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Erin Kelly's Fan Journal: Being Kelly tough

Erin Kelly

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It was the first time she cried since we found out about Daddy. I don't think she knows how to deal with everything. Tears welled up in my eyes as my little sister, Camryn, hugged me. As I held her in my arms my heart longed to release the tears, but my mind reminded me to be Kelly Tough.

Kelly Tough doesn't mean that we don't cry. Kelly Tough means that in that moment I was strong for someone else. I was strong for my little sister who couldn't bear to watch her daddy suffer.

Kelly Tough is a selfless toughness. It's not about being strong in your own strength. It doesn't mean being strong for the sake of your own suffering. Being Kelly Tough means that you press on because there's someone else out there who needs you to be strong.

For years, my dad was tackled into the turf, but he still got up. He never quit. Why?

Because he heard the fans cheering, and he remembered the sound of his dad's voice saying, "Come on, son. You're a Kelly. Be tough!" He was determined to fight no matter how hard the battle.

My dad is known as one of the toughest quarterbacks to ever play in the NFL, but I've never witnessed toughness like that of my brother, Hunter!

I've never watched someone so weak be so strong. Hunter relied on God for every breath. Every worry, every fear, every hurt. He couldn't do it on his own. He relied on God, completely. He was Kelly Tough so that we could fall into the strong and mighty arms of God. Hunter was Kelly Tough so that we could rejoice with every breath he took and every time he blinked three times to say, "I love you!"

Hunter was Kelly Tough so that every child can be tested at birth so they don't have to suffer like he did. Hunter was Kelly Tough to encourage my dad on THIS day ... as we hear the word "cancer" for a second time ... as he goes to bed every night not knowing what tomorrow will bring ... as he suffers from intense pain yet still smiles when his daughters walk into the room. Hunter James Kelly was Kelly Tough so that our family can say to the world today, "We are weak, but God is strong!"

For my daddy, some days are harder than others to press on. I've never seen him this weak before. But Jim Kelly will remain tough ... for Jason, the cancer patient who had only weeks to live. For the Hunter's Hope families. For the die-hard Bills fan, for Buffalo, for the entire Kelly family, for his wife, for his daughters.

He's Kelly Tough. In the midst of his struggles, he has surrendered to the God who holds this moment and the future. THIS is Kelly Tough!

This is the first in a series of stories for The News by the oldest daughter of Bills great Jim Kelly.