabeth has received over the years is impeccable, but obvious it isn't enough to justify the CGM. They just couldn't approve the machine they said, because this would be the first time we ever would have done so. Besides, they indicated, "Dr. Kaufman works for Medtronic® it is a conflict of interest." This enraged me and I stated, "Oh right, Dr. Kaufman is now in the business of selling the CGM for Medtronic®. Medtronic® is the #1 insulin pump manufacturer in the world, and Dr. Kaufman is world renown. Golly, what a totally ludicrous thing to say and allow this to be part of your recommendation for denial of such a life saving unit for Elizabeth. I would love to provide them with her tournament schedule and observe this occurrence of high and

low blood sugars. I would like for them to tell me it still wouldn't work. More importantly, I would like for them to tell my daughter, it wouldn't work. After the match I went over to congratulate Patty, Jana's mother and she knew Elizabeth must have had issue with her diabetes. Elizabeth came over shortly thereafter, and Jana's father hugged Elizabeth. Too bad I didn't have my camera. Definitely was a Kodak® moment. When we sitting away from everyone later she said, "Mom, you think they will approve the CGM now?"

I said, "That's the million dollar question. They have already rejected it. I will appeal their decision. I guess they're waiting for you to crack your skull open on the tennis court, then, they will approve it. Insurance companies are typically a day late and a dollar short. I'll send them this article and let's see what they will say then. An ounce of prevention beats a pound in cure. Obviously this is not their philosophy."

Elizabeth smiled and said, "Okay."

The thing is she never once said, "I hate diabetes." You know who said that? Me.

Written By Yvonne Profit – April 13, 2010