

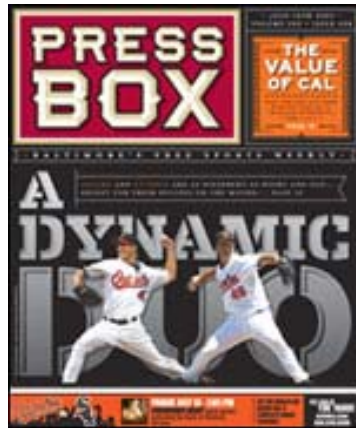
Issue 2.30: July 26, 2007

Media Guide: By Barry Silverman

'RALLY CAPS' GOING TO COOPERSTOWN, TOO

In a recent *PressBox* "High School Then and Now," Keith Mills talked with Jodi Cutler, a native Baltimorean now living in Grosetto, Italy, about her book "Rally Caps." The book, which she co-authored with her father and my friend Stephen Cutler, is about a young boy who is hit by a pitch and becomes afraid to play baseball. (By the way, one of the camp kids in the book is named "Silverman," and another named "Barry." How 'bout that?) At summer camp he overcomes his fear, thanks to the encouragement of a hearing-impaired youngster from Italy.

Jodi Cutler wrote the book so her own hearing impaired son would have a character to relate to. In the book, the boys' love of baseball is inspired by the Cutlers' baseball hero, Ripken. In fact, this weekend, Stephen Cutler will be at Augurs Bookstore in Cooperstown signing books. "Rally Caps" is also on sale at the Hall of Fame's Museum Bookstore.



Issue 2.28: July 12, 2007

HS Then and Now: Cutler Point Being Heard Loud and Clear

By Keith Mills

When Jodi Cutler was playing three sports at Pikesville High School in the late '80s, the last thing she thought she would be doing nearly 20 years later was promoting a book and living in Italy.

"You can't control your own destiny," Cutler said. "Wherever it takes you, it takes you."

Destiny and Cutler's husband, Luca Del Dottore, have taken her to Grosseto, Italy, a coastal town in Tuscany halfway between Florence and Rome. Cutler spent the last decade in Grosseto teaching English at a local school, raising her two children (4-year-old Sofia and 10-year-old Jordan) and writing a book with her father, Stephen, called "RALLY CAPS." It is a story about how a young baseball player who idolizes Cal Ripken Jr. stopped playing because of an injury and battles to get back on the field.

"My father lives in West Palm Beach and had been pressuring me to write it for the last six years," Cutler said. "But when somebody tells you, 'Write a book, write a book,' it's almost impossible to do. Somehow we got it done."



(Courtesy of Publish America)

For Cutler, the story hits home hard for Cutler, like a Ripken line drive. Ripken is one of the inspirations for the book. The other is her son Jordan.

"There's a child named Jordan who is a die-hard Cal Ripken fan," Cutler said of her book's plot. "He suffers a lot of anxiety toward baseball because he gets flung in the face with a baseball bat and he's afraid to play. He goes to a baseball camp and meets a strong, hearing-impaired boy who convinces him to get back on the field. He is wearing a hearing aid, a cochlear hearing implant."

Cutler's son is also hearing-impaired and wears a cochlear implant.

"My son was born profoundly deaf," Cutler said. "He goes to speech therapy three times a week. When he was 8, he got a cochlear implant. At the time, I was jotting things down for the book but when he had the implant done -- and it was an incredible success -- the story really began moving along."

And incredibly, Jordan has yet to read it.

"It's written in English and he can't read English," said Cutler. "He speaks and reads Italian. But we're working to get it translated for him."

Cutler graduated in 1989 from Pikesville High School, where she lettered in volleyball, basketball and softball. After graduating from the University of Maryland with a degree in English, language and literature, she returned to Baltimore County to teach and coach junior varsity basketball at Randallstown and Pikesville and softball at Franklin and Randallstown.

But it was as a gifted scholar-athlete at Pikesville High in 1989 when Cutler's life took an interesting turn. She took a trip to Italy as part of an exchange program and met her husband-to-be on the streets of Grosseto.

"I thought he was 'hot,' so I talked to him," Cutler said. "We stayed in touch, went back and forth, back and forth for about seven years. Then we got engaged. I was teaching here and he was working there. Then I got pregnant. That decided it."

So Cutler moved to Italy, where she and her husband began to raise a family. In 1997, Jordan was born, followed in 2003 by Sofia. Jordan, despite his hearing challenges, began to play baseball.

"Baseball in Italy is like soccer in the United States," Cutler said. "Fortunately, he plays on a good team with great coaches."

Meanwhile, back in West Palm Beach, Stephen Cutler was still trying to convince his daughter to co-write a book with him. At that point, he had found another inspiring reason to do it -- Curtis Pride.

Pride, an 11-year major league veteran, is also hearing impaired. A 10th-round pick in the 1986 amateur draft out of John F. Kennedy High School in Montgomery County, Pride has played for six major league teams. He is presently at triple AAA in Salt Lake City with the LA Angels of Anaheim. He runs a foundation called Together With Pride, which raises money for families to purchase devices like a cochlear implant.

Stephen Cutler met Pride in 2001 in West Palm Beach and began a relationship that continues to this day. In fact, Pride has endorsed "RALLY CAPS" and has been one of the book's biggest advocates.

"Curtis actually wanted the book to be about the hearing-impaired character," Jodi Cutler said. "But I wanted the book to be a mainstream book for all children to read. That's how I see my son." And that's how Cutler hopes others see the book.

So far, so good.

Since Jodi Cutler has returned to Baltimore, she has had book signings at Borders Express in White Marsh, Breathe Books in Hampden and the Ivy Bookshop on Falls Road.

"Everyone has been so helpful," Cutler said. "I really didn't have to ask for help because everyone gets the message -- how a child with a handicap can help other children. I am humbled by the experience."

She has also been a guest on multiple local TV and radio programs, and on July 27-28, Stephen Cutler will sign books at the Augurs Book Store on Main Street in Cooperstown, N.Y., as part of Ripken's Hall of Fame induction.

Ripken remains a huge part of the Cutler message.

"The important aspect for me as to why he's an inspiration for the book is because he has such a strong work ethic," Jodi Cutler said. "He started playing at Memorial Stadium and my dad took my sister Niki and me to a lot of games growing up and he was always there. Everybody says it's so easy playing the game of baseball. But I just can't imagine playing through good times, bad times, bad press, through slumps, through nicks, through the negative things. Not just through the positive things. Yet day in, day out, he always went to work. He went through it all and has risen above all else to where he is today."

Today, Cutler celebrates life in Grosseto, far from her home in Pikesville where she and Niki grew up playing baseball with the boys. Now she returns to her roots as the author of "RALLY CAPS."

"Why 'RALLY CAPS?' I remember when I was a counselor at Camp Milldale [Owings Mills] and we used to say, 'Put on your rally caps, let's go!' "Cutler said," I love the idea of a team coming from behind. It's the best part of baseball."



Issue 2.18: May 3, 2007

Media Guide: Hard Ball off the Field

by Barry Silverman

"RALLY CAPS" A MUST READ

Congratulations to local guy Steve Cutler, who along with daughter Jodi co-wrote a newly published children's book, "Rally Caps." Jodi's son Jordan, who is hearing impaired and wears a cochlear implant, was the inspiration behind this book.

According to Steve, "Jodi wanted to provide a strong character in literature that her son, my grandson, could identify with."

Curtis Pride, the only deaf player in major league baseball, appreciated their effort and graciously endorsed the book. Pride made history in 1996 when he got his first major league hit to a standing ovation while with the Montreal Expos. He later went on to play for the Tigers, Braves, Red Sox and Angels.

Plus, since Steve and Jodi gave Cal Ripken Jr. a major role in the story line, a bookstore in Cooperstown has invited them to come up for a signing during the week of Ripken's induction to the Hall of Fame this summer. For more information go to www.rallycaps.net.