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'91 Reds graduate Jeff Sutter successfully defeating an oncoming opponent during his high school career

EATON FIGHTIN' REDS' MR. ALL-AMERICAN DEFEATS ONE MORE OPPONENT, THIS TIME: CANCER

“Success builds self-esteem. Self-esteem promotes success.”

This message, posted on the front of Mr. Jeff Sutter’s webpage at the school in which he teaches, is stated by a man who has found success in more areas of life than maybe any other Red in history. 1991 Reds’ Graduate Jeff Sutter has achieved the utmost success in the classroom, on the athletic field, as a teacher, as a coach, with his family, and in saving his own life by defeating a rare form of life-threatening cancer in 2009. And yet Jeff has remained extraordinarily humble through all of his successes, with the other message posted on his school webpage stating “in humility, consider others better than yourselves.”

At www.EatonBaseball.com though, we don’t hesitate to matter-of-factly state that Jeff is not only among the very best of us within the Eaton Baseball Family, he is among the very best that any family could claim as one of their own. And we are proud to honor him as the March 2010 Red of the Month.

Jeff was a star All-State athlete in high school, and led the Reds’ basketball team to the State Title as a senior. He then led the Reds’ baseball team to an improbable run to the State Championship Game as well. After having graduated a number of star pitchers in ’89 and ’90, and before a few Eaton legends took the mound in coming years, the Reds in 1991 were without a number of true pitchers. Instead they relied on their star athletes to move from their infield positions and take the mound. Jeff didn’t throw 90 mph and he didn’t have a snapping knuckle curveball, but he had the heart of a champion and battled with guts that led the Reds to know that when Jeff took the mound, the Reds were going to win. This was no more evident than in the 1991 State Semifinals, when battling against a top college prospect, Sutter took the mound in the 7th inning with a slim 2-run lead, and retired the heart of the opponent’s lineup in order to send the Reds on to the State Championship Game. Jeff had won Regionals the week before that on the mound, and had saved the Reds’ season in the District Tournament the week prior to that by shutting down the Reds’ opponent as the Reds rallied to win in extra innings in a must-win game. *Battling to victory in “must-win” competitions would prove to have no bigger meaning than 18 years later when Jeff was confronted with a true “must-win” battle for his life.*

Jeff will forever be remembered as one of the Reds’ top shortstops of all-time. He was the first shortstop to start at that position for all 4 years in high school, and only one other Red has gone on to do it since. Nothing got past Sutter, he was the most reliable fielder of the era, and one of the Reds’ top fielders of all-time. Sutter simply made every play, and no one performed better under pressure than Jeff.

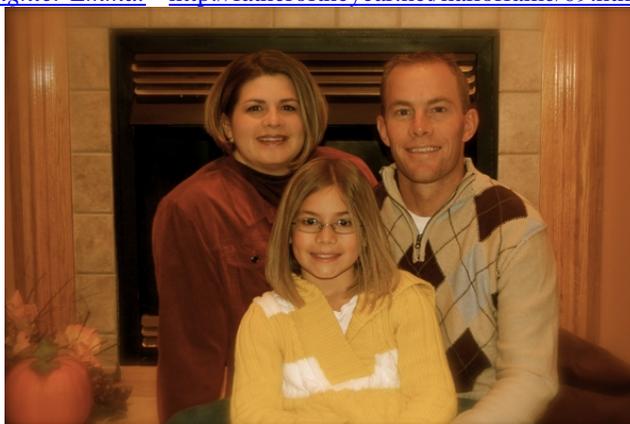
In 4 seasons at shortstop in the State Tournament, with the entire season on the line, Sutter made only one error. That throwing error though would be made up for 2 pitches later when Sutter made a great play up the middle and stepped on 2nd base and threw a laser to 1st base to complete the inning-ending double play. Sutter never played on the Reds' top-notch field of today, instead he played on all-dirt infield, where literally infielders threw out the big rocks before each game and just ignored the smaller rocks. They were forced to play with the determination that "if the ball takes a bad hop, then I'd better adjust and still make the play". No one outmatched Sutter's determination.

He was also a star player as a hitter. Sutter hit over .400 as a senior, and even as a freshman never hit below .325 in a season. His on-base percentage was always among the top in the state, as Sutter would take a walk or hit-by-pitch or do anything that it took to win. Sutter knew how to win, and he played to win.

Sutter did this in the classroom as well. Sutter was among the very top students in his class, earning nearly a 4.0 GPA. This kind of success would normally lead a high school kid to develop a form of arrogance. Not Jeff. Jeff not only coached Eaton's youth in baseball all summer long, but when he drove near a few of those younger ballplayers walking to school or to practice, he would always stop and give them a ride. He was not only the most respected player among a top-notch group of athletes on his team, he was exceptionally well-liked by all who came into contact with him. 20 years later, that hasn't changed at all.

It has been said many times before that to whom much is given, much is expected. Sutter was Mr. All-American at everything that he ever did. Not that it was handed to him though, Jeff took more groundballs than anyone in practice, and developed calluses on his hands from all the batting practice he took to get better. His work ethic combined with natural talent and competitiveness has shown in everything he has ever done. Jeff went on to have an outstanding 4-year career as the shortstop at Doane College as well.

And Jeff would have been a huge success in business or in any field that his heart chose, but he instead decided to give back by becoming a teacher, and a special education teacher at that. Rarely does a man have the heart of a warrior and yet show compassion for those who were given much less in life, but Jeff is that rare combination. Jeff is a man of God, a church elder (though only in his 30's), and a family man who along with his wife is raising two children for them to find personal greatness as well. The Sutters most recently adopted a son, Emerson Jeffrey. [Click here to read Jeff's Christian Heritage Fatherhood Initiative 2009 Hall of Fame nomination written by his daughter Emma.](http://fatheroftheyear.net/halloffame/09.htm#ANCHOR7)



Having established for himself the ideal life, Jeff was thrown a curveball one year ago, when he was diagnosed with life-threatening cancer. Many questioned how something so terrible could be given to someone so great, as Jeff is still one of the most beloved Reds, and men, in the Eaton community, as well as throughout his new community of Aurora, Nebraska. Jeff though, never took such an approach, as he simply determined it was one more challenge, and one more victory to seek.

This time however, it truly was a must-win battle on Jeff's hands, as his life depended on it.

His fight against cancer, and the enormous outpouring of support Jeff received from friends literally throughout the country, especially in his hometown of Eaton and the community of Aurora, NE, would take pages to describe and even that could not summarize the man that Jeff Sutter is and the battle that he won.

It is best chronicled in writing through one website...

[Read updates throughout Jeff's battle with cancer and notes from over 850 well-wishers whose life Jeff has positively influenced.](https://www.carepages.com/carepages/Sutter)
<https://www.carepages.com/carepages/Sutter>

...and one video tribute...

[Please click on the following video link to see Jeff's successful battle against cancer](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpm4U5GazMw)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpm4U5GazMw>

(the group surrounding Jeff near the end of the video, and below, is his senior class of Reds' baseball and basketball teammates)



Jeff battled with tenacity and strength that is difficult to summarize briefly, but that surprised no one who knows Jeff, as he is truly a champion. His efforts were rewarded with a cancer-free diagnosis less than 6 months later, following a series of treatments that often are not successful with patients. For Jeff though, failure was not an option, and success was the only path that he would take. And he did.



Jeff was an honored guest and speaker for the nationally-ranked Nebraska Cornhuskers for a game in 2009

It is quite possible that this month's Red of the Month has achieved success in more forms than any Red in history. Jeff has always placed those around him ahead of himself. Frankly, knowing Jeff, if he would have known that a Red was going to have to fight through life-threatening cancer, Jeff would have been the first to raise his hand and ask God that he be the one chosen for this. And frankly, no Red would have been better prepared, through success in every avenue of life, than Jeff to battle through this ordeal, not only with ultimate success, but in record time. A humble man who never ran up the score on an opponent on the basketball court or baseball field, in this case, against cancer, Jeff kept the full-court press on with a 50-point lead and two minutes remaining in the contest. Jeff is the ultimate winner, and we're just proud to know him as a Red.

From one of the many former Eaton youth baseball players who have always looked up to you:

Congratulations Jeff on Defeating Yet Another Opponent, and Thanks for All that You Have Done for Eaton Baseball, and for Being the Role Model that You Are for The Reds

Letter from Jeff Sutter's father, who also played baseball for the Reds in the 1960's, dated September 2009...

To the Eaton Baseball Family:

We want to express our sincerest gratitude for all the prayers and positive support that you have given Jeff over the past few months. We are several years past our active participation in the Eaton Baseball Family, but we still feel all the ties and bonds from every member, new or old.

I attended a thank you gathering in Aurora, Nebraska last weekend and I am including a couple of pictures that help sum up our feelings. Mike Anderson and Mike Herzberg were both coaches for Jeff when he was going through the Eaton system. They both attended Jeff's celebration last weekend, and it was obvious to all who were there what a special bond these guys have for each other. The other picture I'm sending shows a couple of other Eaton players who ended up in Nebraska too. Ron (Dino) Nolin and Matt Rice are also a special part of the group of ex-Eaton players who have settled in Nebraska.

All these guys have remained close and have continued to spread what began on the ball fields in Eaton. They all are tremendously positive individuals that unselfishly share their lives and their experiences with everyone around them. I know that through prayer and through the support of all far and near, Jeff was able to get a clean bill of health in record time.

Mike Anderson said something last weekend that is a real testimony to the positive background we have tried to offer all our kids. He said that Mike Herzberg and Jeff showed up in Aurora, Nebraska not knowing anyone. In a few years time, they both have made such an impact on that small community that over 200 people would drop by to help celebrate Jeff's good news. As I sat back and watched Jeff greet and thank all his well wishers, I couldn't have been prouder, and it brought back a lot of fond memories of days back in Eaton.

Thanks again to the entire Eaton Baseball Family, and I hope every young man who goes through the program will continue to share the life lessons they learn there with all they meet for the rest of their lives.

Keep the Faith!

John & Carolyn Sutter
Jeff, Michelle & Emma Sutter



Reds' Mike Herzberg, Jeff Sutter, Mike Anderson ---



Reds' Ron (Dino) Nolin, Jeff Sutter, and Matt Rice